

The Mother of All Vices, Part Two (Pride and Arrogance)

By Metropolitan Saba (Isper)

The danger of arrogance is that it is a snake with many heads. Each time one head is cut off, another one grows. Arrogance is a disease that creeps stealthily into everything, just like the sunlight flows quietly everywhere. If I fast, I will brag about my fasting. If I do a good deed, I will praise myself and tell others what I did to receive praise. Sometimes I may remain silent during a discussion, not out of humility or to be attentive, but rather to draw attention to myself with the aim that others might urge me to speak!

Inferiority complexes fuel pride. Persons in need of attention, affection and care seek them in the wrong sources. They tend to prove themselves and accentuate their presence by all possible means. This tendency may go against norms and standards to attract attention. Aren't "trends" of fashion, beautification and changing one's appearance – to have the "look" or become eye-catchers – all self-affirmations of one's existence and a hidden cry that says, "I am here"? Don't some people distort their appearance to attract attention, even if in a negative way? What is the purpose of the dreadfulness we sometimes see in fashions?

Pride begins when complete arrogance grows to disdain one's neighbor, yet brazenly boasts and praises oneself. It avoids any criticism or rebuke and refuses to hear what is not self-pleasing. It is fulfilled by rejecting God and His help, and by being sufficed with one's self and abilities, thus imitating the demons.

The more pride is rooted in us, the more spiritual and psychological our illnesses become. Our need for comfort and peace becomes more pressing.

We fight pride and arrogance by remembering our own sins, shortcomings and defects. Examine your conscience daily to realize your imperfection. Accept comments from those who love you and review yourself when you receive harsh criticism or rebuke from dear ones. Nothing promotes our pride as much as forgetting our own shortcomings and sins.

Compare yourself with those who are better than you or with those who preceded you on the path of virtue. Befriend the saints to know that the road ahead of you

is still long. Pay attention to anger as a clear sign of pride. Affirm yourself in acts of love instead of arrogance and haughtiness.

Learn from nature. Trees with abundant fruit are bent to the ground, while fruitless trees rise toward the sky. The low-lying land receives rivers and streams to become fertile, fruitful and yield generously.

Produce virtues and good deeds to eliminate the inferiority complex in you. Know yourself and admit your faults so that you can move comfortably towards correcting them. Reconcile with your past so that you can see things clearly in the light of reality and can advance humanly and spiritually. Let go of your complexities by practicing acts of love. Compare your situation, from time to time, with those who are less fortunate than you so that you can learn gratitude and contentment.

Live with the gospel and examine yourself in the light of its commandments. You will then uncover the number of vices nesting within you.

Hold yourself accountable and make Christ your example, then you will be able to let go of pride, and instead love humility and find the peace you seek.