

SELF LOVE

MEVC NOV 2023



Today's meditation concludes our general theme of LOVE. As we have explored the subthemes shared earlier on the love of God Man, the love of Man for his neighbor and the love of Man for God, we can say that LOVE is the highest point of the fulfilment of "good", as God accomplished it in Jesus Christ, by handing Him over to the Cross for the salvation of Man.

We begin today's sharing by raising the question of how man can achieve such a high level of "goodness" both toward God and the neighbor, and with regard to himself? Would not be a conflict of interests or priorities between God, the neighbor and oneself? Indeed, looking after both his "own good" and that of his neighbor will, in most cases, encounter an opposite flow in the order of priorities.

To this concern, the Word gives us the trigger point conducive to the realization of such a complex "good", in that it is both introverted and extroverted. This trigger is the commandment given by the Lord Jesus Christ: "And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as YOURSELF'." (Matthew 22:39 NKJV).

This commandment implies that it is possible to "love yourself" and to love your neighbor to the same extent as you love yourself.

And love of neighbor is also the measure of our love for the LORD God, as it is written in 1 John 4:20 NKJV: "If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?"

In view of the above-mentioned biblical texts, it is possible to have love for "yourself ", for your neighbor and for God at the same time; these three orientations of love converge.

Love for "self" is not to be confused with "selfishness" or "pride", which are vices that darken the mind and soul, and silently destroy both the body and the social relationships. These vices are anything but love for "self".

But how can man really "love himself"? The psalmist answers with us when he gives thanks to God, saying, "I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well." (Psalm 139:14 NKJV). Recognizing that we are all "God's marvelous handiwork", every person should then accept himself or herself as he or she is; according to their race, size, gender, intellectual and physical aptitudes, as well as their social and national origins. Man's love for himself is to be found at three levels of his being: spirit, soul and body.

1. THE SPIRIT

To love yourself is to live with eternal life as your priority and ultimate vocation. Indeed, to live for eternal life is to have love for "yourself ", because, through an inner disposition for eternal life, we guarantee ourselves true happiness, which is to spend our earthly life in Christ and eternity with the Father (Salvation). The biblical story of poor Lazarus and the rich man should edify us, in that it better explains self-love as we prepare for our eternal rest. (Luke 16: 19-31).

That's why we're urged to look after our spiritual state, by means of Faith and prayer, and by meditating on the Word, which inclines us to acquire knowledge, frees us from evil, sanctifies us and keeps us from perdition. "Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as new-born babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious." (1 Peter 2:1-3 NKJV).

Knowledge and sanctification keep us in Jesus Christ, so that we may eternally experience the goodness of the Lord. For we are set apart to be the Church, the bride of Jesus Christ, to be presented without blemish before God.

Brethren, are we among those whom Christ will present to God?

Are we concerned by this ultimate fulfilment of our life of Faith? We are all called to bear love for ourselves, by being part of the Church. "You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 2: 5 NKJV). So let us love ourselves by preparing for our blessed eternity with the Father. Christ is coming back soon!

2. THE SOUL

The soul is the seat of our feelings and desires. The state of our soul and its desires reflect the nature and quality of what we feed it and expose it to.

Our soul should thirst for the Lord, seek Him with all our heart and make Him our delight. This is how the Lord will give us what our heart desires. In constant pursuit of God, in patience, the desires and thoughts of our heart will necessarily align with His will, and our needs will be dictated by this desire of God: "Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart." (Psalm 37:4 NKJV). "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things." (Philippians 4:8 NKJV).

This is the source of the true peace and joy that God alone gives: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (John 14:27 NKJV).

Let's get rid of our worries, anxieties and dissatisfaction, which lead us to under-appreciate what we have and what we are, to the point of immersing ourselves in negative self-

regard and persuading ourselves that the other is better than we are. These negative feelings about ourselves lead us to jealousy, hatred and similar sentiments, which destroy our soul, burdening it with suffering of all kinds, causing psychosomatic illness and personal degradation.

