

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. 164, footnotes 49: 2Cor 5:7; 50: 1Cor 13:12; No. 1808, footnotes 70: Ps 118:14; 71: Jn 16:33.

www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/catechism/

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Tadeusz Dajczer, *The Gift of Faith*, 4th ed. (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary

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Families of Nazareth Movement – www.familiesofnazareth.us

December 22, 2024~ 4th 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	Mi 5:1-4a
Responsorial Psalm	Ps 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19
Reading II	Heb 10:5-10
Gospel	Lk 1:39-45

Opening or Closing Prayer

We fly to thy patronage,

O Holy Mother of God;

despise not our petitions in our necessities,

but deliver us always from all dangers,

O glorious and blessed Virgin.

Amen.

Considered to be the most ancient complete prayer to Our Lady

Families of Nazareth USA
Summer Retreat 2018

Spiritual Reflection

*"Blessed are you who believed
that was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled." Lk 1:39*

Mary goes before us, leading the way on the "pilgrimage of faith," as if she were anticipating our steps. Mary is near us on our road to faith. According to conciliar thought, the Blessed Mother is pre-eminent and wholly unique in the Church, while, at the same time, she is closest to us. It could be said that we hurt the Blessed Mother when we speak only of her eminence and elevation and, by so doing, create a distance between her and us. Too much is said about her distinctiveness and too little about the fact **she is our way and this way is Christocentric**. Mary is our way in the sense that she goes before us and shows us the way of faith, for she has already experienced everything that could happen to us. Looking at her life, we should find answers to our problems.

...To love Mary means to imitate her and follow her because she is the one who goes before us, the one who is an example for our faith.

If we are surprised that God foils our plans and leads us down a different road than the one we imagined, let us recall that it was the same in the life of the Blessed Mother. Mary also thought of her sanctity, her road, her mission differently. The one who gave up motherhood was called to an exceptional and unique motherhood. This call foiled all of her plans. By responding to the Annunciation with her *yes*, Mary did not fully realize what she was agreeing to. However, that did not diminish the value of her consent, which she later confirmed with her continual *yes* throughout her life. God so loved Mary that He chose this very harsh way of treating her. We know that this is the way He treats His friends. This is the best method for allowing the shaping of a person in the image of the Son of God. . .

Faith does not remove darkness; it does just the opposite: it requires it. This truth reveals the meaning of faith. The Blessed Mother, living in faith, lived in great darkness and was therefore tested in her faith in a sometimes exceptionally hard manner. The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem was a trial of this kind. And it was in the difficult situation of this trial of faith that the child was to be born...

The next trial of faith that proved to be very difficult arose when the young Jesus remained in the temple without previously telling His parents...Why did Jesus not want to explain everything to her? She, **the Mother of God had to learn the correct way to interpret events**. She had to learn the spirituality of events. God did not make anything easier for her; everything in her life was always very difficult.

The *yes* during the Annunciation seems joyful and easy compared to the last *yes* spoken under the Cross. A person on a high level in his spiritual life is usually ready to sacrifice his own self. It is much more difficult to agree to the sufferings of those close to us, the ones we love very much. Mary, standing at the Cross, gave a double *yes*: ***let it so happen to us, to Him and to me. If my beloved Son is to suffer and be tortured, then let it be so.*** Agreeing to this was the supreme sacrifice. This *fiat* of Mary at the Cross caused her to become the Mother of the Church and the Mother of us all...If you are very upset or depressed by something, remember that you are very close to Mary whose life was so very difficult. God loved Mary in a special, exceptional way, but in her life there was so much suffering. God treats His friends in just this way.

Tadeusz Dajczer, *The Gift of Faith*, pp.115-119

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.

1808 *Fortitude* is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life. The virtue of fortitude enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions. It disposes one even to renounce and sacrifice his life in defense of a just cause. "The Lord is my strength and my song."⁷⁰ "In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."⁷¹

Questions for Reflection

1. How do I usually interpret problems, trials and suffering in my daily life?
2. What does the spirituality of events mean to me? How does it challenge me? How is God present in these events?
3. How can I attempt to entrust myself to Mary so that she may obtain from God all the graces that I need for my *fiat*?

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.