

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 my 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. 2222, No. 2226, footnote 35: Cf. *LG* 11; No. 1435, footnotes 33: Cf. *Am* 5:24; *Isa* 1:17; 34: Cf. *Lk* 9:23. .

www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/catechism

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Tadeusz Dajczer, *The Gift of Faith* 4th ed. (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary

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Families of Nazareth Movement – www.familiesofnazareth.us

DECEMBER 31, 2023 ~ THE HOLY FAMILY ~ YEAR B SPIRITUAL REFLECTION ON SUNDAY'S READINGS

PREPARED BY:

FAMILIES OF NAZARETH MOVEMENT USA
COMMUNION OF LIFE WITH CHRIST THROUGH MARY

Reading I

Sir 3:2-6, 12-14 or Gn 15:1-6; 21:1-3

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 128:1-2, 3, 4-5 or Ps 105:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9

Reading II

Col 3:12-211 or Col 3:12-17 or Heb 11:8, 11-12, 17-19

Gospel

Lk 2:22-40 or Lk 2:22, 39-40

Opening or Closing Prayer

Dear Father, great is Your Mercy.

My true vocation is intimacy with You in the Kingdom of Heaven. May the new model of righteousness Your Son has given me, "as I have done, you should also do," open me more to Your mercy and transform me into Your divine likeness.

Dear Jesus, holy is Your Name.

May your prayer, "that they may be one as you, Father, and I are one," become my own desire. Teach me how to build up the unity of Your Mystical Body by embracing and living out my vocation to authentic holiness and happiness.

Dear Holy Spirit, amazing is Your Grace.

Grant me your gifts in order to "always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks" the reason for my hope. Thank you that, through You, I can encounter Jesus daily in the Eucharist, the source of my hope, even in the situations of my life that are most difficult to understand.

Dear Mother Mary, source of my joy.

"Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled." As a vessel of the Holy Spirit, teach me to live the Beatitudes of your Son. Wrap me in your mantle, where I can believe in His mercy and fulfill my vocation to be salt of the earth and light of the world.

I ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Families of Nazareth USA
Summer Retreat 2011

Spiritual Reflection

*The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom;
And the favor of God was upon him. Lk 3:40*

Within the Mystical Body of Christ there are mutual bonds of varying degrees of closeness and depth. The physical image of a **system of connected vessels** can enlighten us about the mystery of mutual bonds within the Mystical Body of Christ. A family, as a domestic church, can be an example of a system of connected vessels. Usually God, wanting to affect a particular group of people, uses one of them in a special way so that through that person he can bestow graces on the others. Let us assume, for example, that in a system of connected vessels, such as a family of four, three people are closed to life in grace. They are like hermetically sealed test tubes. If just one of the persons tries to turn toward God, he or she becomes a channel of grace for their loved ones. This person has two possibilities for influencing the others. He can try to remove the stopper from above, just as a corkscrew removes a cork. But if the stopper is made up of live tissue of human personality, forcing access through the top will always bring about suffering, painful and destructive wounds, as well as significant limitation of personal freedom. God does not want this. He loves his children to make decisions in **freedom** of choice, striving for fuller faith and love. Continuing further with the image of connected vessels and sealed test tubes, one can say that God prefers stoppers to be pushed out from below by the specific pressure of grace within your test tube. Before converting others, try first of all to be converted yourself. The greatness of your faith and your adherence to Christ is important. John Paul II said that it is not important what you do, it is important who you are. **The more good there is in you and the more faithfully you follow grace, the more effective your influence on others will be.**

Therefore, if a wife wants to convert her husband who, for example, has a drinking problem, she must begin with her own conversion. It is she who must first be converted. Her spouse may be converted through the basic pressure of goodness increasing within her. This can only be brought about when she grows in grace and deepens her conversion. The reformation of the world and the transformation of others must begin with ourselves. The life of Christ must first increase to such an extent in you that the graces and good accepted by you cause the conversion of others. It can happen that this kind of conversion remains ineffective; that it requires an ever greater “pressure” of grace in your “test tube.” This is when God may ask you to lead a more intense spiritual life and even to offer yourself completely to him, which amounts to a radical striving for sanctity. This is the consequence of your belonging to the Mystical Body of Christ, the consequence of this extraordinary truth, that through Baptism you have become a member of the Total Christ, of His Mystical Body. . .

. . . The light of faith lets you see that, through Baptism, you belong to the Body of Christ, that you are incorporated into the system of connected vessels of this Body. Baptism. This Body so greatly needs the converted and the saints. It is in great need of your conversion and your sanctity. Thanks to the light of faith, you come to know that the reformation of others should always begin with yourself.

Every one of your good deeds affects others. **Your faithfulness is the strength for those whom you love.** When you receive Holy Communion, not only are you strengthened, but also your spouse, children, brother, friends, parish, the Church, and the world. Begin then with yourself, with your own opening up to Christ. God wants you to be sanctified, and through this, he wants to sanctify your environment, your loved ones, the Church, and the world.

Tadeusz Dajczer, *The Gift of Faith*, pp. 175-179

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

- 2222 Parents must regard their children as children of God and respect them as human persons. Showing themselves obedient to the will of the Father in heaven, they educate their children to fulfill God's law.
- 2226 Education in the faith by the parents should begin in the child's earliest years. This already happens when family members help one another to grow in faith by the witness of a Christian life in keeping with the Gospel. Family catechesis precedes, accompanies, and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith. Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God.³⁵ The parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families; it is a privileged place for the catechesis of children and parents.
- 1435 Conversion is accomplished in daily life by gestures of reconciliation, concern for the poor, the exercise and defense of justice and right,³³ by the admission of faults to one's brethren, fraternal correction, revision of life, examination of conscience, spiritual direction, acceptance of suffering, endurance of persecution for the sake of righteousness. Taking up one's cross each day and following Jesus is the surest way of penance.³⁴

Questions for Reflection

1. What family problems have I tried to fix or think I need to solve? How do I perceive God's love in these experiences?
2. In what ways must I be converted in order to help those needing conversion around me? To what is God calling me?
3. How can the example of Mary help me to live in God's will for the good of my loved ones?

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.