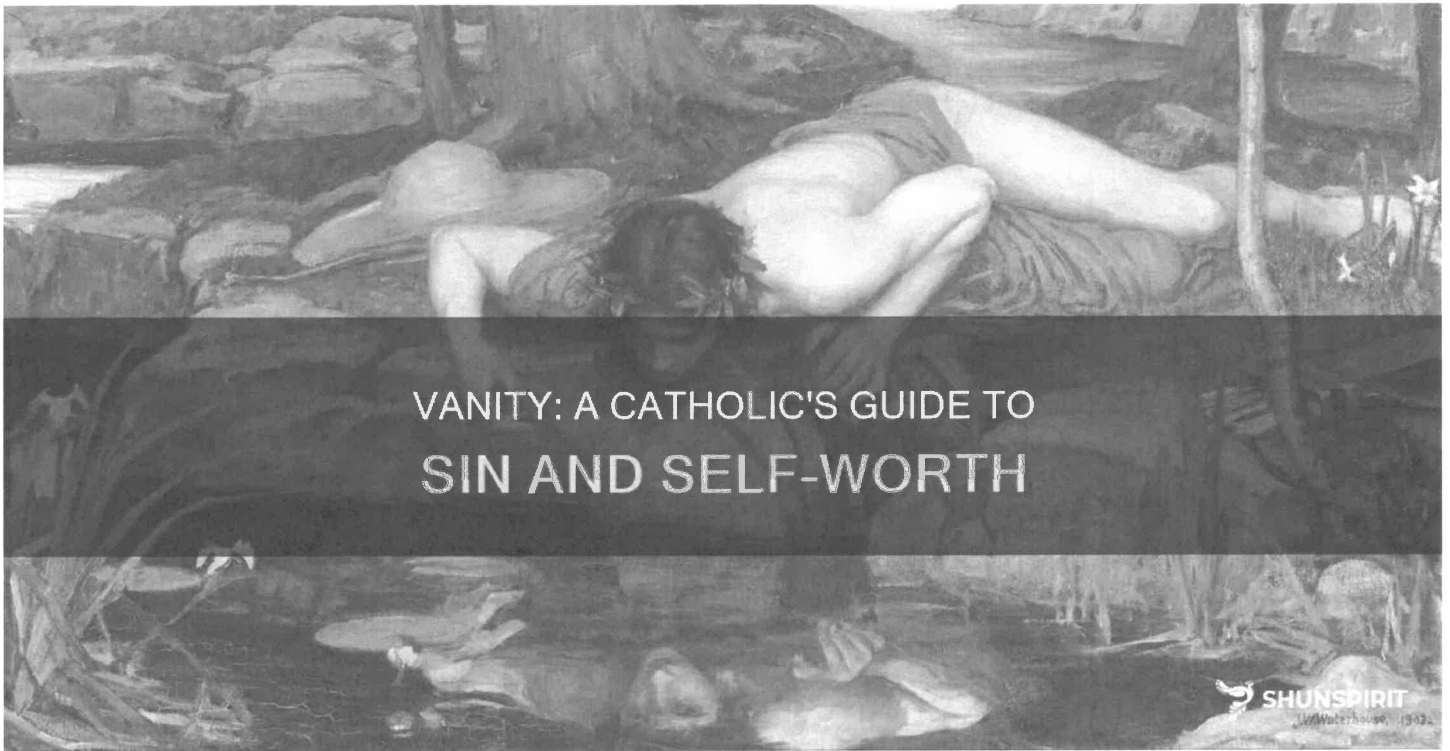




## VANITY: A CATHOLIC'S GUIDE TO SIN AND SELF-WORTH

Vanity is considered a sin in the Catholic faith, counted among the seven deadly sins in some lists. It is often associated with pride, another of the deadly sins, and is regarded as a more specific form of it. While pride is the inordinate desire for excellence, vanity is the inordinate desire for external glory and the esteem of others. It is characterized by an excessive focus on one's appearance or achievements and a craving for the praise and admiration of others. This can lead to a self-idolatry that replaces God and family.

