

# Scrupulous ANONYMOUS

PUBLISHED EACH MONTH BY THE REDEMPTORISTS

JUNE 2016  
Vol. 53, No. 6



*Scrupulous Anonymous*  
*One Liguori Drive*  
*Liguori, MO 63057-9999*  
*ScrupulousAnonymous.org*

## When the Bill Comes Due

*by Fr. Thomas M. Santa*

**D**r. Victor Frankl was a psychiatrist. From 1942 to 1945, he was imprisoned in four Nazi concentration camps. He spent the time caring for fellow inmates. In 1945 he and a colleague decided to escape. One of the dying men sensed Frankl's nervousness and asked whether he was leaving. As he talked with the man, Frankl had a growing sense that he was betraying his patients, so he decided to stay. He told his colleague he was staying and at once was overwhelmed with peace.

Dr. Frankl survived the war and later wrote about the importance of meaning and commitment. Those who survived the atrocities best, he said, were those who had something to live for.

The Gospel of Luke shows what many scholars believe is a turning point in Jesus' life. After performing miracles and teaching in Galilee for the first part of his public ministry (4:14–9:50), Jesus makes a decision—a commitment—to turn his face toward Jerusalem (9:51), where he will eventually be crucified. From that moment, he demonstrates the same inner peace Victor Frankl felt many years later when he committed to staying with his patients. Luke's Gospel mentions

little of miracles, instead sharing strong parables that challenge people to change their attitudes and their hearts.

Jesus immediately runs into difficulties as a result of his decision. In Luke 9:51–53, the Samaritan people “would not welcome him because the destination of his journey was Jerusalem,” the land of their enemies.

Next, three disciples commit to following him. Luke 9:57–62 tells us that Jesus warned the first, “Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head.”

The second asked to fulfill his family duty to bury his father, but Jesus answered harshly, “Let the dead bury their dead. But you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”

The third said, “I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say farewell to my family at home.” Jesus said to him, “Whoever has put his hand to the plow and looks back is not fit for the Kingdom of God.”

**T**he apostles and disciples who had been following Jesus must have sensed that things were changing. With the starkness characteristic of the gospels, Jesus is saying that a decision

to follow him will cost a lot, but this cost earns the kingdom. Jesus himself pays the cost and for that reason has the authority to ask us to follow him.

As clear as this message was, it must have nevertheless unsettled some people.

The gospel is not meant to be comfortable. The life of a committed Christian was never intended to be nice and safe. Jesus was on the cutting edge, proclaiming a kingdom where things would be very different than what people were used to. He called disciples who were deeply committed to the kingdom and willing to pay the price—the bill—to acquire it.

As it was for the disciples of Jesus, so it is with us. When we go to that deep place within ourselves where we store our values, we may discover that we've placed the kingdom of God with those other decisions and determinations we hold to be important. Perhaps we haven't examined our choice and commitment for a while. Perhaps we've taken it for granted. Perhaps it needs to be dusted off and brought out into the light. But it's there, and we know it's important.

On further reflection, we realize that at some time or another we'll be called on to pay the price.

There will be a moment—perhaps even a series of moments—when we come face to face with choices, decisions, and actions that conflict with the kingdom of God. At that moment, the bill comes due.

**T**he inclination for people with scrupulosity is to quickly conclude that sin has everything to do with paying the bill that has come due. We spend so much time thinking of the punishment we imagine we must endure because of sin. Although sin has something to do with who we are, it's really a very minor part of who we are.

So much more makes up a human being. So much more comes into play when we make choices and decisions. To emphasize only sin, or to become too preoccupied with sin, denies us the richness of the experience of grace. It narrows our vision and makes it impossible for us to see the power of God at work in our lives.

For Dr. Frankl, who was Jewish, the bill came due when he looked into the face of his suffering patients. When the bill comes due for us (if it hasn't already), we'll know and understand what Jesus has challenged us to be.

