

If you ever feel bad about yourself, look deep within, realize that no one is perfect, neither are you, but even with all your flaws and qualities you are a unique person in the universe, which is what makes you special and loved by God.



TRAINING REFLECTION
March 2022

Self-knowledge, self-image, self-esteem and talents

Introduction

The year 2021 was rather complicated all over the world. The pandemic, which has still not ended, has forced us to make many changes in our lives, customs, values, habits and feelings. It is important at the beginning of this new year to take a break **to realize and reflect on** how we have faced these difficult times and how we are going to move forward with our lives, how we are going to continue to cope with the challenges we face and what tools we have at our disposal.

This is why we suggest that each of us, in an atmosphere of prayer, should enter into our inner self and review our life plan.

We would like the following training material to help and encourage us all. May it fill us with hope and trust in God, who loves us with an infinite love.

1. Self-knowledge

In her great work *The Interior Castle*, St. Teresa of Ávila invites us to enter the inner castle of our soul.

She says that we usually live outside the castle, believing that everything that exists is outside, and we are then missing all the beauty and grandeur of the life taking place inside. She invites us to get to know our inner self.

St. Teresa tells us about three forms of knowledge:

- Knowing God himself
- Knowing the plan that God has for each one of us, valuing our dignity and considering the gifts and talents we have received
- Becoming aware of our weakness, but seeing it through God's loving gaze



Self-knowledge consists in knowing ourselves deeply. This means knowing and understanding:

- Our qualities and flaws
- Our strengths and weaknesses
- The emotions we find manageable and those that are more difficult for us to handle
- Our personal values, interests and beliefs
- The experiences that have marked us
- Our expectations, dreams, desires and goals
- What we are afraid of and what motivates us to act

Knowing ourselves is a lifelong task. By working on it, we develop personally, our relationships are enhanced and the results of our actions improve.

In order to know ourselves we must:

- Observe ourselves
- Be in touch with our feelings, recognize them and accept them
- Be aware of our thoughts
- Analyze our automatic reactions and our behavior in general

Obstacles to knowing ourselves:

- Our own subjectivity and bias
- Justifying ourselves so as not to feel guilty
- Fear of finding something that upsets us
- Looking for answers outside of ourselves

Things that can help us to know ourselves:

- Accepting ourselves without judging, criticizing or devaluing ourselves
- Forgiving ourselves
- Not forming our self-image based on the opinions of others

Self-knowledge necessarily leads to self-esteem.

Questions to discuss in your groups:

1. In these times of pandemic, have you behaved as you would have expected or have you had to go inside yourself to reflect on your reactions and behavior?
2. What lessons do you think you learned about yourself while in lockdown? What did you learn about the people around you?



2. Self-image

Before defining self-esteem, it is necessary to define and understand what self-image is, since self-esteem is based on self-image.

Our perception of ourselves forms a mental image of who we are and how we behave. We all have a mental image of ourselves, that is, a perception and an idea of how we are both physically and psychologically.

We form this image over time, starting in our childhood. Our image of ourselves may or may not coincide with the image that others have of us, and this image may or may not coincide with reality.

The more realistic our self-image is, the more adequate our interaction with the environment around us will be. We will also be more accepting of ourselves, and have a greater capacity for personal growth and more solid self-esteem.

3. Self-esteem



"I love myself"

Self-esteem can be defined as a set of elements: what I think of myself, how I feel about these thoughts and what I do with my life having all of this in mind.

It manifests itself through the way we look at ourselves (self-image), our emotions, our behavior and our thoughts. It is a tool that shows us how our interactions with others are.

Self-esteem does not result from evaluating ourselves positively in every situation, but from observing ourselves objectively and especially from valuing and accepting our self-image.

Self-esteem is not something fixed and stable: it depends on our life situation and circumstances, and changes throughout our life.

The importance of self-esteem

When we have enough self-esteem:

- we can interact with the world in a healthy way, being confident in any situation and defending our rights without wavering.
- we are immune or not very vulnerable to personal attacks from our surroundings and will act calmly in any situation, accepting ourselves unconditionally, which will make us satisfied with our reactions and behavior.

Self-esteem is also one of the foundations of human relationships and it therefore directly affects the way we act in the world and relate to others.

Nothing in our way of thinking, feeling and acting escapes the influence of self-esteem.

A healthy self-esteem allows us to have a series of behaviors and attitudes that have beneficial effects on our health and quality of life, and it prevents illnesses such as depression or anxiety.

