

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. 301, footnote 160 Wis 11:24-26; No. 970, footnotes 513 LG 60, 514 LG 62; www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/catechism
New American Bible © USCCB. All rights reserved. <https://bible.usccb.org/readings>
S.C.Biela, *The Two Pillars: Gratitude and Contrition* (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary Foundation, 2006). All rights reserved. – www.inthearmsofmary.org
Families of Nazareth Movement – www.familiesofnazareth.us*

December 15, 2024 ~ 3rd Sunday of Advent ~ Year C 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 Zep 3:14-18a

Responsorial Psalm Is 12:2-3, 4, 5-6

Reading II Phil 4:4-7

Gospel Lk 3:10-18

Opening or Closing Prayer

Holy Mary, full of God's presence

during the days of your life, you accepted with full humility the Father's will,
and the Devil was never capable to tie you around with his confusion.

Once with your Son you interceded for our difficulties, and,
full of kindness and patience,

you gave us the example of how to untie the knots of our life.

And by remaining forever Our Mother, you put in order, and make more clear
the ties that link us to the Lord.

Holy Mother, Mother of God and our Mother,

to you, who untie with motherly heart the knots of our life,
we pray to you to receive in your hands (name), and to free them [him/her]
of the knots and confusion with which our enemy attacks.

Through your grace, your intercession, and your example,

deliver us from all evil, Our Lady,

and untie the knots that prevent us from being united with God,
so that we, free from sin and error,

may find Him in all things,

may have our hearts placed in Him,

and may serve Him always in our brothers and sisters. Amen

Pope Francis' prayer to *Our Lady, Untier of Knots*
Families of Nazareth USA
Summer Retreat 2013

Spiritual Reflection

*The crowds asked John the Baptist,
“What then should we do?”* Lk 3:10

. . . You, and not what you do for God, are all that matters to Him. What also matters to God is that you stand on the foundation of truth, possibly in the entire truth, and that you do not cover this truth with some kind of falsity or hypocrisy, because the truth means that you have nothing, just as the prodigal son had nothing. When you have nothing, then, only then, can you receive everything. Like the prodigal son who had nothing but who received everything, such as the fine robe, the ring, and the feast symbolize, you too may receive everything when you are barefoot and naked and have nothing. Only then may God bestow upon you all of His tenderness. He may bestow this tenderness to the degree to which you want to receive it and to the degree to which the barriers that separate you from the Only Love have been demolished.

While we journey along the difficult path that involves the destruction of the barriers within us, we must not count on ourselves to accept everything that God gives us as a gift, as the grace of purification and something that is rightly due us. It is best if, like St. Juan Diego, we try to live in Mary's arms, or on her back, according to the words that she addressed to him. Do we not resemble conquered men lying on a battlefield? Do we not continually suffer many defeats in the battle against the pride of the old man in us? Do we not constantly convince ourselves that we cannot overcome our weaknesses?

You lie on the battlefield of your own spiritual struggle against the one enemy who defeats you, and you do not even have the strength to call out for help. You nurtured this sole enemy within you such that, in the end, it revealed its true claws, beat you up, and tore you to pieces. Now, following the example of St. Juan Diego, you can count only on the Mother of God and believe that she will come, stoop down to you, place you on her back and carry you. You are unable to advance toward holiness on your own because you are so wounded.

Just as she did in the case of St. Juan Diego, the Blessed Mother places you too on her back and carries you through your life as someone defeated by your own pride. While carrying you on her back, she unceasingly adores her Son, Jesus Christ, your Savior who constantly blesses both her and you whom she carries as her beloved child. You should not forget why you are being carried: you lost the fight; you could not manage on our own. Without her you would have never advanced from the point of defeat. . .

For can the one whom Our Lady of Guadalupe takes into her arms, so that he does not become lost on the difficult path to the Only Lord, live in any other way?

S.C. Biela, *The Two Pillars*, pp. 36-37,39

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

301 With creation, God does not abandon his creatures to themselves. He not only gives them being and existence, but also, and at every moment, upholds and sustains them in being, enables them to act and brings them to their final end. Recognizing this utter dependence with respect to the Creator is a source of wisdom and freedom, of joy and confidence:

For you love all things that exist, and detest none of the things that you have made; for you would not have made anything if you had hated it. How would anything have endured, if you had not willed it? Or how would anything not called forth by you have been preserved? You spare all things, for they are yours, O Lord, you who love the living.¹⁶⁰

970 "Mary's function as mother of men in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power. But the Blessed Virgin's salutary influence on men . . . flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on his mediation, depends entirely on it, and draws all its power from it."⁵¹³ "No creature could ever be counted along with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer; but just as the priesthood of Christ is shared in various ways both by his ministers and the faithful, and as the one goodness of God is radiated in different ways among his creatures, so also the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a sharing in this one source."⁵¹⁴

Questions for Reflection

1. How difficult is it for me to believe I am loved by God without works?
2. How difficult is it for me to believe the truth that I have nothing but my weaknesses to offer to God?
3. How difficult is it for me to believe Our Blessed Mother carries me and because she does, I can advance in spiritual 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.