The Catholic Church teaches that vanity is a venial sin, which becomes a mortal sin when it severely harms one's family or makes it impossible to pay debts incurred to maintain one's vanity, or when it is in serious opposition to the moral law.

### **Vanity is a venial sin, but can become a mortal sin**

Vanity is often included in lists of the seven deadly sins, but it is considered a venial sin in Catholic theology. Venial sins are those that are less serious in nature, and they do not sever a person's relationship with God. However, vanity can become a mortal sin if it leads to severe consequences.

Vanity is defined as an excessive desire for the admiration, recognition, and love of others. It is often associated with an exaggerated focus on external appearances and material possessions, such as fashion, wealth, or power. While vanity stems from pride, it is distinct in that it primarily seeks to showcase one's excellence to others. This can lead to deceitfulness, hypocrisy, and a disregard for moral law.

The Catholic Church teaches that vanity is a sin that can lead to a person placing the esteem of others above God. This can result in a person becoming enslaved to the approval of others, chasing after empty glory, and neglecting their spiritual well-being. Vanity can also lead to other sins, such as gossiping, boasting, and lying.

To combat vanity, one can practice purity of intention by doing good deeds for God rather than for human praise. Cultivating a love for Christ in others and admitting one's mistakes can also help to overcome vanity. Additionally, the virtue of modesty can counter vanity by promoting proper decorum and discouraging self-promotion.

While vanity is a venial sin, it can become a mortal sin if it leads to serious scandals or severely harms one's family. For example, if a person becomes so vain that they can no longer pay their debts or oppose serious moral laws, their vanity has crossed into mortal sin territory.

### **Vanity is an inordinate desire for external glory**

Vanity is often included within the deadly sin of pride, but some scholars have kept it separate due to its differences from pride's lust for power and dominion. Vanity is an excessive desire to be loved, admired, or recognized by others. This can lead to a self-idolatry that replaces God and family.

The English word "vanity" is frequently used to mean "futility" in the Bible, but this is not what is intended in the original lists of the deadly sins. Instead, the scholars who compiled these lists meant "vainglory"—a belief that one deserves to be admired because of one's perceived superior beauty, status, or talent. This is translated in the New Testament Greek as "kenodoxia", or "empty glory".

Vanity is attributed to shams, which lack substance and are deceitful (like human praise); or to things without solidity and permanence (such as physical beauty); or to means that fail in their purpose (such as vaunting one's own reputation). It is an inflated pride and, as such, is considered a venial sin.

Vanity can also be understood as the outward manifestation of pride's interior rot. It is not wrong to desire glory, but vanity is the redirection of this good desire to empty things. It leads us to desire the wrong kind of glory (e.g. mere human praise) or to desire it wrongly (e.g. when we do not deserve it). The Greek word for "vanity" literally means "empty glory". For that is precisely what the vain person does: they hanker after praise and glory that is passing and therefore empty.

### **Vanity is an inflated pride**

Vanity is often associated with the sin of pride, and indeed, the two are similar. Pride is the "inordinate desire for excellence", and vanity is considered an outward expression of pride. Vanity is an inflated pride, an excessive desire to be loved, admired, or recognized by others.

Vanity is a venial sin, but it can become a mortal sin when it harms one's family or makes it impossible for the vain person to pay their debts, or when it is intended to seriously oppose moral law.

A vain person seeks praise and may go to great lengths to obtain it. They attach exaggerated importance to external appearances and superficial details, such as fashion, wealth, or power. They seek empty praise and glory that is passing and therefore empty. This can lead to a self-idolatry that replaces God and family.

The antidote to vanity is humility, which is an honest estimation of oneself, in accord with the truth. A humble person desires excellence but with a realistic understanding of their limitations and an acknowledgment of their need for divine assistance.

