

Scrupulous ANONYMOUS

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THIS WILL BE YOUR LAST ISSUE

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The Holy Year of Mercy

by Fr. Thomas M. Santa

By the time you receive this issue of our monthly newsletter, we will be well into our celebration of the Holy Year of Mercy, an Extraordinary Jubilee announced by Pope Francis in March 2015.

In his September 2015 letter on the granting of indulgences to the faithful during this Year of Mercy he writes, "It is indeed my wish that the Jubilee be a living experience of the closeness of the Father, whose tenderness is almost tangible, so that the faith of every believer may be strengthened and thus testimony to it be ever more effective."

Pope Francis' letter is of particular importance to people with scrupulosity. Wouldn't it be wonderful to know God's mercy rather than the fear and

anxiety of scrupulosity? Is it possible to move from the negative experience of fear and anxiety to the positive experience of God's mercy?

Is this not an appropriate grace and blessing for people with scrupulosity during this Holy Year of Mercy?

The anxiety and suffering of people with scrupulosity are the opposite of the peace and contentment felt by people who know they are loved and forgiven by God. We anticipate an extraordinary outpouring of God's grace during this spectacular year as the prayers, hopes, and expectations of the universal Church focus on God's mercy. People of God expect a powerful result when our voices unite in prayer.

This Year of Mercy is the perfect time to ask for the grace of healing. The following prayer petitions are especially appropriate for people with scrupulosity.

1. Practice expectant and extraordinary grace by asking for the grace of healing.
2. If you're not ready to ask for the grace of healing, ask for the grace of courage to ask for the healing you don't believe you deserve. Even when you're in the midst of a personal struggle—a struggle that leads you to believe you're not worthy of the grace you ask for—pray for the grace to remove the obstacle that keeps you from asking for healing grace.
3. If you don't even feel worthy of asking for the grace to have the courage to ask for what you feel you don't deserve, try this: Pray for the grace to have the courage and conviction to ask to be encouraged to ask for the grace of what you fear and what you doubt God wants for you. Pray that God's many blessings fill you so that you can begin to imagine a life free from the daily anxiety and fear scrupulosity inflicts upon you.
4. This last prayer petition is also the most challenging and difficult. It can be prayed by those who have continual blasphemous thoughts.

Ask that even thoughts and words that seem not to be pleasing to God be graced by God so that you don't pay attention to your words. Ask that you will simply feel the love in your heart and trust that this feeling is pleasing to God.

Each of these prayers will enable your fuller participation in the Holy Year of Mercy and the fulfillment of the grace hoped for and prayed for by all of God's people.

Our Holy Father encourages each of us during the Extraordinary Jubilee to encounter God's mercy in a profound and even unexpected manner. The good men and women with scrupulosity are also included in his thoughts and his prayers.

At the same time, however, we humbly acknowledge that scrupulosity makes it hard to easily encounter the grace offered during this Year of Mercy. It may be difficult, and it may require focused energy, but it's not impossible. Perhaps if we join our thoughts and prayers for each member of our group, we will be able to celebrate the blessing of shared experience and the strength of shared grace.

It's worth the effort, and I'm confident in the grace of God that we will experience what we hope and pray for.

Reflection

Adapted from *Peaceful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time (Weeks 1–9)* by Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney (Liguori Publications, © 2013).

When we repeat the thought and behavior patterns that keep us stressed and unfulfilled, the wineskin of our life is ready to burst.

Jesus challenges us to discard our old habits of anxiety and doubt and face each day with a new attitude of love and hope. We can face the world with confidence in God's love. We can let go of yesterday's troubles and worries and focus on doing our best today. We can approach our responsibilities with a fresh outlook, trusting that God will show us what to do and how to do it. We can refuse to project into the future and instead put our energy into enjoying all that today offers us.

Jesus shows us a new way of living with God as our source of love and strength. We can bring our fears about finances, bills, and employment to God and wait for guidance. We can go to God when we are tired, lonely, or ill and receive comfort and love. We can sit in solitude with God and rest in the silent healing of God's grace.

When life's pressures, tasks, and requirements make us feel like we are about to implode, we can remember to discard our old way of meeting life's demands and take up the new way that Jesus teaches us: Surrendering to God's will of love of God, ourselves, and our neighbors.

Ponder: Lord, you are the new wine of life, love, and peace. Bless me with the willingness to pour out love and joy into the lives of my sisters and brothers.

Pray: Lord, your love helps me to embrace the unknown. Reveal yourself to me so that I may recognize you in myself and others.

Practice: Today I will try a new approach to a familiar task.

Scrupulosity Research Project

A marriage and family therapy student at Mount Mercy University in Cedar Rapids, Iowa is studying similarities in behaviors and attitudes in people with scrupulosity and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), and she'd appreciate it if you would participate by completing a 10- to 15-minute confidential survey. Participants will be entered into a drawing for a \$20 amazon.com gift card. If you are 18 or older and would like more information, please visit tinyurl.com/qa99Iga.



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MAILBOX

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Q *I am a priest who is worn out by a parishioner with scrupulosity. I'm at my wits' end and no longer know how to respond. Any advice?*

A Many of St. Alphonsus' confessors in Naples were exhausted, too, so you're not alone. But it's not your parishioner who is wearing you out—it's the unrelenting and untiring ritual of your parishioner's disease.

Set appropriate boundaries for your time and effort and expect your parishioner to abide by them. If your parishioner is unwilling to respect your boundaries, you can in good conscience ask him or her to find another confessor and/or spiritual director. To be effective, good pastoral ministry requires mutually agreed-upon boundaries.

Q *What exactly did Pope Francis mean when he declared that the reception of Holy Communion was "not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak"?*

A Pope Francis wrote that passage in his November 24, 2013, apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (On the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World). Our Holy Father is stressing that we should ask the Lord for his grace when we are in need and when we are still struggling and that we shouldn't wait until we have it all figured out. These words are most appropriate for people with scrupulosity who believe they are unworthy to receive the Eucharist unless they have an absolute sense of perfection.

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