

Identifying Root Sin

Pride : having a disordered attachment to one's own excellence;
seeking meaning or fulfillment in one's own achievements or attributes

Vanity : having a disordered attachment to the approval of others;
seeking meaning or fulfillment in the opinions of others or being liked by others

Sensuality : have a disordered attachment to comfort;
seeking meaning or fulfillment in pleasures or seeking the path of ease

Characteristics of the Root Sin of Pride:

- thinking too highly of myself
- annoyance with those who contradict me
- anger if I don't get my way
- being judgmental toward others, putting them down
- slowness in recognizing my faults or asking for forgiveness
- irritation when others do not show appreciation to me
- rebellious reaction to serving others or anything that contradicts my will
- impatience in daily interactions
- coldness or indifference toward others and their needs, tastes, viewpoints
- stubbornness in disrupting my plan to accommodate others
- thinking I am the only one who knows what is right
- not feeling like I need God
- holding grudges against others
- being inflexible in preferences
- setting myself first before others
- centering everything (conversation, choices, etc.) on myself and my interests
- being overly opinionated and thinking others are always wrong

Virtues to foster: humility, simplicity, meekness, compassion, kindness, docility, charity, generosity, faith, patience

Characteristics of the Root Sin of Vanity:

- seeking admiration and praise from others
- shyness because of a fear of not being liked
- intense discouragement when I fail
- being two-faced to ensure being accepted
- weakness in standing up for my beliefs
- speaking harshly about people who don't like me
- stretching the truth or lying to gain the attention or affirmation of others
- always highlighting my accomplishments
- always making myself the center of attention
- severe disappointment when others don't value my views, accomplishments, etc.
- rejoicing in the failures of others due to envy or jealousy of them
- fantasizing about scenarios where I look like the hero/heroine

Virtues to foster: charity, acceptance, gratitude, detachment, poverty, simplicity, selfless service, honesty, modesty

Characteristics of the Root Sin of Sensuality:

- giving primacy to feelings
- being directed by emotions rather than the will
- laziness
- procrastination and being late or last-minute for most things
- complaining about just about anything
- desiring the latest & greatest of things
- over-attachment to personal possessions
- excessive shopping or money-spending
- shallow relationships that easily change based on feelings
- always seeking whatever is most comfortable or easiest
- daydreaming often
- overpowering curiosity
- being very impulsive
- inconstancy, never finishing what I start
- pursuing pleasures, often at a cost to self and others

Virtues to foster: self-denial, patience, long-suffering, temperance, fortitude, diligence, chastity, prudence, gratitude, religion

Combating Root Sin

1. Pray to God, asking Him to show you your Root Sin.
 2. Do a good examination of conscience.
 3. Ask some questions to stir the pot a bit:
 1. Where do my thoughts naturally tend?
 2. What keeps me from living my faith better?
 3. What makes me happy or sad?
 4. What motivates my actions?
 5. Which of my sins are the most serious, numerous, or frequent?
 6. What has the Holy Spirit called me to give up in the past?
 4. Settle on a Root Sin. (If unsure, ask a close friend/pastor/spiritual director. Or just go with pride.)
 5. Identify the most important manifestations of the Root Sin from your own life.
 6. Identify virtues, practices, and habits that will help respond to those manifestations.
 7. Establish a Rule of Life.
 1. Choose concrete means that are clearly understood and easily identified.
 2. Make sure that prayer and the sacraments have a central place.
 3. Consider a Scripture verse, Saint, encouraging quote, arrow prayer, or aspect of life of Christ or Mary to imitate.
 8. Do a daily examen on your Rule of Life.
 9. Go to Confession & Holy Communion frequently to gain the graces.
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An Example Rule of Life for Pride:

Primary Manifestations:

Road rage.
Showing my irritation at interruptions at work.
Slow to apologize to my spouse for my temper.

Virtues to foster: patience, charity, docility

Resolutions:

Praying a Hail Mary for people that upset me on the road.
Make eye contact with people and greet them when they interrupt my work.
Admit my wrong as soon as I realize it.

Scripture: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

An Example Rule of Life for Vanity:

Primary Manifestations:

Not acknowledging my faith in public.
Turning conversations to focus on myself.
Getting upset for not being thanked.

Virtues to foster: selfless service, honesty

Resolutions:

Make the sign of the cross before eating meals.
Ask a genuine question in every conversation.
Do one act of kindness each day that nobody can see.

Prayer: "This, too, for love of You, Jesus."

An Example Rule of Life for Sensuality:

Primary Manifestations:

Hitting the snooze button.
Praying only when I 'feel like it.'
Procrastination on housework projects.
Excessive book-buying habit.

Virtues to foster: diligence, self-denial, religion

Resolutions:

Hitting snooze has consequence of no coffee.
Lectio Divina for 15 minutes each morning.
No TV until 30 minutes of a housework task is done.
Limit book purchases to 3 per month.

Quote: "I want to do Thy Holy Will, not my own." (St. Gabriel Possenti)