

### 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. 1262, footnote 65: Cf. Acts 2:38; Jn 3:5; No. 1266; No. 967, No. 968, footnote 511: LG 61.

[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>  
S.C. Biela, *Behold I Stand at the Door and Knock*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary Foundation, 2024). All rights reserved. – [www.inthearmsofmary.org](http://www.inthearmsofmary.org)  
Families of Nazareth Movement – [www.familiesofnazareth.us](http://www.familiesofnazareth.us)

JANUARY 12, 2025 ~ THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD ~ YEAR C  
SPIRITUAL REFLECTION ON SUNDAY'S READINGS

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

Opening Prayer

Read Decalogue

Read Scripture

Read Reflection

**Reading I** Is 42:1-4, 6-7 OR Is 40:1-5, 9-11

**Responsorial Psalm** Ps 29:1-2, 3-4, 3, 9-106 OR Ps 104:1b-2, 3-4, 24-25, 27-28, 29-30

**Reading II** Acts 10:34- 38 OR Ti 2:11-14; 3:4-7

**Gospel** Lk 3:15-16, 21-22

### Opening or Closing Prayer

**Dear Father**, great is Your Mercy.

My true vocation is intimacy with You in the Kingdom of Heaven. May the new model of righteousness Your Son has given me, "as I have done, you should also do," open me more to Your mercy and transform me into Your divine likeness.

**Dear Jesus**, holy is Your Name.

May your prayer, "that they may be one as you, Father, and I are one," become my own desire. Teach me how to build up the unity of Your Mystical Body by embracing and living out my vocation to authentic holiness and happiness.

**Dear Holy Spirit**, amazing is Your Grace.

Grant me your gifts in order to "always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks" the reason for my hope. Thank you that, through You, I can encounter Jesus daily in the Eucharist, the source of my hope, even in the situations of my life that are most difficult to understand.

**Dear Mother Mary**, source of my joy.

"Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled." As a vessel of the Holy Spirit, teach me to live the Beatitudes of your Son. Wrap me in your mantle, where I can believe in His mercy and fulfill my vocation to be salt of the earth and light of the world.

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

*Families of Nazareth USA  
Summer Retreat 2011*

## Spiritual Reflection

*And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." Lk 3:22*

Only when you cease to adore your own reflection in the pond of pride will you begin to be open to the Holy Spirit's action in you. In order to become more like God, you must turn away from your own ego and submit yourself fully to His will.

To submit to God means to live by the grace of Baptism, which gives us back our dignity as God's children and restores our likeness to our Father.

Christ's gifts of the Sacraments show us how much **God desires that we become more and more like Him**. Living by the graces of the sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Reconciliation, Matrimony or Priesthood, means to be open to God's humble knocking so that He may transform us and allow us to become more like Him. The extraordinary graces that we receive in the Sacraments can enable us to have this kind of supernatural relation to God, to another human being, and to one's self, especially with regard to the call we have received from God according to our vocation.

Receiving these graces will enable you to adore God in the most profound way, and realize your very likeness to Him. He desires to reflect His own image in the mirror of your soul.

When you stop appropriating God's gifts and His actions to yourself, you will more easily notice that Love is knocking at your door. This Love unceasingly takes care of you and becomes active in your life in more or less visible ways. Perhaps when this happens, you will daily discover anew the truth that Jesus safeguards you with the greatest care through all of your experiences. Then you will fall in love with God and you will cease to gaze at your own image,

When this happens, your concept of the need to always defend your own freedom will change. Your greatest treasure will become the imitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the humble servant of the Lord. You will be ready to defend your right to choose this concept of freedom, which means to become a servant and even a slave of the Lord. Departing from spiritual narcissism will allow you to spurn your former vision of God, the world, and yourself. You will be more open to a new vision of everything – the vision of a person who is in love with the Lord.

Surely, the old person in you will continue to resist God, affirming that you are simply enchanted by an unreal illusion. All of your faculties will entertain thoughts filled with skepticism: your mind, reason, memory, and experiences. However, your own will can reply that the real illusion is precisely a life without the folly of God's love. Lacking true faith to the point of folly signifies a compromise and, in the end,

this compromise always leads to sin and, consequently, to a deeper immersion into evil.

If you do not try to be faithful to the end, according to the example of the humble handmaid of the Lord, then you will continue to just tread water in your interior life. You will not be able to take advantage of this inconceivable grace thanks to which even your faults and your sins cannot turn you away from God.

S.C. Biela, *Behold I Stand at the Door and Knock*, pp. 60-62

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

- 1262** The different effects of Baptism are signified by the perceptible elements of the sacramental rite. Immersion in water symbolizes not only death and purification, but also regeneration and renewal. Thus the two principal effects are purification from sins and new birth in the Holy Spirit.<sup>65</sup>
- 1266** The Most Holy Trinity gives the baptized sanctifying grace, the grace of *justification*: - enabling them to believe in God, to hope in him, and to love him through the theological virtues; - giving them the power to live and act under the prompting of the Holy Spirit through the gifts of the Holy Spirit; - allowing them to grow in goodness through the moral virtues. Thus the whole organism of the Christian's supernatural life has its roots in Baptism.
- 967** By her complete adherence to the Father's will, to his Son's redemptive work, and to every prompting of the Holy Spirit, the Virgin Mary is the Church's model of faith and charity...
- 968** Her role in relation to the Church and to all humanity goes still further. "In a wholly singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope, and burning charity in the Savior's work of restoring supernatural life to souls. For this reason she is a mother to us in the order of grace."<sup>511</sup>

## Questions for Reflection

1. What does it mean for me to fall in love with God?
2. With this reflection's perspective, how can I have a new vision of God, and God's action in my life?
3. How can Mary, the humble servant of the Lord, enable me to live her loving "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.*