

# **Humility**

Pride is defined as an inordinate love of one's own excellence. It is called an inordinate love because everyone is bound to love self in an ordinate or rational way, which means to love self inasmuch as and after the manner in which one is loved by God. God loves every human being that He has created; this means that God desires the happiness and salvation of each one and directs all His laws and all His providence and all His gifts and graces to these ends. A rightful love of self is really reducible to the love of God, because it means seeking what God seeks, conforming self to God's will, fulfilling God's plans in regard to one's destiny.

An inordinate love of self or of one's excellence means setting oneself against God and above God. For example, it means attributing to one's own judgment a higher value than to the wisdom of God. It means thinking that one can find and follow a better road to happiness than that made known by the all-wise God. It means rebelling against God because it is assumed that God does not know what is best for one's body and soul.

It stands to reason, therefore, that pride is in some way responsible for every deliberate sin that is ever committed. If a person sins through lust or indulgence in forbidden sense pleasure, it is fundamentally because he believes he can find some happiness in that, whereas by keeping God's law happiness could not be attained. If a person sins through malice, i.e., by deliberately breaking a law like that of hearing Mass on Sunday, it is radically because he thinks that God made a useless law. If he sins through fear of poverty or pain, then it is because he will not admit that God can take care of those who keep His law. So with every kind of sin: in some way it signifies pride, assuming that the sinner

knows more than God or can do more than God or can find greater happiness in rebellion against God than by remaining subject to His authority and by keeping His law.

For this reason it is difficult to enumerate mortal and venial sins that are sins of pride alone. Pride usually reveals itself in the breaking of some specific law that God has made. However, in order to trace the influence of pride in our lives, it is well to examine our minds for the motives of various sins, because it will quickly be found that pride is a major factor in all. Thus sins already contained in previous examinations of this series will be repeated here, with special reference to the form of pride that causes them. The list will not be exhaustive but representative of how pride works.

Of course, the only remedy for pride is humility. Humility is the fundamental virtue by which a person remembers his utter dependence on God and God's laws and God's providence, and the utter folly of any action or any judgment or any self-glorification that is contrary to the will of God.

## **I. Mortal Sins**

1. Have I considered myself capable of reading forbidden books without permission —books dealing with things contrary to my faith or destructive of morals—because I thought my judgment about these things was better than that of God and His Church, which forbids such reading?
2. Have I decided that it could do me no harm to attend non-Catholic services even though God's law and the law of His Church forbid it?

3. Have I made light of or even ridiculed certain doctrines or laws of the Catholic religion, as if I knew more than Christ or His Church?

4. Have I, with but a shallow and mediocre training in religious teaching, presumed to make quick judgments about doctrines I hardly even understood?

5. Have I shown my independence of God by missing Mass on Sunday without a reason, by eating meat on Friday, refusing to fast on days appointed?

6. Have I practically expressed the conviction that I know more than God and His Church by refusing to send my children to a Catholic school, or by saying that I do not believe a Catholic education is necessary for a Catholic child?

7. Have I drawn others into sins of impurity on the ground that God's law in this matter is old-fashioned, impossible, unimportant, or harmful?

8. Have I practiced any form of preventing conception in marriage because I maintained that God's law could not be kept, or, if kept, would result in too much hardship?

9. Have I refused to forgive someone who wronged me because I considered my honor a more valuable thing than that of God, who forgave His enemies and commanded me to forgive mine? 10. Have I slandered others because I thought revenge against them was necessary for my honor even though it is forbidden by God?

11. Have I used unjust methods in business because I deemed it more important for me to make money and "to get ahead" than to be obedient to God?

12. Have I used sinful means to attain social or political power because I would rather be above my fellow-human beings than subject to God?

13. Have I rebelled against superiors and the serious commands they gave because I thought my knowledge and dignity freed me from the necessity of obedience?

14. Have I failed to confess certain mortal sins I had committed because I said they were "my own affair," that "they were no business of the priest," that "I could get along without God's forgiveness"?

15. Have I maintained either in word or action, that it is unnecessary for a man to pray?

## **II. Venial Sins**

1. Have I been guilty of the form of pride called vanity, by considering myself more intelligent, more learned, more handsome, even more charitable than others?

2. Have I bragged about my accomplishments, my virtues, my abilities?

3. Have I given in to anger against others because I thought myself better than they were, and that they should know better than to cross me?

4. Have I shown my pride in the form of sensitiveness, resentment, pouting, and peevishness?

5. Have I talked about the faults of others, as if to say: "I have no faults at all"?

6. Have I complained about God's providence in permitting me certain trials, as if I were deserving of better treatment from Him?

7. Have I looked down on others who were less wealthy, less cultured, less learned, less prominent, less gifted than I?

8. Have I been too proud to take second place in any work or activity, withdrawing from it or hindering it because I could not be first?

9. Have I shown my pride in constant disobedience to my superiors in small things, or by stubbornness and disrespectful language to those who had a right to command me?

10. Have I neglected daily prayer as if I were strong enough and good enough to get along without God's help?