

Healing Self-Love

Self-love is a commandment Jesus has given to us

"You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Mk 12:31)

Self-love draws its healing and beatifying power from the love of God, passes it on to other people and deepens the vivid relationship with God.

The Reservoir of Self-Love

St. Bernard of Clairvaux compares self-love with a reservoir which first receives the love of God and communicates this love to the neighbours only when it overflows:

"The man who is wise, therefore, will see his life as more like a reservoir than a canal. The canal simultaneously pours out what it receives; the reservoir retains the water till it is filled.

It then discharges the overflow without loss to itself. You too must learn to await this fullness before pouring out your gifts, do not try to be more generous than God.

The reservoir imitates the source. Only when it has been filled with water will it flow to the river and become a sea. Do the same! Be filled before you pour out.

Kind and wise love is used to flowing over not flowing out. I do not want to become rich if this means that you are becoming empty. When you treat yourself badly, to whose good will you be? If you can, help me out of your fullness, if not, take care of yourself." (St Bernard of Clairvaux)

Diseases as a Consequence of a Lack of Self-Love

Neglecting the order of God's love leads to mental, spiritual and physical exhaustion and, as a consequence, brings about many diseases.

"Popular Disease" Burnout

"Burnout has meanwhile become a popular disease. Almost everyone knows this syndrome, nearly everyone has already experienced it. In today's performance society, where burnout is so largely spread, those suffering from the disease, however, often come across a lack of understanding... Here, it is not considered that burnout is not a simple exhaustion which will be overcome by a good night's sleep. Burnout is a complete exhaustion of the spiritual, physical and emotional powers." (Anja Stephan)

Other diseases, where self-rejection may be a contributory cause

- **Coronary heart disease, strokes, inflammation of the heart muscle:**
Self-rejection, self-condemnation and **hatred against oneself** is seen as a spiritual cause of occlusion of the coronary /cerebral arteries and inflammations of the heart muscle.
- **Acne, skin rashes, shingles, psoriasis:**

These skin diseases are spiritually associated with **fear of rejection resp. self-rejection**; in particular in the case of puberty acne, group pressure and the fear of “not belonging” are also decisive.

- **Autoimmune diseases like lupus erythematosus, crohn’s disease, diabetes mellitus or multiple sclerosis:**

In these diseases the body attacks itself, the immune system considers one’s own body as an enemy and attacks it because of unresolved self-rejection, self-hatred and bitterness and eventually destroys it.

- **Migrane, loss of consciousness, sleep disorders, epilepsy, memory loss, deafness, poor vision, impotence.**

In order to avoid misunderstandings in advance, it is pointed out at this place that under no circumstances may one discontinue medication prescribed by a doctor on one's own initiative without the doctor's advice.

Definition: What Is Actually “Self-Love”?

- Self-love does not equal egoism. It means the acceptance of oneself. This term is related to notions like **self-acceptance, self-respect, self-care, self-confidence** and **self-esteem**.
- Self-love understood in this spirit is separated from arrogance and narcissism. The narcissist is egocentric and pretentious, because he does not love himself and considers himself inferior.
- The difference between self-love and narcissism becomes more distinct by translating narcissism with **selfishness** or **self-indulgence**. This **enhanced self-image**, in which all weaknesses are ignored, is dependent on permanent confirmation and admiration, which is to be achieved through the self-indulgent external presentation of one’s own advantages and performances.
- In contrast to this, self-love leads to self-acceptance with all strengths and weaknesses. (Wikipedia)

What Does Jesus Mean by „Self-Denial“?

Jesus says, *“If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me”.* (Lk 9:23)

- God does not want us to deny the “good” sides of our nature (the healthy wishes and joys of our life). It is God’s wish that our deeper, true self, which He has created, may blossom undisturbed.
- We shall “deny ourselves” by looking at the sinful traits of our nature – as e.g. our indifference towards others, our hypocrisy, our tendency to judge others, our dishonesty, as well as the obvious sins: You shall not kill. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not lie.

Overview of the Healing Tasks of Self-Love

It is often a crisis (in marriage or vocation), sickness, exhaustion, powerlessness and joylessness which remind us of the lack of self-love.

Self-love takes care of itself and provides for the necessary **recovery** for the **body, the spirit (the mind) and the soul**, and thus prevents total exhaustion:

- **Physically**, it reminds us to courageously set boundaries to performance pressure and it renews the resources.
- **Emotionally**, it teaches us the right attention towards our feelings and needs and helps us to accept our strengths and weaknesses.
- **Spiritually**, it shows us our big self-esteem as beloved children of God, irrespective of our performance, our possessions and our recognition by people.

