

## 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, 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. 2074, footnotes 33: Jn 15:5; 34: Jn 15:12; No. 736, footnotes 129: Gal 5:22-23; 130: Gal 5:25; cf. Mt 16:24-26; 131: St. Basil, De Spiritu Sancto, 15,36: PG 32,132. [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>  
Tadeusz Dajczer, *The Gift of Faith*, 4th ed. (Ventura, CA: In the Arms of Mary Foundation, 2020) All rights reserved. [www.inthearmsofmary.org](http://www.inthearmsofmary.org)  
Families of Nazareth Movement – [www.familiesofnazareth.us](http://www.familiesofnazareth.us)*

APRIL 28, 2024 ~ FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER ~ 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

**Reading I** Acts 9:26-31

**Responsorial Psalm** Ps 22:26-27, 28, 30, 31-32

**Reading II** 1 Jn 3:18-24

**Gospel** Jn 15:1-8

### 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*

*Families of Nazareth USA  
Summer Retreat 2012*

## Spiritual Reflection

*"I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing...By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples." Jn 15:5,8*

If you open yourself to Christ through faith, He becomes your way, your truth, and your life (cf. Jn 14:6). He then starts to show you your ideal *I* and at the same time makes it a reality. Christ alone will bring about your self-actualization...

We are all destined "to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom 8:29); thus, only Christ can be our **true** example of an ideal person. As the image of our ideal *I* becomes more similar to the image of Christ, **we approach the truth**; for it is Christ Himself who becomes our way and truth. Moreover, He Himself impart strength to our will so that we can form our real *I* following the example of our ideal *I*.

Each of us brings about our own self only when we love. I can actualize my self thanks to the ones I love. Such is God's economy, and such is my psychological structure. None of us can bring about our self without a relationship with another person. Sometimes in our interaction with another person, everything seems almost perfect, and then we do not see the need for heroism. However, sometimes a person can put us in a situation such that, without heroism, there would only remain that which contradicts love. During World War II, people were often in situations that called for heroic love – strike, or you will be beaten; kill, or you will be killed. This was an exceptional circumstance, but God will also call us to love at great cost in less dramatic situations. We will then be convinced that we are unable to love, and it will be easier for us to understand the profound sense of Christ's words, "I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5). Without Christ **we can do nothing**. It is Christ who is our life. Without Him, we become like the branch that withers when cut from the vine. A person cannot actualize himself without Christ.

Our self-actualization is brought about to the extent that we open ourselves to Christ, **to the extent that we allow Him to love from within us – that we allow God Himself to live in us**. If you would fully open yourself to Christ, then you could say, as St. Paul said, "Yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20). Christ really does have such an unusual desire: **He wants to love with a love proper to each of us**; He wants to have as many faces as there are people on earth.

The Church teaches that there is no love without a cross to bear. In order to be able to love another person, my self must be crucified. However, I am not able to accept this without grace. Only grace will make me capable of this. Grace acts in such a way within us that it is Christ Himself who partakes in our *I want*, in our human *I want to love*; *I want to choose good*. "For God is the one who, for his good purpose, works in you both to desire and to work" (Phl 2:13).

Tadeusz Dajczer, *The Gift of Faith*, pp. 255-257

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

**2074** Jesus says: "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."<sup>33</sup> The fruit referred to in this saying is the holiness of a life made fruitful by union with Christ. When we believe in Jesus Christ, partake of his mysteries, and keep his commandments, the Savior himself comes to love, in us, his Father and his brethren, our Father and our brethren. His person becomes, through the Spirit, the living and interior rule of our activity. "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."<sup>34</sup>

**736** By this power of the Spirit, God's children can bear much fruit. He who has grafted us onto the true vine will make us bear "the fruit of the Spirit: ...love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."<sup>129</sup> "We live by the Spirit"; the more we renounce ourselves, the more we "walk by the Spirit."<sup>130</sup>

Through the Holy Spirit we are restored to paradise, led back to the Kingdom of heaven, and adopted as children, given confidence to call God "Father" and to share in Christ's grace, called children of light and given a share in eternal glory.<sup>131</sup>

## Questions for Reflection

1. What has been my perception of "self-realization" in the past? How do I see it now?
2. "Without me, you can do nothing." Where do I see God's love and mercy in what I have discovered in this text?
3. When I acknowledge the truth about myself in this reflection, what do I need from Mary and how can I respond?

## 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.*