

# A Christian meditation on the four 'sublime' states of the Buddhist tradition and with four Taizé songs

Song            Ubi caritas et amor, ubi caritas Deus ibi est

(<http://www.taize.fr/spip.php?page=chant&song=503&lang=en> )

Reading        Loving Kindness

*Love*, without desire to possess, knowing well that in the ultimate sense there is no possession and no possessor: this is the highest *love*.

*Love*, without selecting and excluding, knowing well that to do so means to create love's own contrasts: dislike, aversion and hatred.

*Love*, embracing all beings: small and great, far and near, be it on earth, in the water or in the air.

*Love*, embracing impartially all sentient beings, and not only those who are useful, pleasing or amusing to us.

*Love*, embracing all beings, be they noble-minded or low-minded, good or evil. The noble and the good are embraced because *love* is flowing to them spontaneously. The low-minded and evil-minded are included because they are those who are most in need of *love*. In many of them the seed of goodness may have died merely because warmth was lacking for its growth, because it perished from cold in a loveless world.

Silence

Song            God is forgiveness. Dare to forgive and God will be with you. God is forgiveness. Love and do not fear.

(<http://www.taize.fr/spip.php?page=chant&song=257&lang=en> )

Reading        Compassion

The world suffers. But most men have their eyes and ears closed. They do not see the unbroken stream of tears flowing through life; they do not hear the cry of distress continually pervading the world. Their own little grief or joy bars their sight, deafens their ears. Bound by selfishness, their hearts turn stiff and narrow. Being stiff and narrow, how should they be able to strive for any higher goal, to realize that only release from selfish craving will affect their own freedom from suffering?

It is *compassion* that removes the heavy bar, opens the door to freedom, and makes the narrow heart as wide as the world. *Compassion* takes away from the heart the inert weight, the paralyzing heaviness; it gives wings to those who cling to the lowlands of self.

Through *compassion* the fact of suffering remains vividly present to our mind, even at times when we personally are free from it. It gives us the rich experience of suffering, thus strengthening us to meet it prepared, when it does befall us.

*Compassion* reconciles us to our own destiny by showing us the life of others, often much harder than ours.

Silence

Song In God alone my soul can find rest and peace, in God my peace and joy. Only in God my soul can find its rest, find its rest and peace  
(<http://www.taize.fr/spip.php?page=chant&song=468&lang=en> )

Reading Sympathetic Joy

Not only to compassion, but also to *joy with others* open your heart!

Small, indeed, is the share of happiness and joy allotted to beings! Whenever a little happiness comes to them, then you may rejoice that at least one ray of joy has pierced through the darkness of their lives, and dispelled the grey and gloomy mist that enwraps their hearts.

Your life will gain in joy by sharing the happiness of others as if it were yours. Did you never observe how in moments of happiness men's features change and become bright with joy? Did you never notice how joy rouses men to noble aspirations and deeds, exceeding their normal capacity? Did not such experience fill your own heart with joyful bliss? It is in your power to increase such experience of *sympathetic joy*, by producing happiness in others, by bringing them joy and solace.

Silence

Song            Nothing can trouble, nothing can frighten. Those who seek God shall never go wanting. God alone fills us  
(<http://www.taize.fr/spip.php?page=chant&song=483&lang=en> )

Reading        Equanimity

*Equanimity* is a perfect, unshakable balance of mind, rooted in insight.

Looking at the world around us, and looking into our own heart, we see clearly how difficult it is to attain and maintain balance of mind.

Looking into life we notice how it continually moves between contrasts: rise and fall, success and failure, loss and gain, honour and blame. We feel how our heart responds to all this with happiness and sorrow, delight and despair, disappointment and satisfaction, hope and fear. These waves of emotion carry us up and fling us down; and no sooner do we find rest, than we are in the power of a new wave again. How can we expect to get a footing on the crest of the waves? How can we erect the building of our lives in the midst of this ever restless ocean of existence, if not on the Island of Equanimity?

Silence        With time for personal prayer and the lighting of candles



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Readings derived from "The Four Sublime States: Contemplations on Love, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy and Equanimity", by Nyanaponika Thera. Access to Insight (Legacy Edition), 30

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