Spirit (Mind)

Health in God

Body

Soul

Self-Love Sets Boundaries to Performance Pressure (Physical Area)

In the physical area self-love takes care of itself, reminds us of the necessary boundaries. We may learn to resist the performance pressure and also cancel unnecessary appointments.

Helpful hints:

- **Restrict your work area!**
Jesus Himself restricts the scope of His Mission: *"I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."* (Mt. 15:24)
- **Recover!**
And he (Jesus) said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a lonely place, and rest a while." (Mk 6:31) - Plan necessary breaks.
- **Accept the good sides of your nature!**
God does not request us to give up the healthy wishes and joys of our life, like e.g. friendship, joy, arts, music, beauty, laughter, nature etc.
- **"Decelerate!"**
Throttle the speed of your life. Avoid stress.
- **Limit the time spent on means of communication!**
You do not have to be available at any time for everyone. Restrict unnecessary time at the PC.
- **Day of rest: Keep Sunday rest as a commandment of God (3rd commandment)!**
 - a) Work dominates our life and destroys the balance between work and rest, which God has foreseen for us.
 - b) Sunday is an anticipation of eternity. For 24 hours a week I may let work rest, recover, enjoy life and contemplate God.
 - * **Pause from work:** Let go of the delusion that you are indispensable for the course of the world.
 - * **Take rest:** Midday nap, time with the family, reading, hiking, friends etc.
 - * **Enjoy:** What gives you real joy? What does your soul good?
 - * **Time with God:** Do not take a vacation from Him. Search for Him, contemplate His love, internalise His word.

Self-Love Helps You to Accept Yourself (Area of Emotions)

Self-love teaches us the right attention to ourselves and helps us to accept our strengths and weaknesses.

1. Observe your feelings and needs in silence

- To hear the voice of our inner being and to be able to accept ourselves we need **silence**, to trace our feelings and needs, which we often repress and suppress in our everyday life.
- Self-love confirms to me that I am allowed to have **feelings** and that I am loveable, even when I confess with brutal openness to everything good, and also bad and ugly, which is situated deep below the surface of my “iceberg”...
- 90% of the mass of the **iceberg** are located beneath the surface of the sea. Only 10% are visible above the surface of the sea. This comparison is applicable to our feelings and needs:
 - a) We are only conscious of 10%, everything related to figures, data or facts.
 - b) 90% - instincts, feelings, desires, experiences, traumas – are situated in the subconscious mind and block, paralyse resp. motivate us.
- **“Tame” the feelings** by becoming conscious. Very often, feelings lose their “demonic” power at the very moment of being perceived.
 - a) **Watch** your feelings, wishes, dreams, preferences and dislikes.
 - b) **Name**, realise and control your feelings (e.g. anger, hatred, bitterness, sadness, self-doubt). Bear in mind: Feelings are morally neutral.
 - c) **Recognise** the influence of the **past** of your family of origin on the present.
 - d) Pay attention to how your **body reacts when you do so** (stomach is constricted, tension headaches, sweaty palms, tapping your feet, insomnia etc.)
 - e) Develop the skill to **clearly express** thoughts and feelings and **make a note** of them in a **diary** (ask yourself: How do I react to critical comments? Why was I so angry? What was I happy about? What could be the reason for my sadness today? Etc.).
 - f) Give your feelings, needs and motives to Jesus in prayer.

2. Search for a trusted counselor to discuss your feelings

- Two decisive powers want to prevent us from changing profoundly: our obstinate **stubbornness** and our **surroundings** which exert enormous pressure on us.
- To take off the shells of our false self we need a trusted counselor (priest, friends with a mature faith, good colleagues, therapists).
 - a) The monks have realised: Nobody is a good counselor in one’s own cause. The danger of self-deceit is big.
 - b) St. Benedict advises: Reveal your weaknesses to your superior (the spiritual counselor).
- Those who do not have a spiritual counselor should pray for one.

Self-Love Teaches True Self-Esteem (Spiritual Area)

Self-love invites us to silence and loving togetherness with God. In doing so, we discover our true self-esteem as beloved children of God and gain healthy self-confidence.

“In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.” (Is 30:15)

- **Enter the time for silence in your calendar: a time for God and you.**
 - a) “.... and all night he (Jesus) continued in prayer to God.” (Lk 6:12)
 - b) Choose a **“valuable time”** for God, no random **time slot**.

