





The following is an excerpt from a *Navigating the Interior Life* by Dan Burke

As Lagrange rightly counsels, it is wise to accept the observations of our spiritual director or trusted friend. If our first instinct is to reject their perspective, we might find upon a second and honest look that they are right and our reaction is a self-protection mechanism that needs to be overcome. Of all the exercises in this book, the admonition for external input is a strong one. This can't be over-emphasized because the human person has an infinite capacity for self-deception.

Root Sins and Their Manifestations

The following is a list of three root sins and some of their most common manifestations provided by Father John Bartunek. We have also included several warm-up questions to get you thinking in the right direction. This process should be handled with a great deal of prayer and simplicity.

First, just as with the previous exercises, be sure that you are in a quiet place (most preferably with Christ in adoration).

Second, pray and ask the Holy Spirit to give you insight and wisdom and ensure that you sit in silence before the Lord for a few moments before you begin. Be careful not to get caught up in the wording of the questions or examples and to avoid any tendency to split hairs. If you don't understand a particular statement or question, just move on.

Also take caution to avoid any concern over less than perfect distinction between root sins. The human heart rarely works in perfectly clear distinction of vice and virtue. The goal of this exercise is to be approximately right versus precisely wrong. Because of our fallen human nature, all three root sins are present in all of us, but one usually predominates. Identifying that one is the goal of this exercise.

Begin your exercise with one of these prayers:

Lord, help me to see the obstacles in me that get in the way of my growth in love and service of you and others. Help me to see the things that I have chosen that keep me from you. Help me to see the things that I may have not deliberately chosen that keep me from you. Help me to be honest with myself and see clearly where you desire to set me free and then help me to be courageous and ruthless in rooting out the darkness and allowing your light to heal me and draw me firmly onto the path of life. Amen.

Oh blessed Trinity, help me know my deeds and myself without deception or duplicity. Save me, dear God, from falsehood and pretension, not only in the eyes of others but also to the depths of my soul. I am weak and faulty. Make me grow strong, holy, and honest with pure intention. I ask with grace to know the clarity of how I sinned, how I failed you and others. Most particularly I beg to know the roots and reasons and sources of my sins to begin to see myself as I really am. To acknowledge the deep flaws and weaknesses of character that lie under the surface of my behavior. What kind of person am I? Oh God, tell me, tell me unsparingly, I wish to listen to you with all humility. Help me be led by you to live a better and more holy life. Lord, help me to be completely sorry once again for all the ugly, hateful, and unspeakable past evils of my life. You

and I know what the wretched evil has been. Make me sorrier for it than I have ever been before. Come, O Holy Spirit, fill my mind with light and my heart with honesty. Immaculate mother of Christ and honest Saint Joseph, please pray for me and help me. Amen.

Next, prayerfully and slowly review your warm-up questions (provided below). Write down your brief reflections on each. Then, begin your review of the root sin manifestations. If you have seen any of the manifestations in yourself, simply check them off upon your first pass through.

Complete your first pass quickly. Check the manifestations even if they ring only true in the slightest sense.

Then, once you have completed your first pass, stop and pray again. Sit in silence again for a time. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you.

Then take a second turn back through the warm-up questions and the checklist. This time, work more slowly through the checklist and put a star next to those symptoms that most frequently appear in your life.

You should begin to notice more stars or checkmarks appearing in one of the three root sin categories. This is the place to begin your next battle against sin in your life.

Be encouraged! The Holy Spirit through this exercise is leading you into a new phase of progress and growth.

Root Sin Evaluation Warm-Up Questions:

1. To what do my thoughts naturally attend? What are the preoccupations of my heart? What keeps me up at night? Where do my thoughts and desires spontaneously take me when I am alone or without distraction?
2. What is generally the cause or source of my sadness, my anxiety, my frustration, my lack of peace, my joy, or my pleasure?
3. When I have knowingly sinned or disobeyed God, what was the sin or what was my motivation to sin? What are the patterns of sin that show up regularly in confession? Is there a sin or an issue that I regularly bring to confession?
4. If and when I have resisted or avoided God in any way, how have I done so? What was at the bottom of my motivation? Why did I do it? What temporal benefit did I gain from the resistance or avoidance?

