

Decalogue for the Sharing Group

1. Meetings are led by the Holy Spirit through Mary.
2. Purpose of the meeting:
 - To become aware of my weaknesses and the truth of being loved by God
 - To respond to the desire to deepen my faith
 - To be open to others (brothers and sisters) in the group
 - To share different experiences of my faith and how God is present in my life
3. When I go to the meeting, I will pray to God for others and myself.
 - Prayer of empty hands or that of the tax collector is recommended.
4. I will remember that I am God's child who has the right to trust and await miracles.
5. As a participant in our meeting I will:
 - Serve others and not count my own merits
 - Create the atmosphere of calm, focus/concentration and openness
 - Not impose on others my ways of thinking, reacting and perceiving
 - Avoid giving advice or solving others' problems
 - Speak from my personal "I" rather than use such terms as "you, we, us, people, we should, others do this"
 - Avoid discussion and criticism
6. By keeping what is shared in the meeting confidential, I will preserve each participant's freedom to share openly and protect their dignity as a child of God.
7. I will not be afraid of moments of silence, since I or somebody else may need time to reflect. Moments of silence provide us with unique opportunities for prayer and entrustment to God.
8. I will remember to attentively listen to what my brother or sister is saying in order to help them in the process of sharing.
9. When I give a witness talk or share my faith, God's grace is not only given to me but it is being multiplied and given to others.
10. Above all, God expects from me humility and openness. Even one person who is humble and open to God can create an appropriate climate during a given meeting that will spread to all participants. The most important and desirable goal is not the format of the meeting, but it is to be open to God's grace and presence.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, **No. 273**, footnotes **113**: Cf. 2 Cor 12:9; Phil 4:13; **114**: Lk 1:37,49; **No. 274**, footnote **115**: *Roman Catechism* 1,2,13; **No. 494**, footnotes **140**: Cf. LG 56; **141**: St. Irenaeus, Adv. haeres. 3, 22, 4: PG 7/1, 959A; **142**: St. Irenaeus, Adv. haeres. 3, 22, 4: PG 7/1, 959A; **143**: LG 56; St. Epiphanius, Panarion 2, 78, 18: PG 42, 728CD-729AB; St. Jerome, Ep. 22, 21: PL 22, 408.

www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/catechism

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S.C. Biela, *In the Arms of Mary* 2nd ed. (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary Foundation, 2005). All rights reserved. – www.inthearmsofmary.org

Families of Nazareth Movement – www.familiesofnazareth.us

DECEMBER 24, 2023~ FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT ~ YEAR B
SPIRITUAL REFLECTION ON SUNDAY'S READINGS

PREPARED BY:
FAMILIES OF NAZARETH MOVEMENT USA
COMMUNION OF LIFE WITH CHRIST THROUGH MARY

Reading I	2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16
Responsorial Psalm	Ps 89:2-3, 4-5, 27,29
Reading II	Rom 16:25-27
Gospel	Lk 1:26-38

Opening or Closing Prayer

Holy Mary, full of God's presence

during the days of your life, you accepted with full humility the Father's will,
and the Devil was never capable to tie you around with his confusion.

Once with your Son you interceded for our difficulties, and,

full of kindness and patience,
you gave us the example of how to untie the knots of our life.

And by remaining forever Our Mother, you put in order, and make more clear
the ties that link us to the Lord.

Holy Mother, Mother of God and our Mother,

to you, who untie with motherly heart the knots of our life,
we pray to you to receive in your hands (name), and to free them [him/her]
of the knots and confusion with which our enemy attacks.

Through your grace, your intercession, and your example,

deliver us from all evil, Our Lady,
and untie the knots that prevent us from being united with God,
so that we, free from sin and error,
may find Him in all things,
may have our hearts placed in Him,
and may serve Him always in our brothers and sisters. Amen

Pope Francis' prayer to *Our Lady, Untier of Knots*
FNМ Summer Retreat 2013

Pope Francis' prayer to *Our Lady, Untier of Knots*
He brought this devotion from Augsburg, Germany to Argentina
Novena and history at <http://www.theholynosary.org/maryundoerknots>

Spiritual Reflection

“... *for nothing will be impossible for God.*” Lk 1: 37

For Mary, who entrusts herself totally to God –
the will of God – even when least comprehensible,
is the supreme value.