- c) Plan an hour per day, a day per month, a week per year for God.
- d) Avoid the continuous noise of TV, radio, PC etc.
- **Try to find a balance between prayer and work.**
 - a) The Rule of St. Benedict: ora et labora (pray and work).
 - b) In our life there is an imbalance between prayer and work: a little bit of prayer, and a lot of work. Here, a **healthy balance** must be achieved!
 - c) One way of finding out how strongly we have to slow down our speed is to observe how well we are **listening to God** during our manifold tasks.
 - d) **God** constantly **speaks** to us through the bible, through creation, in silence, through conflicts, broken relationships, success, failures etc.
- **Self-love makes us discover our true self-esteem.**

We experience our **true identity** from the word of God. One of them is the word which God Father speaks to Jesus at the baptism and which He addresses to each one of us at our baptism: *"This is my beloved Son (my beloved Daughter), with whom I am well pleased."* (Mt 3:17)

 - a) In other words: "You are loveable. It is good that you exist! "
 - b) Before Jesus has done anything, He receives the confirmation from God Father that He is **deeply loved for the sake of Himself**. This love is the basis of his self-understanding and the origin of how He thinks about Himself. – And the same holds true for us!
 - c) This knowledge about **God's love and acceptance**, which is rooted in a deep experience, is the only **secure foundation** to love and accept ourselves the way we are.

Three Lies of the False Self that Want to Destroy the Self-Esteem

But now the "liar" comes who envies us the happiness of the wonderful love of God. In **three powerful temptations** he offers us three masks which threaten our self-love. Each one calls to us in its own way: *"God's love is not sufficient for you! You are not loveable! You are not good enough."*

1st lie: I am valuable when I perform (performance)

The devil says, *"If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."* (Mt 4:3)

- a) Our culture asks the following questions to determine the value of a person: *What do you actually do? What is your profession? What have you achieved so far? How can you prove your usefulness?*
- b) In the **relationship with their fellow human beings** many measure their value by the success they have been able to achieve – on the workplace, in the family, at school, in the community. If they have nothing to show, they will probably increase their efforts, withdraw into themselves or into depression out of shame and blame others for their situation.
- c) In their **relationship with God** many measure their value by the number of prayers they make to "satisfy" God.

Jesus says, *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."* (Mt 4:4)

- a) Being is more important than doing: Through baptism we are beloved children of God, irrespective of how much we achieve.
- b) The truth is: You are valuable in the eyes of God irrespective of your performance! God gives you an infinite value through His word.
- c) *"Because you are precious in my eyes and honored, and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life. " (Is 43:4)*
- d) *"If the heart wanders or is distracted, bring it back to the point quite gently and replace it tenderly in its Master's presence. And even if you did nothing during the whole of your hour but bring your heart back and place it again in Our Lord's presence, though it went away every time you brought it back, your hour would be very well employed. " (St. Francis de Sales)*
- e) In retreats we may repeatedly expose ourselves to the Love of God like warming rays of sunshine and draw from His love.

*You may find some further useful quotations in the **Folder** „God's Medicine against Self-Rejection“ (in German) by Fr. Gabriel Hüger (accompanying **CD** with the respective lecture also available)*

2nd lie: I am valuable when I am popular (popularity)

The devil says, *"If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will give his angels charge of you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'"* (Mt 4:5-6)

- a) Our self-esteem experiences a flight of fancy through a **compliment** and is destroyed by **criticism**. In this way, many are dependent on what others think and speak about them: *What do I or do I not say in a conversation? Shall I say that he has hurt me?*
- b) Only because we attach such great importance to what others think about us, we live imprisoned in a life of deception and **games of masquerade**.

- There is the danger of resorting to **white lies**.

- c) **Fear of rejection** determines our life and our decisions.

- Fear makes you start to hide some things.

- Rejection by others may lead to self-rejection.

- d) In the religious field, the area of the **so-called charismatic gifts** (mediality) is tempting to become important and popular.

*You may find some further useful information on this topic in the **Brochure** "Charism or Mediality?" (in German) by Fr. Gabriel Hüger (accompanying **Double-CD** also available).*

Jesus says, *"Again it is written, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'"* (Mt 4:7)

- a) We have gained true freedom, when we no longer have to pretend to our fellow human beings that we are a different person, because we know that we are loveable and good enough.

- We are free when we base our self-esteem on Jesus (and His word) and not on the opinion of other people.

