

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. 1458, footnotes 59: Cf. Council of Trent DS 1689, can.988 S2; **60:** Cf. *Lk* 6:36; **61:** St. Augustine, In Jo. ev. 12, 13: PL 35, 1491.

www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/catechism

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S.C. Biela, *Behold, I Stand at the Door and Knock* 2nd ed. (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary Foundation, 2024). All rights reserved. – www.inthearmsofmary.org

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February 23, 2025 ~ Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time ~ 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 1 Sm 26:2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23

Responsorial Psalm Ps 103:1-2, 3-4, 8, 10, 12-13

Reading II 1 Cor 15:45-49

Gospel Lk 6:27-38

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

*But rather, love your enemies and do good to them,
and lend expecting nothing back;
then your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High,
for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.
Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Luke 6:27-28*

Jesus Christ knocks at your door by allowing you to encounter difficult and unpleasant people. He expects that you will try to fulfill His *new commandment*. You have to remember that He is not expecting the impossible from you. When somebody's behavior, actions, views, or positions is irritating to you, you have a special opportunity to be like a child who imitates his own Father in everything

In the book, *The Imitation of Christ*, Thomas Kempis states that "It is better to avert your eyes from what distracts you from your purpose. Quietly leave each person to his own opinion and avoid contentious bickering." It is easy not to quarrel in a discussion when we see that the person with whom we are speaking is right. It is very hard, though, to leave another person with his opinion when you are convinced that the person is wrong. It would be important then to be reminded how our Almighty God treats us when we are the ones who stray away and we are in the wrong. Does He pressure us or stop loving us?

When, however, the demands of Christ seem very difficult, remember what God told St. Paul in a similar situation, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness"(2 Cor 12:9). Jesus Christ calls us to love in a real way, without any self-interest, the way He loves us...

God bestows His love on everyone, even those who persecute Him or crucify Him. If you want to imitate Him, then you too should love the people who are a source of suffering and torment for you...

If you willingly help the people who are kind and good toward you, who understand and love you, then you are not doing anything extraordinary, even if you are capable of making great sacrifices. You then act as those who do not lean on God and do not take advantage of His special power. The One Who is knocking expects something much more from you. If you invite Him to yourself in the posture of an evangelical child, and if you open up to Him the world of your difficult relationships with various persons, those whom you cannot love, He Himself will lead you with His light and **will teach you how to also love those who wound you.**

St. Thérèse writes about the extraordinary outcome of such love. She says, "It is only charity that can expand my heart." If you open the door of your heart to the humble Christ, and try to imitate Him like a child, then your heart will *grow* and without knowing it, you will become more like the One Who is Love.

It is best of we learn from our Blessed Mother, Mary, how to look at the world and how to receive the kingdom of God like a child. She perceives everything the way God does and She loves every person in the same manner as God does.

S.C.Biela, *Behold, I Stand at the Door and Knock*, pp.83-84;87-89

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

1458 Without being strictly necessary, confession of everyday faults (venial sins) is nevertheless strongly recommended by the Church.⁵⁹ Indeed the regular confession of our venial sins helps us form our conscience, fight against evil tendencies, let ourselves be healed by Christ and progress in the life of the Spirit. By receiving more frequently through this sacrament the gift of the Father's mercy, we are spurred to be merciful as he is merciful:⁶⁰

Whoever confesses his sins . . . is already working with God. God indicts your sins; if you also indict them, you are joined with God. Man and sinner are, so to speak, two realities: when you hear "man" - this is what God has made; when you hear "sinner" - this is what man himself has made. Destroy what you have made, so that God may save what he has made When you begin to abhor what you have made, it is then that your good works are beginning, since you are accusing yourself of your evil works. The beginning of good works is the confession of evil works. You do the truth and come to the light.⁶¹

Questions for Reflection

1. In my life, considering who is the difficult neighbor that I am called to love, how do I respond?
2. How have I experienced the beginning of good works by the confession of my evil works?
3. In contemplating Mary at the foot of the Cross, how can I learn from her to perceive every person as God does and to follow God's command to *be merciful as my father is merciful*?

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.