

"Broken Soul: The Path to Healing Wounds and Traumas"

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Glory to Jesus Christ. Dear friends, today I would like to share with you my reflections on the topic of "Broken Soul: The Path to Healing Wounds and Traumas". Nowadays, during the war in Ukraine this is the issue affecting each and every one of us, no matter if we are on the frontline or not. During the former wars, the frontline affected certain locations, villages for one or two days, but nowadays all of us are on the frontline because of media and social networks. That's why we all will be experiencing the wounds and we should learn the ways to heal them.

Interpersonal trauma includes everyone on earth without exception. Pain caused by others can be hard to overcome. In interpersonal relationships, we often see a lack of wise love and serious, fundamental education.

Trauma. Reconciliation. Mature Love.

Interpersonal trauma is a topic that affects everyone on earth without exception. Each of us has suffered and is suffering now in relationship with other people, and with ourselves. Every one of us also faces the victims of the offenders and the offenders themselves, many of whom suffer from painful guilt from a broken relationship and a strong fear of the future. In interpersonal relationships, we increasingly see a lack of wise love and serious, fundamental education.

This presentation consists of three parts. The first part contains introductory remarks concerning the interpersonal trauma. The second part presents steps to healing your soul wounds and how those wounds affect our past relationships. Finally, the third part sets out the rules to protect yourself from interpersonal emotional trauma.

1. Interpersonal trauma: introduction

1.1 Let's be realistic: we are all wounded

We all are wounded in a certain way. It is impossible for someone who has lived an earthly life, not to have a bad relationship and not to be offended by someone. Interpersonal trauma can differ only in their type and depth. Keep in mind that the less someone is wounded, the more vulnerable he is, even to minor offenses. On the other side, those who are abused are usually gradually “getting used” to pain and suffering in order to survive, at least physically. We aware that interpersonal trauma may include all of us. The essential difference between people is not that some are wounded and others are not, but rather how they react to their wounds.

1.2. Offender and offended in one person

The second important introductory observation is the fact that each of us, at least sometimes, hurts ourselves! And not just when another person has hurt us before. The prodigal son of the Gospel parable did not live in his home in a broken relationship. He also didn't have a bad-influenced friends. However, despite this, he distanced himself from his loving father and hurt himself. Some people offend themselves thousands of times and do not draw any conclusions from it. Others offend themselves indirectly, for example, in a way that allows themselves to be offended by other people, even though they are already adults and have the opportunity to defend themselves and do not learn from previous, negative experiences.

1.3. The lack of love that hurts us

The third introductory observation: during relationships, people cause emotional wounds on each other whenever they treat themselves or others without a sense of mature love. You don't have to bully, beat or blackmail someone to make them suffer. It is just enough not to love him or to mix up love and naivety. For example, child abuse can hurt more than physical violence. This is because, usually, no one resists caresses, as it brings pleasure to children.

1.4. Focus on emotions can be harmful

The fourth observation concerns the emotional aspect of a wounds in interpersonal relationships. Nowadays, it is easy to notice not only the tendency to set this problem just in the psychological field by narrowing it to the mental dimension, but also the tendency considering this phenomenon in the emotional dimension. Hence the tendency of many psychologists, educators, and even theologians to focus on the emotional consequences of wounds or to take these effects into account. This approach only deepens the pain from the soul wounds and puts the victim in the emotional prison of the past. Focusing on the emotional aspect of the experienced trauma is a typical example of how to deal with the problem itself, but not with the reason of the problem.

1.5. Saints: Wounded but Blessed!

The one who loves the most is the one who suffers the most. People who love are the most vulnerable not only to evil but also to lack of love. That is why the most wounded people are usually saints. The best example is Blessed Virgin Mary. None suffered as much as she did. Undoubtedly, her fear for the life of Her Only Son from birth to death on the cross made her to suffer. However, the saints are not only the most vulnerable people, but also the happiest people who, like Mary, realize that they are blessed in any situation. The attitude of the saints is a sign that

a person who maintains a mature relationship with God can be stronger than even the deepest trauma received in interpersonal relationships, because the relationship with God is stronger than all relationships with people.

