

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. 2284; No. 2285, footnote 87: Cf. Mt 7:15.

www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/catechism

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S.C. Biela, *In the Arms of Mary*, third edition. (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary

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Families of Nazareth Movement – www.familiesofnazareth.us

SEPTEMBER 29, 2024~ 26TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME ~ 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	Nm 11:25-29
Responsorial Psalm	Ps 19:8, 10, 12-13, 14
Reading II	Jas 5:1-6
Gospel	Mk 9:38-43, 45, 47-48

Opening or Closing Prayer

Father of Mercy and of Love,

Thank you for the gift of reconciliation through the Redemptive Sacrifice of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Your love is more powerful than my sin. There is no evil that surpasses Your infinite mercy.

Send your Holy Spirit to convince me of my weakness so that I may live with a truth of conscience and a certainty of redemption.

Open me, Gracious Father, to the graces of being personally responsible for my sins, longing for forgiveness, and of being obedient to the call to conversion.

When I seek forgiveness, give me the courage to reveal the abyss of my misery and to accept my sins as "happy faults" so that, as Your child, I may run to Your loving embrace.

Through the help and intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy, may I learn true contrition for the wounds I have caused Her Son.

And may my continual renewal, through the grace of Your sacraments, work to revitalize the Church, so that, as One Body in Christ, we may proclaim Your dominion over all the earth.

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

*Families of Nazareth USA
Summer retreat 2008*

Spiritual Reflection

"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were put around his neck and he were thrown into the sea." Mk 9:42

In acknowledging our spiritual misery, we discover that instead of advancing on the way to sanctity, we stop or become aware of going in the opposite direction – the wide way toward perdition. We become a scandal for others. Only by ardently invoking God's mercy can we be preserved from sadness and discouragement.

According to the degree of growth in interior life, we will begin to see more clearly all the signs of our infidelities, which perhaps we previously took for granted. Even if our past sins would no longer be repeated, the feeling of dejection and discouragement can be intensified as a result of our sinfulness. By deepening the spiritual life, one's attention undergoes change: from the sins that before were easily perceived to those which, at the outset, are least important and apparently innocent. In reality they are like the evangelical "camel" (Mt 23:24). You will understand, for example, that your self-absorption and thinking in a human way are your reasons for saying "no" to God who has His own plans for you.

From a person who only minimally responds to the expectations of God, who has bestowed on him a special grace, should emerge the consciousness of great infidelity. Externally, this kind of person can appear better than others. Nevertheless, such a person can be aware that he deserves a long and severe purgatory or even condemnation. He sees that he is closed to the graces that God bestows on him and that he is focused only on himself. He sees it and recognizes that he is one of the greatest sinners. **WHY?** Because living according to **one's own** visions and dreams hinders God in realizing **His** plans. And the consequences of our impassability can be tragic because such consequences can also be extended to many people. The evil that can happen in this situation becomes greater in accordance with the degree to which we do not respond to God's plan. This awareness can be overwhelming, but at the same time can 'spur us to do something' – in order that we may recognize our evil; in order that we may cry out to Christ with greater intensity for His mercy.

When the awareness of your sinfulness begins to crush you heavily, faith in God's mercy can be particularly difficult for you. The aspiration to sanctity will appear as something completely unreal to you. Strong temptations of establishing a convenient life and adhering yourself to the spirit of the world can surface. If you lack faith in God who loves you in spite of your evil, at that point

you will begin to succumb to these temptations. But, in fact, in showing you more of your sinfulness, He wants to empower you to trust even more.

If you do not benefit from such a grace, you could easily be tempted to look for a substitute to inner peace and anything or anybody that can give you a feeling of security other than God, just to calm your dejection. Then you will begin again to live according to the spirit of this world. And your egoism will 'whisper' and suggest to you:

You have to rest and take care of yourself.

You're just a human being.

Don't be so preoccupied and 'tire yourself' so much.

On the other hand, if, in experiencing your misery, you are able to trust to the point of folly, you would not direct yourself toward the pleasures of this world. You would try all the more to adhere to Christ. And you would accept the situations that make you aware that, with your evil, you belong to the worst. You would accept them as a call to trust in God's mercy without limits.

S.C. Biela, *In the Arms of Mary*, pp.93-95

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

2284 Scandal is an attitude or behavior which leads another to do evil. The person who gives scandal becomes his neighbor's tempter. He damages virtue and integrity; he may even draw his brother into spiritual death. Scandal is a grave offense if by deed or omission another is deliberately led into a grave offense.

2285 Scandal takes on a particular gravity by reason of the authority of those who cause it or the weakness of those who are scandalized...Scandal is grave when given by those who by nature or office are obliged to teach and educate others. Jesus reproaches the scribes and Pharisees on this account: he likens them to wolves in sheep's clothing.⁸⁷

Questions for Reflection

1. What is my usual reaction when I receive the grace of recognizing the scandal of my infidelity?
2. How can I experience God's love when I discover some prideful attitudes, complacency or discouragement in my daily life?
3. Our Blessed Mother was the "lowly handmaid." How can she help me to recognize that my small efforts to become more humble can be an invitation for God to pour a flood of graces into my life?

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.