

### 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. 520, footnotes 191:** *GS* 38; cf. *Rom* 15:5; *Phl* 2:5; **192:** Cf. *Jn* 13:15; *Lk* 11:1; *Mt* 5:11-12; **No. 525, footnotes 202:** Cf. *Lk* 2: 6-7; **203:** Cf. *Lk* 2:8-20; **No. 273, footnotes 113:** Cf. *2 Cor* 12:9; *Phl* 4:13; **114:** *Lk* 1:37, 49. .

[www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/catechism](http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/catechism)

*New American Bible* © USCCB. All rights reserved. <https://bible.usccb.org/readings>

André Daigneault, *The Way of Imperfection: Holiness for the Poor* (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary Foundation, 2016). All rights reserved.. – [www.inthearmsofmary.org](http://www.inthearmsofmary.org)

Families of Nazareth Movement – [www.familiesofnazareth.us](http://www.familiesofnazareth.us)

### JANUARY 7, 2024 ~ THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD ~ YEAR B SPIRITUAL REFLECTION ON SUNDAY'S READINGS

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

Opening Prayer  
Read Decalogue  
Read Scripture  
Read Reflection

<b>Reading I</b>	Is 60:1-6
<b>Responsorial Psalm</b>	Ps 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13.
<b>Reading II</b>	Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6
<b>Gospel</b>	Mt 2:1-12

### Opening or Closing Prayer

**Dearest Father**, Your Son tells us, "Unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." I long to be Your smallest child. Help me to rediscover You as the One Who delights in me, Who calls me as His own.

**My Jesus**, You say to us, "Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." You are the way to heaven. Thank You for saving me and giving me Yourself in the Holy Eucharist. Reactivate the call of my Baptism to serve the Church in childlike humility, "boasting only in God."

**Holy Spirit**, reveal to me my weaknesses that I may seek Jesus' strength. Reveal to me my nothingness, that I may await all things from Him. Convince me of Jesus' words, "What is impossible for human beings is possible for God."

**Blessed Mother**, I entrust my prideful doubt, fear, discouragement and ingratitude to your intercession so that I will believe, as God's beloved child and yours, "Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."

**We 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 2010*

### Spiritual Reflection

*"We saw His star at its rising and have come to do Him homage."*

Mt 2:2

To climb the ladder or descend through love, these are the two ways offered to us. Of all the pages written about these two ways, without a doubt none can deepen and illustrate this subject more than the Gospel of Saint Matthew.

We have the story of two kings. One is named *Herod* and the other *Jesus Christ*. I think in all of history there existed no two personalities so opposite...

The two kings, Herod and Jesus, cross paths with each other but are totally opposite. King Herod represents the search for power at whatever price: "Climb, control, serve yourself and be powerful." Jesus, God of Love incarnate, *descends* - lowers himself, kneels near the poor, lets himself be dispossessed, and dies abandoned, nailed to a cross – rather than accept power that could have made him king. He is the *King of Love*.

Herod is a tyrant. Jesus is a servant. One manipulates the weak and the poor, the other serves, heals, empathizes, and loves with total self-denial. We should not forget that these two kings always battle within ourselves. It is the fight between pride and humility.

Jesus is the King of Love in supreme poverty. He always *descends* lower. Everything in him is dispossession. Everything in him is poverty. No one looks or turns toward him. In Jesus, King of Love, we can see that God is not at the top of a hierarchy of domination but a hierarchy of humility. He always *descends*. He is the new Adam who, instead of exalting himself, lowers himself in becoming small and vulnerable...

Rich in what the world considers great and precious, Herod was nevertheless a failure from a human perspective. He thought that the more he controlled others and held on to his power, the more he was becoming invincible. He believed himself to be as great as God, untouchable, eternal.

Fortunately, we can say that we are not like Herod. But if we are honest and truthful, we must admit that sometimes we utilize our gifts, our talents, and our charm to manipulate others in order to obtain what we desire, hiding our deep motivation under charitable or apostolic pretexts.

We greatly desire to be servants, but "useful" servants that God is fortunate to have.

Isn't there a little Herod who prowls somewhere inside us? Like him, we are inhabited by the pride of power which wants to control rather than submit, and we want to be honored rather than lowering ourselves to honor others.

One must choose between *descend* or *ascend*, lowering oneself or elevating oneself; one must decide who will be king of our hearts: Jesus or Herod.

André Daigneault, *The Way of Imperfection*, pp. 45,47-48

### References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

- 520** In all of his life Jesus presents himself as *our model*. He is "the perfect man",<sup>191</sup> who invites us to become his disciples and follow him. In humbling himself, he has given us an example to imitate, through his prayer he draws us to pray, and by his poverty he calls us to accept freely the privation and persecutions that may come our way.<sup>192</sup>
- 525** Jesus was born in a humble stable, into a poor family.<sup>202</sup> Simple shepherds were the first witnesses to this event. In this poverty heaven's glory was made manifest.<sup>203</sup> The Church never tires of singing the glory of this night.
- 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.<sup>113</sup> 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."<sup>114</sup>

### Questions for Reflection

1. Herod was threatened by the Magi coming to offer homage to Jesus. When have I desired or resented the honor that was given to another, revealing the battle between pride and humility within me?
2. As I contemplate the lowly Child in Bethlehem, how is God present in my experiences when called to be "servant"? What do I discover?
3. How can Mary, who magnified the Lord, be an example to imitate in order to become small and vulnerable?

### 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.*