- We may courageously address changes without fear of losing face.

b) Jesus gives us a healthy self-confidence, freedom and courage to stand up for the true values, without white lies and secrets:

- "Be strong and of good courage, do not fear or be in dread of them: for it is the LORD your God who goes with you; he will not fail you or forsake you." (Dt 31:6)

- "Yes, I shall always be with you if you always remain a small child, and do not fear at all; Do not rely on creatures, not even for the slightest thing, for I do not like that. I want to have your soul all to Myself. I will strengthen your soul and give you light..." (Diary 295, Jesus to St. Faustyna Kowalska)

c) Jesus tells us: You are precious, even if your life is simple and modest, without exciting miracles or great charisms – as was the case with Mary, Mother of God!

3rd lie: I am precious, when I possess a lot (possession)

"Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." (Mt 4:8-9)

a) The devil said to Jesus: Look, what others possess. You own nothing. How can you think that you are something special? How do you want to survive? You are a nothing!

b) Our culture determines the value of a person according to these questions: *How much money do you have? Do you have a beautiful body? Do you have a comfortable life, a good education? Do you have great friends and a beautiful wife? Only possession, talent and applause provide for sufficient security! Success is measured by what one possesses.*

c) The world is full of deception. One deludes oneself that it is not possible to live without certain **pleasures, acquisitions and relationships**.

d) The **price** for wealth is high. The accumulation of possessions does not give permanent satisfaction. We need more and more to attain the same level of satisfaction.

- Unfulfilled wishes may lead to depression.

- There is the danger of addiction. One tries to repress one's suffering.

e) Some resort to magic and literally bow down to the devil to become rich (e.g. magic incantations of love, health and finance magic etc.)

Jesus says, *"You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve." (Mt 4:10)*

a) Through the vivid relationship with God (adoration, word of God, question of meaning) we obtain true, deep peace. In this joy we can do without many unnecessary things.

- "God Alone is Enough" was the motto of St. Teresa of Avila.

- St. Francis chose holy poverty as his bride.

b) Jesus exemplified how the surrender of one's will to the love of the Father is the true anchor for who I really am.

c) As a beloved child of God I may stretch out my empty hands to him. He Himself takes care of me and makes me happy.

- " For the Gentiles seek all these things ('What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear? '); But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well. " (Mt 6:32-33)

Testimony: God and I (Fr. Gabriel Hüger)

This year I could again go on a week of silent retreat. It was the best holiday week in this year with recreation for soul and body. It is probably the most beautiful expression of self-love, when one is allowed to be all alone with God. After the many ministries I had done, I was in a state of exhaustion, without joy and power. Within eight days God filled me with power and and joy again...

What helped me to get out of my condition was, among other things:

- *The strict command to **completely switch off the smartphone**. In the beginning, when I entered the room, there still was this habit of reaching for the smartphone. But how pleasant it was to be free from the stress caused by the smartphone.*
- ***Slowed down speed**. I tried to eat the food without haste and in peace. My walk in the garden was also without haste.*
- *By "**internalising**" the word of God first thing in the morning after getting up for 60 minutes the joy and the power came back.*
- *In the silence and in being alone with God I could strongly feel the **love of God** – in spite of all my mistakes, which the word of God revealed in me.*
- *In peace and quiet – while eating resp. washing the dishes – God gave me the most beautiful **impulses** and showed me, where my soul is wounded.*
- ***I wrote down everything that "surfaced"** in the silence when I contemplated the word of God. During this, many burdens already fell off me.*
- *I found great help in the **spiritual counselor**, whom I told about the hardest chunks of my life, which broke open in the silence. Here I also noticed the healing of the wounds only through expressing them.*
- *My **confession list** mainly consisted of the sins which I could associate to physical and spiritual problems.*
- *On the last day I received a **guidance** for my everyday life in the book of hours: "Take heed to yourself and to your teaching; hold to that, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers. " (1 Tim 4:16)*
- *With new vitality and joy I returned to my ministry. But also after the retreat I kept the silent time for Jesus – with His word – and the time of recovery for me as well as the processing of my feelings.*

Invitation to Renewal of the Baptismal Promises and Self-Acceptance

- I renounce satan and all his works and all his empty promises
- I renounce the spirit of self-pity, self-rejection, self-hatred, self-condemnation, negative thoughts, longing for death, white magic, praying things away, mediocrity, the so-called charismatic gifts, which do not stem from God!
- I ask forgiveness from God for having admitted these negative thoughts and I repent them with all my heart!
- I forgive myself for my failure... my sin... because God has already forgiven me in the holy confession.