2. Reconciliation as the medicine that heals interpersonal trauma

We face often two misconceptions about the interpersonal relational trauma. The first mistake is the above-mentioned tendency to set this problem just in the psychological field, which leads to focusing on feelings and re-experiencing trauma received in the past. The second mistake is moralizing, that is, when a person is given "pious" advice such as: "Forgive with all your heart and forget!", "Be a good Christian who loves enemies and who forgives all!" As well as focusing on the painful emotions of the past and trying to "heroically" get rid of the painful past through the efforts of "good will" only make a bigger problem and solve nothing. The Gospel points us to the only true medicine that heals the wounds of the past. These remedies are a mature union and reconciliation with God, with myself and with another person.

2.1. Reconciliation with God

The first condition for healing the wounded interpersonal relationships of the past is reconciliation with God. A person who has been offended by other people, or even those who have offended others or harmed themselves usually feels sorry for God not protected them from these painful feelings and experiences. That is why the first condition for being free from a painful past is realization that God does not put any crosses on his shoulders, does not make him suffer and go through various trials. God does not send any offenders to man and does not want him to suffer.

In fact, reconciliation with God is much more than confessing our sins to Him and asking for forgiveness our sins. To be reconciled with God is to confess with all

my heart, "God, you love me, and everything you send into my life you send out of your love." A person who is united with God is one who loves God above all. And to love God above all things is to trust Him above all things. It is to treat Him with the childlike gratitude and trust as a child who experiencing his parents to love him unconditionally and maturely.

To be reconciled with God is to discover and understand that He is right even when He does not listen to some of our requests and when He is not guided by our human logic or our human ideas of love and justice. To be reconciled with God is to realize that He is neither cruel nor naive. To be reconciled with Him is to discover that each of us is a prodigal child who has distanced himself from the loving Father, under the illusion of easy happiness, and that He continues to love us, certainly and wisely. God will never stop loving us. Even when we are at a great distance from Him, He comes out to meet us, to forgive us and to embrace us as a sign of merciful love. To be reconciled with God is to understand that God, who certainly loves us, does not prevent us from suffering the painful consequences of our own sins and the sins of others, so that it is under the influence of suffering that we reflect and return to Him.

2.2. Reconciliation with yourself

The result of reconciliation with God is a mature reconciliation with ourselves. However, reconciliation with ourselves is something completely different from reconciliation with God. Because reconciliation with ourselves does not mean that we recognize our rightness! On the other hand, a person, having reconciled with himself, realizes that in the past he was not only offended by other people, but he himself repeatedly offended himself. To be reconciled with yourself is to acknowledge that no one outside can protect you from the enemy you become for yourself when you turn away from God and when you stop loving.

Each of us feels sorry for ourselves in a certain way. My task is to forgive myself for hurting myself and others. I can forgive myself for allowing myself to be offended, I can come to terms with the whole story of my life. Reconciliation with myself occurs when I live in the truth about myself, when I take note of who I am and what I am. To reconcile with myself is to agree with the truth about myself. The truth is liberating - even if it hurts and concerns a lot. As a result, I do not protest against the reality around me or against the past, which, of course, I cannot change.

Reconciliation with oneself is limited by extremes. One extreme is that a person is cruel to himself/herself and does not want to forgive the mistakes of the past. The second extreme is naivety, which is that a person, although he forgives the mistakes of the past, but continues to offend himself, repeating to make the same or similar mistakes. This approach to oneself can be called mature when one perceives oneself with God's love. To reconcile with ourselves is to learn from the mistakes of the past. Or, in other words, to demand from now on to be guided by love, truth and responsibility, in order to overcome the evil in yourself and in others with good.

