

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. 2547, footnotes 152: Cf. *Lk* 8:13-15; *Acts* 14:22; *Rom* 5:3-5; *Tim* 3:12; **153:** Cf. *Jas* 1:14-15; **154:** Cf. *Gen* 3:6; **155:** Origen, *De orat.* PG 11, 544CD; **No. 2848, footnotes 156:** *Mt* 6:21, 24; **157:** *Gal* 5:25; **158:** *1 Cor* 10:13; **No.2849, footnotes 159:** Cf. *Mt* 4:1-11; 26:36-44; **160:** *Jn* 17:11; cf. *Mk* 13:9, 23, 33-37; 14-36; *Lk* 12:35-40; **161:** Cf. *1 Cor* 16:13; *1 Col* 4:2; *1 Thess* 5:6; *1 Pet* 5:8.; **162:** *Rev* 16:15. www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/catechism

New American Bible © USCCB. All rights reserved <http://www.usccb.org/readings>
S.C. Biela, *God Alone Suffices*, 4th Ed. (Ft. Collins, CO: In the Arms of Mary Foundation, 2023). All rights reserved. – www.inthearmsofmary.org
Families of Nazareth Movement – www.familiesofnazareth.us

March 9, 2025 ~ First Sunday of Lent ~ 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	Dt 26:4-10
Responsorial Psalm	Ps 91:1-2, 10-11, 12-13, 14-15
Reading II	Rom 10:8-13
Gospel	Lk 4:1-13

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*
FNM Summer Retreat 2013
Families of Nazareth USA

Spiritual Reflection

“Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days to be tempted by the devil.” Lk 4: 1

When we are concerned about the future in an exaggerated way, we are actually being submissive to Satan in the same way as was St. Peter. After hearing from Jesus that He was going to suffer and die, St. Peter reacted decisively with opposition: “God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to you” (Mt 16:22). There was Peter standing in confrontation of the approaching suffering and death of his Master, and connecting his Master’s fate with his own suffering, he wanted to take care of it in a purely human way.

This temptation of exaggerated concern about the future inherently questions our hope that God will actually take care of us. And when we are beset with **temptations against hope, faith, or purity**, we **should not**, as St. Maximilian Mary Kolbe warned us, **fight** against them **directly**. These temptations present a glove thrown to us by Satan himself, and they are a challenge from him. The one who goes into battle with Satan determines in advance his own catastrophe, for he is trying to rely on himself, thinking that he should be stronger than the evil spirit. The question arises: what should we do?

We simply have to imagine that someone is calling us to fight, someone much stronger and full of pride. However, if you know that you are unable to defeat him by yourself, it will be most profitable for you to leave the glove behind. In medieval times, for a knight to be ignored in such a fashion was considered the **ultimate disgrace**. Similarly, Satan will also be humiliated and conquered by this kind of disregard, by your **ignoring** of this **temptation**. Otherwise, he will try to weaken and destroy you, tempting you with thoughts about your future and leading you to greater sadness, discouragement and despair.

God does not expect us to struggle with exaggerated concerns and with thoughts about our future. Oh, how happy is the one who, in the simplicity of his heart, looks at his present life situation and does not get ahead of himself. In his thoughts about the future, he sees that it does not depend on him, but lies totally in the hands of God. Moreover, the examples of various saints confirm our conviction that God’s intervention can be so powerful that even death by terrible tortures can be permeated with His presence. In this way, a person can be united with the One who shows His presence in the most tender love.

During the period of purifications, our active renunciation should be concentrated on constant questioning of the exaggerated concern that we have about our future and the future of those who are entrusted to us. When we experience the temptations to be rebellious, fearful or discouraged, we have to

readily **admit** to our enslavement to human reliances, and our lack of faith, while simultaneously calling upon God’s mercy with trust. In this way, Jesus will lean over to look upon our misery and He will take upon Himself our denudation, overcoming barriers that are insurmountable for us.

S.C. Biela, *God Alone Suffices*, pp.56-58

References from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

2847 The Holy Spirit makes us *discern* between trials, which are necessary for the growth of the inner man,¹⁵² and temptation, which leads to sin and death.¹⁵³ We must also discern between being tempted and consenting to temptation. Finally, discernment unmasks the lie of temptation, whose object appears to be good, a “delight to the eyes” and desirable,¹⁵⁴ when in reality its fruit is death God does not want to impose the good, but wants free beings. . . There is a certain usefulness to temptation. No one but God knows what our soul has received from him, not even we ourselves. But temptation reveals it in order to teach us to know ourselves, and in this way we discover our evil inclinations and are obliged to give thanks for the goods that temptation has revealed to us.¹⁵⁵

2848 “Lead us not into temptation” implies a *decision of the heart*: “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. . . No one can serve two masters.”¹⁵⁶ “If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.”¹⁵⁷ In this assent to the Holy Spirit the Father gives us strength. “No testing has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, so that you may be able to endure it.”¹⁵⁸

2849 Such a battle and such a victory become possible only through prayer. It is by his prayer that Jesus vanquishes the tempter, both at the outset of his public mission and in the ultimate struggle of his agony.¹⁵⁹ In this petition to our heavenly Father, Christ unites us to his battle and his agony. He urges us to *vigilance* of the heart in communion with his own. Vigilance is “custody of the heart,” and Jesus prayed for us to the Father: “Keep them in your name.”¹⁶⁰ The Holy Spirit constantly seeks to awaken us to keep watch.¹⁶¹ Finally, this petition takes on all its dramatic meaning in relation to the last temptation of our earthly battle; it asks for *final perseverance*. “Lo, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is he who is awake.”¹⁶²

Questions for Reflection

1. In what way does my “fall” into sin affect my heart? What is my initial inner attitude? Defiant or depressed? Resentful or repentant?
2. What is my reaction in discovering that I have untold failed opportunities for God’s love to fill me with the graces He wants to bestow on me?
3. What is the role of Mary in my life? How can I envision her bending to pick me up and rush home with her child who has fallen?

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.