

Scrupulous ANONYMOUS

PUBLISHED EACH MONTH BY THE REDEMPTORISTS

May 2010
Vol. 47, No. 5



Scrupulous Anonymous
One Liguori Drive
Liguori, MO 63057-9999

Spring Awakening

by Thomas M. Santa, C.Ss.R.

At home in the desert southwest of the United States, I'm more and more attuned to the diversity of the beauty and vitality that surround me. It would be easy to take for granted, so I make a real effort to observe the gift of God's creation.

Most people who have little or no direct experience of the Southwest think our geography is uneventful. It's true that we enjoy blue skies most of the year and that inclement weather is mostly something we watch on the Weather Channel, but we do have four distinct seasons.

WISDOM OF NATURE

Spring speaks dramatically of new life. The flowers bloom. The saguaro cactus buds, and then the fruit appears. We see newborn wildlife everywhere.

When I focus my attention on the new life that surrounds me, I learn many lessons that are valuable to my spiritual life and journey. For example, if the little desert wren is patient, the larger birds that flock to the bird feeder will knock more than enough seed to the ground, where the wren can easily devour it. If the wren is impatient and insists on competing with the larger birds on the perches of the bird feeder, it will go home hungry and bruised. It can chirp loudly, ruffle its wings, and make all kinds of fuss, but it has no effect.

When spring arrives, larger wildlife species like javelinas return to foraging on the desert floor. They descend from the higher heights, where the rain and the moisture are more abundant in the winter, and return to their normal routines and habits.

The desert wrens and the javelinas remind me of the wisdom of living *with* natural rhythms instead of trying to establish personal rhythms and routines that go too much against the natural flow of life. Life's challenges are plentiful enough without our creating even more. A more relaxed and accepting attitude is respectful of the spiritual path and creative Spirit of God.

CONSISTENT PERSISTENCE

The desert woodpeckers are busy pecking cacti and the occasional tree in search of food. They also peck away at the steel flashing on the rectory roof as they search for a mate. Female woodpeckers find the loudest males the most attractive and so, bless their little hearts, the male woodpeckers call attention to themselves.

Their persistence and dedication remind me of the need for daily practice and discipline in my own spiritual practices. The routine of liturgy, ritual, and meditation focuses my attention. It lets me more easily observe and be grateful for the manifestation of the creative spirit that surrounds me.

If I was not persistent in my spiritual practices, I'd probably remain ignorant of the smallest but very powerful manifestations of God's grace: the blessings of his care and concern for his people.

The spring rain that loosens the parched desert earth and settles the dust reminds me of God's abundant, sanctifying grace. Only through the power of God's grace are we able to "live and move and have our being," as sacred Scripture reminds us in Acts of the Apostles 17:28.

Nothing is required of me to receive this gift of grace, but somehow it seems all the more powerful when I try to develop an attitude that recognizes it as a true blessing. I try to grow daily in this gratitude, slowly learning to also be grateful for the other manifestations of God's gifts to me. Knowing that God cares for me in this way helps me live in anticipation

of God's special blessings and graces in the areas of my life where I am most in need of his power and love.

AWARENESS OF GOD'S GRACE

People with scrupulosity may find it difficult to see God's grace. It may seem that everyone but us is receiving God's grace, and often the feeling that bubbles to the surface isn't gratitude for life but instead guilt, anxiety, loneliness, and even abandonment.

But even with these feelings, every member of Scrupulous Anonymous can grow in awareness and appreciation of God's manifold grace—we can each have our own spring awakening.

Imagine you're the smallest, most vulnerable of the desert creatures—the smallest hummingbird, or mouse, or even a slow-moving, frightening tarantula. Do you think, even for a moment, that these most vulnerable creatures of God are somehow deprived of God's grace? Is God's grace given only to the strong, the perfect, the good?

I think not. I believe the vulnerability, the helplessness, and the feeling of inadequacy make it all the more probable that God's grace is being poured out into us. I can't imagine even for one moment how it could be otherwise.

Perhaps our prayer might be to slowly grow each day in personal awareness of the grace God gives us. Perhaps we might pray that despite the strong feelings, the distractions, the weariness of the struggle—whatever makes life difficult—God will break through and help us see. Perhaps we might pray that this spring God will awaken in us at least the smallest seed of awareness that we are loved, cared for and, most of all, blessed.



IN THE PRESENCE

The following is adapted from *In the Presence: The Spirituality of Eucharistic Adoration*, by Sr. Joan Ridley, OSB (Liguori Publications, 2010).