2.3. Reconciliation with others

Reconciliation with God and with oneself leads to reconciliation with another person. He who has painfully realized that he has sometimes hurt other people and even himself, who has felt God's merciful love and who has forgiven himself for the mistakes of the past, is able to perceive his offenders in a new way. One who has realized his own weakness also begins to understand that other people are also weak and sinful, that they often do not realize what they are doing, that they, like him, need God's mercy and human forgiveness. If someone is not able to sincerely, wholeheartedly forgive his brother or sister, it means that he has not yet believed

that God has forgiven him, and that he cannot yet forgive himself. What is reconciliation with one's neighbor? There are two possible cases. I may need to reconcile with my neighbor as his abuser or as his victim. Let's consider the first option.

If I am the offender, do I have the right to approach my victim and say, "I want to reconcile with you. Forgive me!"? No, I have no such right! If I am the offender, first of all I must fulfill such conditions that would allow the offended person to forgive me. So, if I have offended someone, I have to approach him - but not to apologize to him, but to say, "I'm sorry." "I apologize to you, wife, husband, son, daughter, mother, father, friend, acquaintance... I know that I offended you, that I caused you such harm, frustrations." The offended person has a right to know that I am aware of what offended him. My task is to describe my guilt and probably find out other sins as well - which I may not have been aware of until now. You have to admit your guilt, name it, apologize and say how you intend to correct everything - and that's it. The offender must correct the offense but must not demand forgiveness. Even I will correct my sin that I have done to someone, and the offended person, despite this, cannot or does not want to forgive me, it is his business. Even if he does not forgive me, I can still embark on the path of life and blessing, love and holiness, because I did everything I could to never return to the mistakes I made in the past.

If I am an offended person, then Jesus calls me to forgive my offender immediately. You can never take revenge. I must leave past grievances in the past. At the same time, I must become wiser not to allow myself to be offended in the future, so that from now on I can effectively protect myself from those who do not want or are not able to love. Does this mean that I should go to the offender and say to him, "I have forgiven you!"? Not at all! That would be a very naive act on

my side. In order for me to wisely tell the offender that I am ready to forgive him, he must first fulfill the conditions outlined above. To speak of forgiveness to an offender who does not intend to change is a manifestation of naivety toward the offender and a manifestation of a lack of compassion for myself.

3. Mature love as protection from those who can hurt us

If the best remedy for the wrongs we have suffered or caused in the past is reconciliation, then the best way to protect ourselves from emotional wounds here and now is mature love.

3.1. Dangerous imitations of love

If someone claims to be disappointed in love, they are usually unaware that they have confused love with something that is not love. That is why we can understand love and love maturely - and as a result protect ourselves and others from harm and emotional wounds - only when we know what not a love is. Nowadays, love is often mixed up with sexuality, with love and romantic feelings, with tolerance and perception, with "free relationships", and with naivety.

The first mistake is that the essence of love is sexual cohabitation, and that love is primarily the result of the action of urges, instincts, hormones or pheromones. This approach to love, when confused with instincts, leads to drama, because sexual desire, like any other attraction, is blind. If the essence of love was sexual cohabitation, then parents could not love their own children. Even in marriage, sexual intercourse is only an episode in a whole sea of daily tenderness for one another and daily care for one another. He who mixes up sexuality with love is ready to sacrifice not only his own conscience, spouse or family, but also his health and even his life for the sake of pleasure. Sexuality detached from love leads to violence, including rape and even death (abortion, AIDS).

The second mistake is to believe that love is feeling, and the amorousness is the highest, most intense form of love. Love is definitely more than just feeling emotions. If the essence of love was just feelings, then we could not swear to love during marriage, because feelings are changeable and unpredictable. Feelings are a part of a person, an attribute and his property. Instead, love is the position, the posture of the whole person. We also feel emotions towards animals, objects or events, and also, when we love something or are happy about something. Love is a constant, unchanging way of acting, not a wave of mood.

