

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. 898, footnote 431 LG 31 § 2; No. 901, footnote 434: 434 LG 34; cf. LG 10, I Pet 2:5.

<http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/catechism>

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Andre Daigneault, *The Way of Imperfection: Holiness for the Poor*. (Ft. Collins,

CO. IAMF, 2016),. All rights reserved. – www.inthearmsofmary.org

Families of Nazareth Movement – www.familiesofnazareth.us

JANUARY 21, 2024 ~ 3RD SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME ~ YEAR B
SPIRITUAL REFLECTION ON SUNDAY'S READINGS

PREPARED BY:

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

Reading I Jon 3:1-5, 10

Responsorial Psalm Ps 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

Reading II 1 Cor 7:29-31

Gospel Mk 1:14-20

Opening or Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus,

You were sent by the Father
to gather together those who are scattered.
You came among us, doing good and bringing healing,
announcing the Word of salvation
and giving the Bread which lasts forever.
Be our companion on life's pilgrim way.

May your Holy Spirit inflame our hearts,
enliven our hope and open our minds,
so that together with our sisters and brothers in faith
we may recognize you in the Scriptures
and in the breaking of bread.

May your Holy Spirit transform us into one body
and lead us to walk humbly on the earth,
in justice and love,
as witnesses of your resurrection.

In communion with Mary,
whom you gave to us as our Mother
at the foot of the cross,
through you
may all praise, honor and blessing be to the Father
in the Holy Spirit and in the Church,
Now and forever. Amen.

50th International Eucharistic Congress Prayer, Dublin 2012
FNM Summer Retreat 2012

Spiritual Reflection

"Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." Mk 1:14-20

Evangelization is not only to tell others the good news of the resurrected Lord, but to receive from those to whom we have been sent. We often think of our mission in terms of a gift, but the true mission is also to receive. The mission becomes authentic only when it becomes receiving as much as giving. We are sent to the poor, the wounded, the handicapped, the prisoner, to bring them the good news of the Resurrection. But we will exhaust ourselves quickly if we do not accept to receive the Lord's Spirit in those to whom we have been sent.

The Spirit of the Lord is hidden in the wounds and weakness of the poor. Without this mutual exchange of giving and receiving, the mission can easily become manipulation. When one is proud to give what the other receives from us then the giver can become the oppressor and the receivers become victims. It is only when the giver receives from the poor and the poor also gives that the circle of love can increase.

In truth there is real love only in the one who lowers himself to reach the one he loves, who descends into the abyss to join those who are lost. In order to understand the Gospel, to understand true love, there is first a scandal because one must totally question what was thought at first. Love descends; love lowers itself. God's wisdom is folly: God descends, God is at the lowest. He "delivered himself for us." One must accept that love lowers itself, that love becomes a descent and a self-emptying. The mystery of the Cross is a scandal for our human wisdom. One must contemplate this mystery of *descent* by looking at Jesus in his Passion.

Jesus hangs on the wood totally naked,
stripped of his clothing,
stripped of his human dignity,
stripped of honor and admiration,
stripped of every place and function,
stripped even of his capacity to announce the Good News,
stripped of his disciples and their confidence,
stripped of everything
except the presence of Mary.
And those who were there
only saw his broken body.
Then his body was put in a tomb.

He had to descend
into the deepest experience of death.

This is the Gospel of the Cross that we fear to proclaim because it is scandal and madness. . .

One must not forget that this poverty of Jesus is the renouncing of all prestige and descending into humility. The true career of a Christian or minister of Christ is certainly an advancement forward, but an advancement through descent – an advancement toward the bottom – because in the Gospel, God reveals himself as the Poor One, dispossessed and infinitely wounded, who through his kenosis is totally self-emptied. Therefore, when Jesus said to his disciples to meet him in the poor, he reminds us that this is himself, the totally deprived "first poor."

Andre Daigneault, *The Way of Imperfection*, 65-68

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

- 898** "By reason of their special vocation it belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will.... It pertains to them in a special way so to illuminate and order all temporal things with which they are closely associated that these may always be effected and grow according to Christ and may be to the glory of the Creator and Redeemer."⁴³¹
- 901** "Hence the laity, dedicated as they are to Christ and anointed by the Holy Spirit, are marvelously called and prepared so that even richer fruits of the Spirit may be produced in them. For all their works, prayers, and apostolic undertakings, family and married life, daily work, relaxation of mind and body, if they are accomplished in the Spirit – indeed even the hardships of life if patiently born – all these become spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. In the celebration of the Eucharist these may most fittingly be offered to the Father along with the body of the Lord."⁴³⁴

Questions for Reflection

1. What line or/lines from the reflection speak to me and how does this statement apply to my life?
2. How do I understand "Love descends; love lowers itself"? Can I see a need for me to follow Jesus's example?
3. How can the example and intercession of Our Lady help me to focus more fully on the goal of transformation into the image of Christ?

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.