- I accept myself with all my strengths, weaknesses and limitations.
- I believe in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour!
- I believe that He loves me unconditionally as His child!
- I believe that I am a unique thought of the love of God!
- I believe that God has a wonderful plan for me, now and for all eternity. Amen.

Father's Love Letter

My Child,

You may not know me, but I know everything about you. (Psalm 139:1) I know when you sit down and when you rise up. (Psalm 139:2) I am familiar with all your ways. (Psalm 139:3) Even the very hairs on your head are numbered. (Matthew 10:29-31) For you were made in my image. (Genesis 1:27) In me you live and move and have your being. (Acts 17:28) For you are my offspring. (Acts 17:28) I knew you even before you were conceived. (Jeremiah 1:4-5) I chose you when I planned creation. (Ephesians 1:11-12) You were not a mistake, for all your days are written in my book. (Psalm 139:15-16) I determined the exact time of your birth and where you would live. (Acts 17:26) You are fearfully and wonderfully made. (Psalm 139:14) I knit you together in your mother's womb. (Psalm 139:13) And brought you forth on the day you were born. (Psalm 71:6) I have been misrepresented by those who don't know me. (John 8:41-44) I am not distant and angry, but am the complete expression of love. (1 John 4:16) And it is my desire to lavish my love on you. (1 John 3:1) Simply because you are my child and I am your Father. (1 John 3:1) I offer you more than your earthly father ever could. (Matthew 7:11) For I am the perfect father. (Matthew 5:48) Every good gift that you receive comes from my hand. (James 1:17) For I am your provider and I meet all your needs. (Matthew 6:31-33) My plan for your future has always been filled with hope. (Jeremiah 29:11) Because I love you with an everlasting love. (Jeremiah 31:3) My thoughts toward you are countless as the sand on the seashore. (Psalm 139:17-18) And I rejoice over you with singing. (Zephaniah 3:17) I will never stop doing good to you. (Jeremiah 32:40) For you are my treasured possession. (Exodus 19:5) I desire to establish you with all my heart and all my soul. (Jeremiah 32:41) And I want to show you great and marvelous things. (Jeremiah 33:3) If you seek me with all your heart, you will find me. (Deuteronomy 4:29) Delight in me and I will give you the desires of your heart. (Psalm 37:4) For it is I who gave you those desires. (Philippians 2:13) I am able to do more for you than you could possibly imagine. (Ephesians 3:20) For I am your greatest encourager. (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17) I am also the Father who comforts you in all your troubles. (2 Corinthians 1:3-4) When you are brokenhearted, I am close to you. (Psalm 34:18) As a shepherd carries a lamb, I have carried you close to my heart. (Isaiah 40:11) One day I will wipe away every tear from your eyes. (Revelation 21:3-4) And I'll take away all the pain you have suffered on this earth. (Revelation 21:3-4) I am your Father, and I love you even as I love my son, Jesus. (John 17:23) For in Jesus, my love for you is revealed. (John 17:26) He is the exact representation of my being. (Hebrews 1:3) He came to demonstrate that I am for you, not against you. (Romans 8:31) And to tell you that I am not counting your sins. (2 Corinthians 5:18-19) Jesus died so that you and I could be reconciled. (2 Corinthians 5:18-19) His death was the ultimate expression of my love for you. (1 John 4:10) I gave up everything I loved that I might gain your love. (Romans 8:31-32) If you receive the gift of my son Jesus, you receive me. (1 John 2:23) And nothing will ever separate you from my love again. (Romans 8:38-39) Come home and I'll throw the biggest party heaven has ever seen. (Luke 15:7) I have always been Father, and will always be Father. (Ephesians 3:14-15) My question is... Will you be my child? (John 1:12-13) I am waiting for you. (Luke 15:11-32)

Love, Your Dad My Child, Almighty God

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You may also order the accompanying **Lecture** "Healing Self-Love" (**Audio-CD**) by Fr. Gabriel Hüger (in German) at the address given below. Listen and download free of charge on www.segenskreis.com

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CONTACT DATA & ORDER ADDRESS: 0043/(0)2673 (Monastery) – gabriel.hueger@gmail.com - www.segenskreis.com

Brüder Samariter FLUHM – Kloster Hafnerberg 13 – A-2571 Altenmarkt an der Triesting -
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