The third mistake is believing that love is the same as tolerance. Meanwhile, the one who is tolerant says, "Do what you want to do!", and the one who loves says, "I will help you do what leads to your true good." In the realities we live in, saying to someone, "Do what you want!" - It's like telling him: "I'm not interested in your fate and I don't care what happens to you!" Love is about caring for another person, and tolerance stems from indifference to someone's fate.

The fourth mistake is tendency to identify love with approval. To accept another person kindly is like saying to him, "Be yourself," that is, "Stay in the stage of development you have already reached." Also, no wise person will encourage a drug addict or a thief to be or remain "himself." Approval is much less than love, not only for people who are experiencing problems, but also for those who are on the pathway towards personal growth and development. Because none of us is mature enough to be able to develop further. Human development has no limits. If I love someone, I do not want to stop him in any of the phases of his development, rather, I try to help him to continue to develop. To support someone means to say to him: "Be yourself!", and to love is to say: "I will help you to become someone bigger than yourself every day." Love is an amazing force that can constantly change a person. He who loves has the courage to invite the person he loves to

grow in holiness, in God's grace and human grace, and not to approve of himself at the present stage of development.

The fifth mistake is when a person begins to believe in the myth that "free relationships" are a manifestation of true love. Meanwhile, there is no "free relationship" at all, just as there is no "dry water", no "square circle" or "blue black". People who believe in the myth of "free relationships" assure themselves that they love each other (that is, that they are united by the strongest bond possible in the universe), and at the same time claim that they can divorce at any moment, because their relationship do not oblige them to anything. Such people use internally contradictory views only to hide the painful truth that their "free relationship" is, in fact, a selfish, fruitless, and fragile relationship.

The sixth mistake is that people often confuse love with naivety. This approach to another person, which is a manifestation of naivety, has nothing to do with love. After all, love is not only the highest point of kindness, but also the culmination of wisdom. Christ devoted much time to teaching his listeners to think wisely, so that they would not confuse love with naivety. He wants us to be as simple as doves in love, but also wise as serpents (Mt 10:16).

3.2 Mature love protects

When we know exactly what love is not, it is easier for us to outline the essence of true love. So, the essence of love is the decision to take care of the development of a particular person. It is not just a "willful" decision, but a decision of the whole person, and therefore a decision that involves our physicality, sexuality, thinking, emotions, moral vulnerability, spirituality, religiosity, as well as the values and goals we are guided by. Love, as a decision to take care of another person, is manifested daily in the presence, diligence and tenderness. The most difficult task of a person who loves is to choose the right words and act in such a way that his

statements and actions are an expression of love for another person. The rule is that whether I love you depends on my posture, but how I express my love depends on your behavior. Jesus Christ has always been an example of love for us, supporting noble people, making wrong remarks, and publicly exposing offenders and Pharisees so that they would think and stop offending others.

Love is not a spontaneous position of a person, rather it requires wise thinking and decisive action. You can act under laziness or selfishness thoughtlessly and spontaneously, but you cannot love thoughtlessly or spontaneously. In order to love, you must be very reasonable. Especially when we have fallen in love with a person who does not even love himself. None of us is full of love. Each of us has a bit of naivety, weakness and selfishness. That is why we are able to love more maturely, when we are closer to God, who is the source of love.

3.3. Love like Jesus

Jesus loves everyone unconditionally and inevitably, but at the same time he shows his love to everyone in a different, unique way, because he considers the unique situation and unique behavior of a particular person. Jesus teaches us how to express love in many ways. There are five typical groups of people that Jesus meets and loves in a way that is appropriate to their behavior.

The first group is noble people. Jesus embraces such people, protects, supports, and praises them, distinguishes them from others, entrusts them with important tasks.

The second group is lost people. Jesus does not support such people, does not praise them, does not show tenderness towards them, rather, warns them and urges them to be converted: "If you do not repent, you will all perish." He loves them as well, hence warning them that their acts are not human and moral.