Pray for the grace and courage to accept the challenge and pay the price when your bill comes due.

# Reflection

The following is abridged and adapted from *Summer Meditations*  
by Fr. John Bartunek (Liguori Publications, © 2016).

Peacefulness probably isn't the first thing that comes to mind when you think about summer. But maybe that has more to do with your understanding of peace than it does with your understanding of the values of summer.

We usually associate peace with a lack of conflict or turbulence. And that's true, as far as it goes. But the biblical view of peace is much richer. It begins with a lack of conflict, but it includes the consequences of those circumstances. When conflict and injustice are absent from a human community, that community is free to flourish. People can work and play without fear. This means they enjoy the blessings of prosperity and social harmony. All of those values are included in the biblical concept of peace.

In that sense, summer is a season of peace. It's a time of growth and plenty, a time of bustling and joyful activity that fills life with gusto. That's a vision we can all appreciate and pursue.

Summer teaches us that side of peace. It can also teach us about the joyful side of work. Working and building a personal life and a family life are privileges and joys. Having the

freedom and opportunity to engage in that kind of work is a sign and fruit of peace, of a society that is well-ordered and well-protected.

Often we forget this side of work, its intrinsic dignity and value. We focus so much on finishing the job or on getting the paycheck that we lose our capacity to enjoy the actual process of working and building, a process we're meant to enjoy. The feeling of interior satisfaction that comes at the end of a hard, honest day of work is a kind of peace within our reach in a special way during the ordinary days of summer, when the sun burns hot and the daylight lasts long.

We'll never have perfect peace in this life—that's reserved for heaven. But if we give God the place he should have in our hearts, we can grow in the peace he wants for us. Jesus told his apostles: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid" (John 14:27).

To experience the "peace of God that surpasses all understanding" (Philippians 4:7), we have to follow the teachings and example of the Prince of Peace, of Jesus himself.



SCRUPULOUS ANONYMOUS

# MAILBOX

ONE LIGUORI DRIVE • LIGUORI, MO 63057-9999  
NEWSLETTER@LIGUORI.ORG

**Q** *All sorts of unwanted thoughts about people, relationships, and options pop into my head. When do these thoughts become mortal sins?*

**A** Never. There is no such thing as unwanted thoughts becoming mortal sins. What you're describing is common human behavior and experience. You have no control over random, unwanted thoughts. You didn't generate them (other than by being alive). You may have anxiety, and there may be times when you're startled by the intensity of what you're thinking at any moment, but having that thought is not a sin.

The key word here is "unwanted," and at no point do you become responsible for these thoughts.

**Q** *You were quite harsh to a person who asked about seeking opinions from other confessors. It's out of our control that sometimes our confessor is absent. We have to confess to the priest who is there. You should be a little more understanding.*

**A** I'm sorry you feel I was harsh. My directive was intended to be strong, but not harsh.

People with scrupulosity should not seek additional opinions; a second opinion soon becomes a third, then a fourth, and so on.

You do have a choice when your confessor is absent: Don't go to confession. It's far better to stick with the good pastoral advice of a single confessor than to place yourself in a position that will do more harm than good in both the short-run and the long-run.

[ScrupulousAnonymous.org](http://ScrupulousAnonymous.org)



*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.*

© 2016 Liguori Publications. All rights reserved. **Policy on Copying or Distributing:** *Individuals* may download, print, copy, and/or share issues of *Scrupulous Anonymous* provided 1) you don't remove this copying/distributing policy and 2) you don't seek or accept payment for the copies. **Nonprofit organizations** may quote SA in publications offered at no cost as long as you identify *Scrupulous Anonymous* as the source and include the issue number or date and the publisher (Liguori Publications, ScrupulousAnonymous.org). **For commercial or other purposes**, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior written permission of Liguori Publications. Liguori Publications, a nonprofit corporation, is an apostolate of the Redemptorists (redemptorists.com).