When scientists speak of psychological disorders, or when moralists speak of burdened consciousness, they are referring to everything that weighs on the soul and affects it negatively. In so doing, we plunge ourselves into enormous suffering, and then, when seeking to appease ourselves, we end up resorting to factitious means, which again result in mental and physical self-destruction. By factitious means, we mean drugs, alcohol, excessive carnal pleasure, blaming others and society for our suffering, and letting off steam through violence.

From all the above, we can assess our situation and say whether we love ourselves or not. Our soul is truly thirsty for God, so let us return to Him through repentance, by means of which we will be restored and rehabilitated into true happiness and tranquillity. Repenting for the peace of our souls is an act of love for ourselves.

3. THE BODY

"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" (1Corinthians 6:19 NKJV).

Indeed, the care we take of our own bodies is the measure of the love we have for ourselves. It's good to preserve our bodies from everything that causes them to fall into degradation, including sin of the flesh, envy and similar things that defile it.

God endowed man with a physical body, so that he could interact with the other elements of creation, organizing his

natural and social environment with the aim of serving his Creator during his lifetime. The flesh alone cannot achieve this purpose, which is why we have received from God the Holy Spirit, who dwells within us, and for whom the body serves as an envelope. So let's take care of the body, temple of the Holy Spirit, and ensure its hygiene, healthy diet, physical condition, respectful treatment, health and physical integrity, guarding it from everything that alters the skin and the organism in particular, and preserving it from unnatural practices and excess in all things, even in eating.

So let us walk in accordance with what the Creator has granted and permitted for our bodies, so that all our actions may be the source of our well-being and happiness. Our well-being thus depends on our readiness to carry out activities that conform to natural and social norms, and that contribute to the care and integrity of the body.

That's why we must all make the protection of the environment our moral imperative, starting by making our daily living environment healthy, orderly, well-maintained, pleasant and conducive to safety, good health, peace and rest. Human activity (domestic, urban, artistic, economic and industrial) should be attentive to these virtues, which contribute to the quality of human life.

Our administrative and territorial districts should therefore take appropriate measures to prevent and prohibit all kinds of pollution, starting simply with the management of domestic waste and daytime and night-time noise, before using the considerable resources of the State administration to combat industrial pollution, which is becoming more and more of a threat to the quality of human life.

The human body is certainly exposed to the solicitations of this world, which subjects it to the flow of multiform needs. The human body is certainly exposed to the solicitations of

f this world, which subjects it to the flow of multiform needs. However, for the sake of survival and self-love, the body should not respond to every need, whether intrinsic or extrinsic. It's a good idea to stay within the limits of what's useful for the body's own safety.

So we can conclude that: "I AM A WONDERFUL AND ADMIRABLE ARTWORK, CREATED BY GOD, THE LORD.

This is why, knowing the marvellous and sublime truth that lies in the work of creation, and in particular in the creation of Man, the enemy has inspired Man with the thought known as "Darwinism" (of Darwin), to debase the human being, and plunge his nature into degradation, by attributing to him the evolutionary origins of the ape.

So let us beware of all these things, so that we may live in "love for ourselves", without guilt and false modesty, as wonderful creatures, created in the image of God.

So let's not let ourselves be overwhelmed by feelings that plunge us into doubt about our true nature, to the point of depriving ourselves of love, because of dissatisfaction, spiritual misguidance, lust for others and self-destruction through jealousy.

Everyone should accept themselves as they are; according to their race, size, gender, intellectual and physical abilities, as well as their social and national origins.

We will always differ from one another in more ways than one; to think that what we are and what we have is worthless is a lack of love for ourselves, and this does not please God the Creator. "I said, "You are gods, And all of you are children of the Most High. But you shall die like men, And fall like one of the princes." (Psalm 82:6-7 NKJV).

The Word calls us marvelous creatures and gods, so let's be aware of these attributes that come from our Creator, and accept ourselves as God intended, for His Glory, giving Him thanks.