The third group is people who are trying to offend Jesus. Jesus is strongly defending himself against such people. Several times he did not allow himself to be pushed off the rocks near the cities where he taught and healed people. He also defended himself resolutely against the soldier who struck him during interrogation.

The fourth group are sneaky, hypocritical people, that is, in the language of the Bible, the Pharisees and scribes who knew the Scriptures. So, Jesus exposes such people in public, not face to face. He exposes sinful people alone, who, however, have good will, however they sin because of their weakness, not hypocrisy. Instead, he publicly and openly warns people against contact with these two-faced people: beware of them, because they are the serpent tribe that occupied the cathedral of Moses. These are blind people who want to turn you into blind people, and then you all fall into the abyss. Jesus exposes them out of love for them, and therefore not to condemn them clearly, but to push them to conversion.

The fifth group is exceptionally mature people who love more than others. How does Jesus show love for these extraordinary people? How He shows His love for Peter, John, or Paul. Therefore, His love is manifested in the fact that He finds them and gives them great power and trust.

So, what we should do to love as Jesus loves? First, we should gladly support noble people. Secondly, we should sincerely advise to those who are disoriented. Third, we must strongly defend ourselves against offenders. Fourth, it is necessary to publicly uncover sneaky people, mainly those who want to live at the expense of other people. Fifth, you should trust your life and destiny only to those who are able to truly love more than others.

The hardest thing is to love those who offend and do not love others. If I love a lost person, I must openly and immediately warn her even for even small mistakes. I'm not waiting for him to hurt others or himself. I make remarks to him, but I will

notice that he does not love enough. I would not be waiting for him to start sinning. Of course, the one who is lost will not always take my actions well. He will often deny his mistakes, and there's nothing you can do about it. However, I did what I could. Jesus was not accepted by others as well. Not everyone listened to Him. Not everyone accepted His teachings.

If I love a person who is hypocritical, I must publicly expose his action. In this way I will show my love for people of good will, whom this person is trying to manipulate and whom he wants to offend. Thanks to my actions, it would be harder for the offender to continue to offend others, but it will make him to change. By uncovering the cynic person, I love and protect his potential victims, as well as encourage him to reflect and convert.

If I love someone who is a noble, honest, loving, trustworthy person, I show it by trusting him myself, my loved ones, my earthly life. This most unusual form of expression of love primarily concerns the question of choosing a spouse. You should never have a relationship with someone who is unable to love. If someone wants me to love him with trust, he must first learn to love. People don't get married to save someone who is in crisis and who can't cope with his own lives. To save people in crisis, there are special therapies, correctional facilities, institutions that deal with re-education, but not marriage. Only those people who are able to love should marry true, mature, inevitably. Otherwise, they will offend another person because they will not be able to fulfill the marriage oath they took. The groom swears that he will love his bride, not just refrain from harming her.

Wounds and suffering cannot be avoided by having relationships with other people. In the face of such a point of view, we are threatened by two extreme approaches. The first extreme is the interpretation of guilt and suffering as something positive and desirable, and even as a criterion, the basis of salvation.

There are Christians who believe that only suffering is necessary for salvation, and who as a result of suffering begin to love more than God and people. The second mistake is the feeling of fear and helplessness before wounds, grievances and suffering. Meanwhile, Jesus assures us that the only criterion of salvation is love, not suffering, and that He wants His joy to be ever greater in us, not to make our cross ever heavier.

Those who learn to love by looking at Jesus Christ are the most effective in protecting themselves and others from offence (and not necessarily from the wounds). Such a person has the strength and hope he needs to cope with any wound he inflicts and so that the wounds inflicted on him never lead him to despair. A Christian is a person who looks at the Incarnate Son of God, who loves us even when we offend Him, and Who says, "... Be courageous! I have conquered the world