

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We often confuse the vice of pride with arrogance, bragging or vanity. These are really just outward expressions of pride—and rather shallow expressions at that. Real pride is a much deeper root in our lives.

Pride is best defined as the complete and total conviction that you are right. Other people are always wrong. They cannot be right because YOU are always right.

I was speaking on this topic once and a sincere woman in the audience was troubled by my definition. She said, “But Father, we Catholics ARE right aren’t we?” I answered that we can have confidence in the right teaching of the Catholic Church, and it is liberating to uphold the true teaching of the church, because we can therefore avoid the pride and self righteousness of insisting that WE are right. In other words, my own opinions don’t matter. I don’t have to be right all the time because the church is the source of right teaching not me.

The insistence that I am always right is the distortion of this right relationship to the truth.

The wise teachers say Pride is the root of all the other deadly sins and it doesn’t take much thought to see why: Pride leads to gluttony because my unrestrained appetites are always right. Pride leads to greed because my unrestrained desire for money and material possessions is always right. Pride leads to lust because my unrestrained sexual impulses are always right and good. Pride leads to sloth because my desire to do my own thing rather than my duty is always right. Pride leads to envy because I am better than the other person, and pride leads to wrath because I need to destroy that other person who (through their own pride) thinks they are right.

The virtue that counters pride is humility. Humility is not being a worm or a doormat, but simply becoming the person God created us to be. St. Therese of Lisieux teaches that true humility recognizes in ourselves not only our weakness, but also our gifts and strengths, and realizes both come from God, rely on God, and one day return to God.

Your Pastor,
Fr. Longenecker