

# Scrupulous ANONYMOUS

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As promised in our June newsletter, in this issue I'm passing along practices suggested by SA members. Each practice has been helpful to the person who submitted it.

One caveat: Although I'm not specifically endorsing any of these practices or suggestions, if I believed a suggestion was potentially harmful or not generally applicable, I wouldn't pass it along to you.

## From Michigan

Compassion is the key that has most healed my scrupulous spirit. *The Diary of St. Faustina* is a powerful testament to the unconditional love of God. I could hardly believe the generous love God has for all of us and his deep desire to hold us to his heart.

Another thing I've never forgotten is an SA newsletter that said that instead of looking at

This  
Helped Me

Fr. Thomas M. Santa, CSSR

our sins, we need to look to God to see how much he loves us. Knowing where and whom to look to makes all the difference.

## From Puerto Rico

Receiving the sacrament of reconciliation only during the Church's penitential seasons of Advent and Lent instead of whenever I feel the impulse has been pivotal. When I gave myself permission to trust in the mercy of God at all other times, it was like a great burden was lifted. Joining others for reconciliation during these special seasons has in some miraculous way given me the confidence I need.

## From California

My confessor said I abused the sacrament of reconciliation because I received it every couple of days. I was just trying to receive grace, but now I understand what he meant. I wasn't wearing out God, but I was wearing out my confessor.

That made me think of Saint Alphonsus' scrupulosity and how the confessors in Naples, Italy, dreaded seeing him. I laughed when I saw myself doing the same thing. I want to be like a saint, but not in this way.

### **From New Jersey**

Paying attention to the date a book was published has made a huge difference in my life. I make it a point now to read only recent books and not go back to the old stuff, especially books written before the Second Vatican Council. I can't believe how much better I feel and how much less confusion I experience. I can't thank you enough for that simple advice—I never understood until now what I was doing to myself.

### **From Texas**

I've found centering prayer to be very helpful. I started reading books by Father Keating about centering prayer. At first I really struggled, but eventually I was able to quiet myself down and focus. I can really sense a big difference. Now whenever I feel overcome by anxiety, I just start to pray, and it really helps.

### **From Michigan**

My parish has a monthly communal celebration of the anointing of the sick. Participating in this sacrament gives me a real sense of peace, and I look forward to it every month. It also has helped me understand that scrupulosity is a sickness and not a personal defect. It's very comforting to know it's not my fault—that I'm not doing something wrong.

### **From Utah**

I like using traditional prayers and devotions. When I pray, "Jesus, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me, a sinner," I feel more peaceful. It helps me not to obsess over one sin.

### **From Ohio**

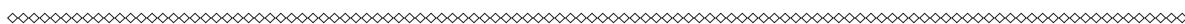
I've tried everything over the years. Some things help for a little while, but then the thoughts start creeping back in. Scrupulosity is so persistent that I'm resigned to going to my death with it.

But I've been trying something lately that has helped even though it sounds strange: *I've stopped fighting my scrupulosity*. Not "stopped" in the sense of being defeated or held captive, but "stopped" in the sense of accepting an uninvited guest. I pay as little attention as possible, and when the "guest" demands attention, I give it my minimum effort. I hope this helps others as much as it has helped me.

### **From Mississippi**

This might sound strange, but what really helped me was Hurricane Katrina. Just as my house was knocked off its foundation, so was my scrupulosity. I became so overwhelmed with what I had to do just to clean up the mess and get my life back in order that I didn't have time to be scrupulous.

I'm still obsessive and compulsive, but now when that happens I just go down the street and clean up a mess. I don't worry about sin anymore. I experienced so much love from so many people, many of whom I didn't know, that I'm forever convinced God loves me. After all, God knows me, and I know I'm precious in his eyes.





# What Is Stress?

The following is adapted from *Manage the Mess of Family Stress: Gospel Solutions For Everyday Life* by Richard Brown, PhD (Liguori, © 2011).

