

Scrupulous ANONYMOUS

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WE NEED YOUR HELP

We urgently need your prayers and financial support to maintain our website and to continue offering this newsletter in print for our many members who don't have Internet access. To send a check, please follow the instructions on page 4. To donate with a credit card, go to ScrupulousAnonymous.org and click on the Donate button. Thank you for your past and continued support of this important ministry!

PART 2 OF 4

The Words of Absolution

by Fr. Thomas M. Santa, CSsR

This month I continue my four-part series on the words of absolution prayed by the priest in the sacrament of reconciliation:

God, the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

These powerful words invite our meditation and reflection. Unfortunately, because of the anxiety they feel in the confessional, people with scrupulosity can't fully appreciate the power of these words and the amazing grace they proclaim. This series will help us appreciate this sacramental encounter with the person of Jesus.

This month we'll consider the following passage: *has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins.*

Notice that the priest isn't praying in hope or anticipation that the world *will be* reconciled; rather, he's proclaiming the world *has been* reconciled.

Jesus' incarnation and saving passion, death, and resurrection removed even the hint of separation and alienation between the human race and our heavenly Father. The great chasm—the rupture in our relationship caused by sin—was forever healed, repaired, mended, knitted, and restored permanently through Jesus.

There may be some lingering *sense* of alienation or separation between each person and God, but there is no *actual* separation. No alienation exists, and no separation is possible.

We can state this wonderful fact with all assurance and conviction, not because of any merit or effort we've earned, but because of the presence of the Holy Spirit of God. Through the Spirit of God, the guarantee of reconciliation is perfectly proclaimed and realized. The Spirit, sent by Jesus after his resurrection, gives us this sacred comforter, this path of wisdom, the fortifier of God's grace and life at work.

The presence of the Holy Spirit proclaims the reconciliation of the human race with the creator God, the heavenly Father, our Abba. No action, no event, no experience is required to ensure or confirm this heavenly gift of grace.

In response to God's grace and the Holy Spirit's presence, we become instruments of God's reconciling spirit. Through our thoughts, words, and actions, the people of God manifest the reconciliation given and graced to us by Jesus' incarnation. When we know we've been reconciled to our heavenly Father, we choose to put into action the grace of actually trying our best to live as the children of God. As it says in Matthew 18:21–22, “Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus

answered, ‘I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times.’”

The reconciling grace of God, given to each person every day by the Spirit of God in our midst, cannot be measured, cannot be parceled out, and is never in short supply. God's gift of grace is abundant in the world, in our communities, and in our relationships. Each time we become instruments of this grace, we confirm the presence of this Holy Spirit in our world.

To feel that grace is not abundant, that it is conditional or in danger of running out, is a serious temptation against the Spirit of God. It is the “blindness” of the scribes and Pharisees who were in constant conflict with Jesus whenever he spoke about the kingdom of God.

The abundance of the grace of God guaranteed by the Holy Spirit stands in sharp contrast to the perception of forgiveness experienced by people with scrupulosity: Forgiveness must be earned and is in short supply. When people with scrupulosity struggle to name every sin, every possible nuance, feeling, or emotion that may or may not have been an original part of the action they perceive as sin, they feel scarcity of grace and dread of mortal sin—that any error, anything less than perfection, will result in the denial of forgiveness and grace. It's almost like the heavenly Father is dangling the gift of forgiveness in front of the penitent, tantalizingly close, but ready to be snatched away at a moment's notice.

There is cruelty in this perception, a never-ending sense of dread, incompleteness, and emptiness that can never be filled no matter how we respond. Every response will be incomplete, imperfect, and in direct contrast to the pervading reality of the presence of God's grace and the Holy Spirit, which are never to be denied and never to be removed.

As we grow in relationship with God, as we embrace truthfulness, acknowledge vulnerability, and experience the intimacy of our relationship with our heavenly Father, Abba, we learn how gifted and blessed we are.

When people with scrupulosity encounter this truth, they want to believe it. They long to be freed from the dread, fear, and anxiety of feeling cut off, alienated, and somehow separated from God, but they fear that the perception they perceive may become a reality for everlasting life.

This is one of the horrific consequences of the “doubting disease.” It robs us of the peace of knowing we are loved and beloved, and it prevents us from experiencing the abundance of God’s grace and life.

Acknowledging that this feeling is the result of the disease and not the reality of our relationship with God is the grace we must pray for. We must come face to face with vulnerability and learn to accept it while refusing to let it dominate our thoughts and feelings.

Be sure to listen to Fr. Santa’s live call-in show, “Understanding Scrupulosity,” on Radio Maria USA. The show airs Wednesdays at 2 pm Eastern Time.

To listen: Go to radiomaria.us/scrupulosity to access podcasts or listen live

To call in: 866-333-MARY (6279)

To e-mail a question to Fr. Santa: Go to radiomaria.us/scrupulosity and complete the form



***2014 Scrupulous Anonymous Retreat
Presented by Fr. Thomas M. Santa, CSSR***

Friday, Dec. 12 – Sunday, Dec. 14

Perpetual Help Retreat Center, Oconomowoc, WI
For information, call 262-567-6900 or visit
RedemptoristRetreat.org and click on “Calendar”



SCRUPULOUS ANONYMOUS

MAILBOX

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Q *You said on your radio show that drinking coffee or tea before receiving Communion doesn't break the eucharistic fast. That's not true. Are you going to correct this?*

A You are correct. Only water may be consumed; any other flavored beverage is unacceptable. I was trying to emphasize that a person shouldn't be overly concerned to the point of the extreme with the eucharistic fast, as is sometimes the case in scrupulosity. I should have chosen my words more carefully.

Q *You say you don't accept phone calls from, schedule appointments with, or otherwise engage the members of SA. Is that because we drive you crazy?*

A SA members do not drive me crazy. I'm privileged to share this ministry with you. I'm unable to accept phone calls, schedule appointments, or answer personal mail because I have a full-time position of ministry that is very demanding. It's not possible to be engaged full-time in both positions. *That* would drive me crazy!

I thank all of you for your understanding and patience.

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