A person with healthy self-esteem:

- Is willing to stand up for their own rights even in the face of opposition or personal attacks.
- Has enough confidence in themselves to change their opinion or judgment if experience proves them wrong.
- Learns from the past and plans for the future, but experiences the present with great intensity.
- Is confident in their ability to solve their own problems without being discouraged by failures and difficulties, and when they really need it, is willing to ask for help from others.
- Considers themselves and feels equal to everyone else as a person, neither inferior nor superior but simply equal in dignity, and at the same time recognizes differences in specific talents, professional status or economic position.
- Recognizes that they can be interesting and valuable to others.
- Does not let themselves be manipulated.
- Recognizes and accepts in themselves different feelings and emotions, both positive and negative, and is willing to show them to others when appropriate and worthwhile to do so.
- Is able to enjoy a wide variety of activities.
- Is sensitive to the feelings and needs of others.



- Is able to make the best of the present moment, depending on their environment.

In conclusion, it is clear that having a healthy self-esteem will bring us great benefits in all aspects of our life.

Types of self-esteem

In general terms, we can distinguish between two types of self-esteem, although they are not exclusive of one another and can refer to different aspects of a person.

High self-esteem

People with high self-esteem typically have great confidence in their abilities. This enables them to make decisions, take risks and face tasks with a high expectation of success, because they see themselves in a positive light.

As our self-esteem increases, we will feel better prepared and will have a greater ability and disposition to carry out various activities. We will become more enthusiastic and will have a stronger desire to share things with others.

Low self-esteem

People with low self-esteem may feel insecure, dissatisfied and sensitive to criticism. Another characteristic of people with low self-esteem can be their difficulty to be assertive, that is, to claim their rights in an appropriate way.

Low self-esteem can result from many things, for example the value we give ourselves, the opinion we have about our personality, and our beliefs, among others.

Sometimes people with low self-esteem may try to please others in order to receive positive reinforcement and thus increase their self-esteem.

Developing and strengthening our self-esteem

In order to strengthen our self-esteem we need to:

- understand where our limitations and mistakes in how we manage our life come from, and above all work on developing new ways of being (a bit more calm, a bit more confident, a bit more daring, a bit more indifferent to others' opinions and how they see us), always taking into account our personality traits. This implies working on our relationship with ourselves at the same time as we progress in our relationship with others.
- reflect, act and repeat the process until "appreciating oneself" becomes as natural as breathing, in order to be able to address everything else: others, life, etc.

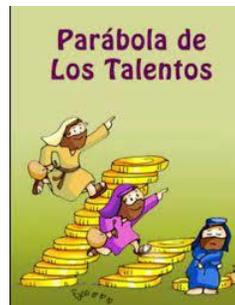


Questions to discuss in your groups:

1. Do you think your self-esteem has changed over the different stages of your life? If so, in what way?
2. Have you ever had to change anything in your life as a result of your own introspection?
3. Do you think your self-esteem has changed during the pandemic? If so, why?

4. Talents and gifts

We invite you to read the Gospel of St Matthew, Chapter 25, 14-30



“Parable of the Talents”

This parable teaches us that when we have a gift, we cannot let it wither and go to waste. Instead, we must share it by putting it at the service of others.

God gives us different gifts. It does not matter what He gives us, what matters is whether each of us has discovered all of our gifts and whether we have put them to work to share them.

The master in the parable of the talents (God) entrusts to each servant what they can manage. He does not give the same to all, nor does He require the same from them. He respects the abilities of each one. No one is forced to give more than they can, and everyone is required to give according to what they receive. He is simply content that we work with what He gives us. It would be a sin of omission not to work with what He has given us.

If we know ourselves and if we have high self-esteem, knowing that we are who we are by God’s grace, we will surely not spend our time comparing ourselves with others. Instead, we will recognize and value what each of us is and will know how to be happy and make others happy.

Let us ask the Lord to be able to listen to the words He wants to say to us at the end of our lives, with the assurance of having known our gifts and having shared them with others. **“Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things [...] Come and share your master’s happiness!” (Mt 25:21)**



Question to discuss in your groups:

What gifts do you think God has given you? Do you find there are many? Do you put them all at the service of others?

Exercise:

Make a list of your qualities and gifts and another list of your flaws and place them before the Lord. Pray that you will be able to continue to offer your qualities to your volunteer group and that He will help you to manage your flaws.

PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

“Come, Holy Spirit, and help me to look at myself with love and patience.
Teach me to discover all the good that you have sown in me.
Help me to recognize that in me there is beauty and goodness because I am the
work of a Father who loves me and has given me His Spirit.
Sometimes the memories of mistakes I have made pain me.
Help me to look at myself as Jesus looks at me, so that I may understand and
forgive myself.
Come, Holy Spirit, pour into me all your strength.
Do not allow me to be dominated by regrets, for your love always enables me to
begin again.
Come, Holy Spirit.”
Amen

Bibliography:

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