**W**ho doesn't experience stress each day? Your children resist what you cooked for breakfast. Traffic is worse than usual. A client misses your lunch appointment. Your teen misses the 10 PM curfew.

If you stop and pay attention to your physical or mental state, you feel the tangible symptoms of stress—tight neck muscles, dry mouth, and a feeling of fatigue or depression. Your nervous system is responding to protect you from danger—whether physical, emotional, or mental. God created these reactions in you to protect you from danger.

Stress tells you that all is not well and that you need to act to reduce or eliminate the stress. You may experience stress as you begin backing out of an icy driveway. Or perhaps you feel stressed on your way to a family party where you know a certain relative will throw a negative comment in your direction. Your body automatically prepares to handle the danger; as it does, you feel stress.

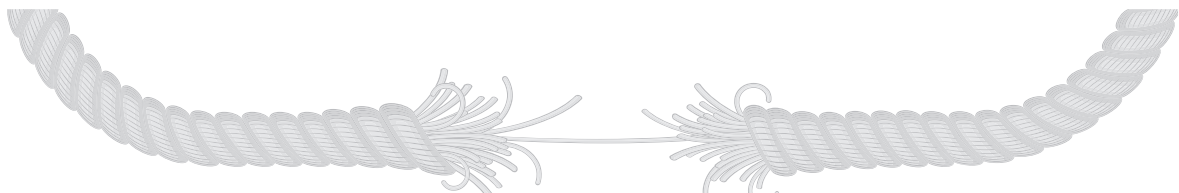
We also feel stress when problems arise. "Should I tell this potential mate about my feelings of love?" "What should I do about my serious job dissatisfaction?" "What should I do

about my unruly teen?" "How can we get our budget under control?" Stress can cause anxiety, worry, sleeplessness, sadness, and fear.

## One Quick Remedy

I've used a rose petal to help hundreds of seminar participants across the United States relieve their stress. First, I ask these Church leaders to think of the problem in their ministry that's bothering them most. Then I ask each leader to take one rose petal and experience it with all five senses. They notice the beauty of its color and design. They feel its softness. They rustle it next to their ear. They smell and taste this physical beauty God made. When I ask who still has that stressful problem on their mind, usually only one or two people raise their hands. Why?

God has given us a psychological gift: Our system can concentrate on only one thing at a time. So when we feel stress, concentrating on any physical object with our five senses does the trick—at least for the moment. We may need to repeat the exercise a few minutes later, but with each repetition we are building our system's awareness that we can control our stress and reduce its mental and physical symptoms.





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# MAILBOX

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**Q** *I'm very worried about my investments. My mutual funds invest in many companies, and I don't know whether they have a significant commitment to prolife causes. Trying to keep up with all this is exhausting, but I'm worried that I'm committing grave sin.*

**A** Socially conscious investing is a commitment and concern for all of us. It's obvious that some opportunities aren't good choices for a person committed to upholding Catholic values and ethics. Other types of investments, such as mutual funds, aren't as easy to judge.

Rather than learning about every company a fund invests in, your responsibility is to be aware of the fund's investment philosophy. If that philosophy doesn't contradict your values, invest in it in good conscience. That's about the best effort any investor can be expected to make.

**Q** *My granddaughter and her husband want children and are having trouble getting pregnant. They've been trying for a couple of years but haven't been blessed with a family. Any suggestions or guidance?*

**A** I'm sure they're receiving the proper and most ethical professional guidance required and that you're giving them your prayerful support and encouragement.

May I also suggest you enroll them in the League of Saint Gerard, the mother's saint? Information is on the Liguori website. Go to [liguori.org](http://liguori.org) and scroll down to the bottom of the page. Under Spiritual Newsletters, click on League of Saint Gerard, then on "View the Current Issue." Enrollment information appears on the last page of each issue.

Perhaps with the intercession of Saint Gerard, things will work out as well as possible.



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