A woman walked into a church and wondered what was going on. In silence, fifteen or twenty people were sitting or kneeling throughout the body of the church. Several looked college age, some elderly. Several were black and several Asian. One person was kneeling in the aisle up front. There was no service, but something had their attention. What was it? Then she noticed on the altar the large white host in a gold frame, positioned over a chalice. Those who were praying demonstrated that there was more here than met the eye. She was told this was adoration of Christ in the Eucharist.

Indeed, there *is* more here than meets the eye. When we sit in silence in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, we are being gazed upon by the Lord. This is true every moment of our lives, but in church or chapel we have *intentionality* in gazing at the Lord. That’s why we’re there. It’s an experience of adoration. We don’t have to be rationally aware of this reality. It doesn’t depend on our mind so much as our heart.

Adoration is our fundamental stance before God, the essential act of relating ourselves to the Absolute. We worship and adore God alone. In Jesus, God became

human. We adore him in the sacrament of his Body and Blood. (See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2096–2097 and 2628.)

The earliest scriptural allusion to God dwelling with us might be the concept of the *shekhinah*, wherein God’s presence remained with the people. In biblical Hebrew, *shekhinah* is used to denote the dwelling or settling presence of God—especially in the Temple in Jerusalem—and also God’s presence, which traveled with the people (Exodus 40:38—cloud by day, fire by night; see Leviticus 9:23 and Numbers 14:10). This goes very far back in religious history—these early instances of God “dwelling” with the people were 1,500 to 2,000 years before Christ.

In Roman Catholic tradition, we reserve the Blessed Sacrament in a tabernacle. The English word *tabernacle* is derived from the Latin word *tabernaculum*, meaning “tent, hut, booth.” The Hebrew word for tabernacle, *mishcan*, is also used in the sense of dwelling place, as in Psalm 132:5: “Till I find a home for the LORD, a dwelling for the Mighty One of Jacob.”

God is everywhere, yet specific holy places are important—places where God’s extended or universal presence in all creation becomes perceptible to us. The tabernacle is a point of permanent contact with the Sacred.



SCRUPULOUS ANONYMOUS MAILBOX

One Liguori Drive • Liguori, MO 63057-9999

Q *How do I start an SA support group?*

A The SA membership as envisioned so many years ago by Father Thomas Tobin, C.Ss.R., remains consistently anonymous. There are no meetings or groups. The only contact between members happens at retreats and in the time we devote to each other in prayer.

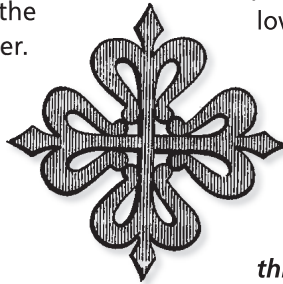
That said, it may prove valuable for people with scrupulosity to have a relationship with others who have it. A gathering of an obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) support group might be a good place to start such a relationship.

Q *I live in Slovakia and have been away from the Church for 35 years. Recently I came across the SA newsletter and was astounded—someone actually understands me. May I meet with you so you can help me restore my relationship with God and the Church?*

A Thank you for the compliment, but I'm not the key to your continued recovery. *You* are. If I believed, even for a minute, that a meeting with me would relieve your torment, I would

make it happen. However, meeting me will only be a disappointment.

My best advice is to start looking closer to home for the support you need. The real work—the real effort for recovery—must take place between you, a confessor or mentor, and perhaps a professional therapist. God's loving and abundant grace will give you everything else you need.



Q *My spouse recently died. We loved each other, and I miss him terribly. Each day I find myself talking to him. A friend says this isn't a good thing to do, and now I'm worried that it's also a sin. Am I not trusting God?*

A I think talking to your husband indicates the love you and he shared, and it's certainly not a sin. Just because he has died doesn't mean you must stop loving him, thinking about him, or even talking to him.

Frankly, I'd be more worried and concerned if you weren't experiencing what you're experiencing. It's a sign of health, faith, and belief in God, who has promised us that we'll all be with him one day in heaven.

Please help us continue Scrupulous Anonymous and other Liguori Publications ministries by making a tax-deductible donation or remembering us in your will. Our legal title is Redemptorist Fathers dba Liguori Publications, Federal ID 43-0653409. To make a donation, please use the enclosed envelope or mail to Liguori Publications, One Liguori Drive, Liguori, MO 63057.