In living by the will of God, **she lives the life of God.**

This singular relationship between God and Mary is revealed very clearly during the Annunciation, when God introduces her into an extraordinarily intimate bond with Him.

God reveals His will to her with an infinite love and Mary responds with total abandonment of herself, even if she is experiencing something that completely surpasses the capacity of human understanding. Later on, her whole life will be a constant living of her *fiat* declared at the Annunciation, and at the same time, an incessant renewal of her abandonment to God.

[Saint] John Paul II says that Mary teaches us the humble recognition and acceptance of the “inscrutable ways” and “unsearchable judgments” of God. “Mary, who by the eternal will of the Most High stands, one may say, at the very center of those ‘inscrutable ways’ and ‘unsearchable judgments’ of God, conforms herself to them in the dim light of faith, accepting fully and with a ready heart everything that is decreed in the divine plan.”

In professing her fiat, Mary believed in something impossible,
and later, with unwavering faith, awaited its fulfillment.
Contrary to all rational premises, she believed in God,
and when she was confronted with new experiences
she invariably adopted only this attitude.

As a response to the boundless entrustment of Mary, God bestowed on her an unimaginable grace. When Jesus was conceived, a bond between Mother and Son was born. It was not only a physical bond but also an *extraordinary spiritual bond*, whose depth will always be a great mystery for us. . .

When we ponder the attitude of the one who leads us in the “pilgrimage of faith,” a question comes to mind: of what does the mystery of such great entrustment of Mary and of such perfect submission to the will of God consist?

In looking for the answer, we may meditate on the attitude of Mary, who leads us in the “pilgrimage of faith” and try to look at her life in the light of one of the indications of Christ: “unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 18:3).

S. C. Biela, *In the Arms of Mary*, pp.123-125

References from the Catechism of the Catholic Church

273 Only faith can embrace the mysterious ways of God's almighty power. This faith glories in its weaknesses in order to draw to itself Christ's power.¹¹³ The Virgin Mary is the supreme model of this faith, for she believed that "nothing will be impossible with God", and was able to magnify the Lord: "For he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name."¹¹⁴

274 "Nothing is more apt to confirm our faith and hope than holding it fixed in our minds that nothing is impossible with God. Once our reason has grasped the idea of God's almighty power, it will easily and without any hesitation admit everything that [the Creed] will afterwards propose for us to believe - even if they be great and marvelous things, far above the ordinary laws of nature."¹¹⁵

494 At the announcement that she would give birth to "the Son of the Most High" without knowing man, by the power of the Holy Spirit, Mary responded with the obedience of faith, certain that "with God nothing will be impossible": ...Thus, giving her consent to God's word, Mary becomes the mother of Jesus. Espousing the divine will for salvation wholeheartedly, without a single sin to restrain her, she gave herself entirely to the person and to the work of her Son; she did so in order to serve the mystery of redemption with him and dependent on him, by God's grace:¹⁴⁰ As St. Irenaeus says, "Being obedient she became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race."¹⁴¹ Hence not a few of the early Fathers gladly assert..."The knot of Eve's disobedience was untied by Mary's obedience: what the virgin Eve bound through her disbelief, Mary loosened by her faith."¹⁴² Comparing her with Eve, they call Mary "the Mother of the living" and frequently claim: "Death through Eve, life through Mary."¹⁴³

Questions for Reflection

1. How do I regard “weaknesses” in my spiritual life? How can I profit from them?
2. In my daily life, what situation has given me a better understanding that, for God, nothing is impossible?
3. The Virgin Mary was willing to believe in God's power like a child. How can I be ready and willing to entrust my faith to her and allow her to lead me to Her Son?

Prayer after Sharing

Thank you, God, for allowing me to see the truth about my weaknesses and how it calls upon the abyss of your merciful Love.