

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 listen attentively 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. 214**, footnotes **27**: Ex 34:6, **28**: Ps 138:2; cf. Ps 85:11, **29**: I Jn 1:5; 4:8; **No. 1825**, footnotes **100**: Rom 5:10; **101**: Cf. Mt 5:44; Lk 10:27-37; Mk 9:37; Mt 25:40, 45; **102**: I Cor 13:4-7.

www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/catechism

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S.C. Biela, *Behold, I Stand at the Door and Knock* (Ft. Collins, CO: IAMF, 2005). All rights reserved. – www.inthearmsofmary.org

Families of Nazareth Movement – www.familiesofnazareth.us

May 18, 2025 ~ Fifth Sunday of Easter ~ 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 Acts 14:21-27

Responsorial Psalm Ps 145:8-9, 10-11, 12-13

Reading II Rev 21:1-5a

Gospel Jn 13:31-33a, 34-35

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 able to tie you around with his confusion.

Once you interceded with your Son 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*

He brought this devotion from Augsburg, Germany to Argentina Novena and history at <http://www.theholynosary.org/maryundoerknots>

Families of Nazareth USA
Summer Retreat 2013

Spiritual Reflection

"I give you a new commandment: love one another.

As I have loved you, so you also should love one another." John 13: 34

By giving us the new commandment to love one another as He has loved us, Jesus Christ wants us to become **servants and, as if, slaves of others**. A slave has the dignity of a child of God, acknowledges he has no rights, and depends on the will of his Master, the Lord, in everything. If the slave loses something because of God's will, then he accepts this loss with joy, knowing that it is an expression of the Lord's purest love **that frees him from something that was unnecessary**. This posture was fully realized by the Blessed Mother, who, by Her own example, allows us to clearly understand the new commandment of love. When Christ gives us this commandment, He is telling us to love the other person as He loves this person, so that we die to ourselves and embrace the Cross.

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. St. Therese describes this for us:

The Lord, in the Gospel, explains in what His *new commandment consists*. He says in St. Matthew: *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies... pray for those who persecute you."* No doubt, we don't have any enemies in Carmel, but there are feelings. One feels attracted to this Sister, whereas with regard to another, one would make a long detour in order to avoid meeting her. And so, without even knowing it, she becomes the subject of persecution. Well, Jesus is telling me that it is this Sister who must be loved, she must be prayed for even though her conduct would lead me to believe that she doesn't love me. . .

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. Therese 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 if 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.

Mary describes Herself as a handmaid, or servant, of the Lord. This statement has a very deep meaning. Today, a servant is not much worse off than the one who hires him. In the time of Christ, however, a significant social difference existed between a lord and his servant. Jesus told the Apostles, "I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing" (Jn 15:15) These words recall that during Christ's time the servant, like the slave, was uninformed about everything and was expected to accept this lack of knowledge. Mary resembled this type of servant precisely. The Mother of our Lord accepted Her lack of knowledge. She asked only for the things that were necessary in order to fulfill God's recommendations, in order to realize His will in fullness.

S.C. Biela, *Behold, I Stand at the Door and Knock*, pp. 87-92.

References from the Catechism of the Catholic Church

214 God, "HE WHO IS", revealed himself to Israel as the one "abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness".²⁷ These two terms express summarily the riches of the divine name. In all his works God displays, not only his kindness, goodness, grace and steadfast love, but also his trustworthiness, constancy, faithfulness and truth. "I give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness."²⁸ He is the Truth, for "God is light and in him there is no darkness"; "God is love", as the apostle John teaches.²⁹

1825 Christ died out of love for us, while we were still "enemies."¹⁰⁰ The Lord asks us to love as he does, even our *enemies*, to make ourselves the neighbor of those farthest away, and to love children and the poor as Christ himself.¹⁰¹

The Apostle Paul has given an incomparable depiction of charity: "charity is patient and kind, charity is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Charity does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Charity bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."¹⁰²

Questions for Sharing

1. Which attribute of God's Love appeals to me? Why? How do I try to live it out?
2. Which attribute of God's Love is difficult for me? Why?
3. What example of Our Blessed Mother's Love do I try to emulate?

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.