Root Sin of Pride

Pride: Excessive love of one's own excellence or desired excellence. Pride manifests itself when we seek our self-worth and security in our own abilities, traits, or strengths.

1st review: Move quickly and assess by instinct. If you hesitate, go with your first instinct.

2nd review: Review items checked in Sometimes or Frequently categories. Determine manifestations that require attention and identify them in the Focus column with a check mark.

Never	Sometimes	Frequently	Focus	Manifestations of the Root Sin of Pride
				Too high an opinion of myself or an elevated concept of myself
				Annoyance with those who contradict me or question what I say
				Inability to submit to those who I judge as less competent or less spiritual than I am
				Refusing or resisting assent to others without a satisfactory explanation
				Anger if I don't get my way or am not taken into account
				Easily judgmental, putting others down, gossiping about them
				Slow to recognize or acknowledge my own mistakes or weaknesses
				Slow to see when I hurt others and inability to seek and give forgiveness
				Frustration or anger when others don't thank me for favors or work that I do
				Unwillingness to serve, rebellion against what I don't like or agree with
				Impatience, distance, brusqueness in my daily contact with others
				Thinking I am the only one who knows how to do things right
				Unwillingness to let others help or advise me
				Inflated ideas of my own intelligence and understanding
				Dismissing what I do not understand or what others see differently
				Not feeling a need for God, even though I do say prayers
				Nursing grudges, even in small matters
				Never taking orders or bristling when orders are given to me
				Inflexible in preferences or perspective
				Always putting myself and my things first
				Indifference towards others and their needs, never putting myself out for them.
				Centering everything (conversation, choices, recreation, etc.) on myself and my likes
				Calculating in my relationship with God and others

Root Sin of Vanity

Vanity: Excessive concern for and seeking our security in how we are perceived (what others think about us).

1st review: Move quickly and assess by instinct. If you hesitate, go with your first instinct.

2nd review: Review items checked in Sometimes or Frequently categories. Determine manifestations that require attention and identify them in the Focus column with a check mark.

Never	Sometimes	Frequently	Focus	Manifestations of the Root Sin of Vanity
				Always seeking admiration and praise, worrying about not getting it
				Excessive concern about physical appearance
				Dedicating excessive time to 'primping' one's person or possessions
				Hoping 'I am the best' and finding ways to get others to think so
				Being guided by the opinions of others rather than principle
				Some types of shyness out of fear of not being liked/accepted by others
				Sacrificing principles in order to fit in
				Placing too high a premium on popularity and acceptance
				Easily discouraged at my failures
				Hypocrisy or two-facedness in order to be accepted
				Taking pleasure in listening to gossip
				Breaking confidences
				Stretching the truth or outright lying to be admired or to hide shortcomings
				Severe disappointment when others don't appreciate my ideas or possessions
				Always wanting to be the center of attention, at times stretching the truth or lying outright, or being uncharitable in my words in order to achieve this

Root Sin of Sensuality

Sensuality: Seeking our securities and self-worth in possessions, comfort, or the avoidance of discomfort (real or perceived).

1st review: Move quickly and assess by instinct. If you hesitate, go with your first instinct.

2nd review: Review items checked in Sometimes or Frequently categories. Determine manifestations that require attention and identify them in the Focus column with a check mark.

Never	Sometimes	Frequently	Focus	Manifestations of the Root Sin of Sensuality
				Laziness
				Always seeking comfort, that which requires the least effort
				Not going the extra mile for others
				Procrastination, last minute in everything
				Shoddiness, complaining, excessively affected by minor discomforts
				Inability to sacrifice
				Not doing my part at home
				Always expecting everyone else to serve me
				Behavior and decisions ruled by my feelings and moods instead of my principles
				Daydreaming a lot with self at the center
				Unable to control my thoughts when they attract me, even when they are not good
				Doing or partaking in only what I enjoy (food, drink, work, etc.)
				Allowing what I enjoy or prefer to push out what I should do
				Uncontrolled curiosity, wanting to see/experience everything
				Senses and impulses overrule what I know is right and wrong
				Acting out feelings (frustrations, desires, etc.) with no regard for God or others
				Only working with those I like, being easily hurt
				Fickleness and inconsistency
				Unable to stay on track without constant supervision
				Can never finish what I start