

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. 164, footnote 49: 2 Cor 5:7, 50: 1 Cor 13:12; No. 272, footnote 111: 1 Cor 1:24-25, 112: Eph 1:19-22;

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

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S.C. Biela, *Open Wide the Door to Christ*, (Ft. Collins, CO: IAMF, 2005). All rights reserved. – www.inthearmsofmary.org

Families of Nazareth Movement – www.familiesofnazareth.us

MARCH 17, 2024 ~ FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT ~ YEAR B
SPIRITUAL REFLECTION ON SUNDAY'S READINGS

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

Reading I Jer 31:31-34

Responsorial Psalm Ps 51:3-4, 12-13, 14-15

Reading II Heb 5:7-9

Gospel Jn 12:20-33

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

*Amen, amen, I say to you,
unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies,
it remains just a grain of wheat;
but if it dies, it produces much fruit. Jn 12:24*

Referring to His approaching suffering and death, Jesus spoke about the death of a grain of wheat, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit." These words of Christ also pertain to each of us. If we resist dying to ourselves, then our lives will remain fruitless. We will not take advantage of the designs and hopes that God has with regard to each one of us. It is not possible to deepen our bond with God without dying to ourselves, namely, without dying to our pride and our egoism. The process of becoming poor in spirit entails reevaluating our relationship to temporal things and people. Moreover, how this happens depends on the will of God for each one of us.

Certainly, dying to one's self is a necessary process, and God awaits our consent to it. The grain dies so that the kingdom of God, the kingdom that can expand only at the cost of the death of our illusions, will grow. . .

Where is our soil, our place to die? It is the environment in which we live. In a way, it is our decision because we choose in which kind of environment we will live. We choose with whom we will have close relationships. Thus, to a certain extent, we choose the soil in which we, as seeds, will die to ourselves and bring forth the expected fruits from God. . .

If you attempt to look at the process of dying to yourself with faith, then everything that you so painfully experience will push you toward God. You will see that everything that you lose in this process – wealth, honor, and status – passes away, or vanishes like rotting garbage. . .

Do not focus on that which is painful for you in the process of dying. Try to see Christ in every situation with the eyes of faith. For, He frees you from wayward illusions and forms of imprisonment that lead you away from Him and make it impossible for you to draw closer to Him. Disappointments occur only for those who do not look at their losses through the eyes of faith. They bring about bitterness and suffering, which are actually only the bursting of the soap bubbles of our illusions. Does it make sense to cry when you lose them? If you live only for those soap bubbles, how can you be a pilgrim? How can you strive

for and move toward the real goal rather than the illusionary one? Acknowledging that dying to yourself is the optimal program of your life will be the result of the efforts of your mind and will. Your emotions and your feelings, however, will defy these efforts. Therefore, you should often repeat to yourself:

*I want to believe that everything that happens to
me leads me to new life, even though it is so
difficult and painful.*

S.C. Biela, *Open Wide the Door to Christ*, pp. 167-171.

References from the Catechism of the Catholic Church

164 Now, however, "we walk by faith, not by sight"; ⁴⁹ we perceive God as "in a mirror, dimly" and only "in part". ⁵⁰ Even though enlightened by him in whom it believes, faith is often lived in darkness and can be put to the test. The world we live in often seems very far from the one promised us by faith. Our experiences of evil and suffering, injustice and death, seem to contradict the Good News; they can shake our faith and become a temptation against it.

272 Faith in God the Father Almighty can be put to the test by the experience of evil and suffering. God can sometimes seem to be absent and incapable of stopping evil. But in the most mysterious way God the Father has revealed his almighty power in the voluntary humiliation and Resurrection of his Son, by which he conquered evil. Christ crucified is thus "the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." ¹¹¹ It is in Christ's Resurrection and exaltation that the Father has shown forth "the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe". ¹¹²

Questions for Reflection

1. What line or/lines from the reflection speak to me and how does this apply to my life?
2. How do I understand "dying to myself" in my life this Lent?
3. How will the examples of Our Blessed Mother dying to herself help me?

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.