

Scrupulous ANONYMOUS

PUBLISHED EACH MONTH BY THE REDEMPТОRISTS

APRIL 2017
Vol. 54, No. 4



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

An Important Decision

by Fr. Thomas M. Santa, CSsR

Recently I had a conversation with a parishioner after Mass. After commenting on my homily, he asked whether I had heard the story of a young American Indian man who told his chief that he often felt conflicted. The chief responded, “That’s because you have two wolves inside you struggling for control. One is gentle, kind, compassionate, and loving, while the other is aggressive, restless, and prone to violence.” The young man asked, “Which wolf will win?” The chief responded, “Whichever wolf you feed.”

That’s often the question: “Which wolf are you going to feed?” Many of us experience the daily struggle of scrupulosity. It’s a demanding disorder, relentless with doubts and questions. It demands total attention as it robs us of peace and contentment. Eventually we begin to fear that the constant guilt and anxiety are normal, and hope of a life not dominated by scrupulosity begins to fade.

Scrupulosity is part of the second wolf the chief described. It’s a ravenous disorder that always demands more. It makes room for little else, its demands crowding out our healthier wolf. If we give attention to the healthier wolf, the wolf that helps us

become more gentle, loving, compassionate, and understanding, the disorder seems to rage all the more.

But yet—and herein lies the challenge—we must learn to spiritually feed and nourish the wolf that scrupulosity is starving and ignoring. Feed not the loudest most demanding wolf, but rather the wolf that helps us be more gentle, loving, and compassionate.

How, you might ask, is this possible? How do you feed the healthier part of yourself and learn not to pay attention to the all-demanding disorder of scrupulosity? It’s not easy, but there is a path to living with scrupulosity without constantly battling it. Here are some steps along that path:

- **Regular reception of the Eucharist.** Pope Francis says the Eucharist is “not a reward for the perfect.” It’s the sacrament that accompanies us and strengthens us as we grow and develop in grace. Feeling distant and unworthy of the presence of the Lord is a sign that we need to be nourished by the Eucharist, not that we should absent ourselves from the Communion line.
- **Regular reception of the anointing of the sick.** People with scrupulosity need its heal-

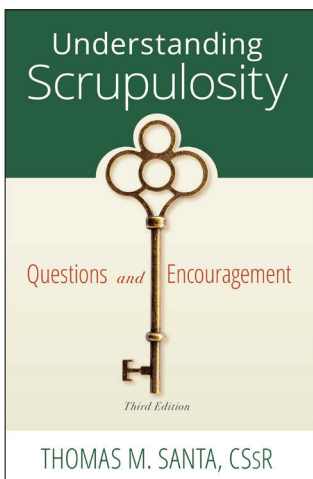
ing power, and they fulfill the requirements for receiving it.

- **Disciplined or infrequent reception of the sacrament of reconciliation.** Disciplined reception is following the structure agreed upon with your regular confessor. If you don't have a regular confessor, go to reconciliation during the penitential liturgical seasons of Advent and Lent. During the rest of the year, limit confessions to occasions when actual serious sin—not the *fear* of sin—can be definitively discerned.
- **Disciplined reading of spiritual materials.** People with scrupulosity need a highly structured and disciplined reading list. Older materials that don't include current findings on the relationship between scrupulosity and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) are not helpful and can even be harmful, so avoid reading them.

- **Disciplined use of the Internet.** The Internet is a helpful research tool, but it takes us into a highly unstructured environment where anything can be posted whether it's accurate or not. The line between fact and opinion is often blurred. For people with scrupulosity, the Internet is often a perilous place. When you have a question, ask your confessor and/or spiritual director or a trusted friend or family member instead of looking it up on the Internet.

Actively feeding the healthier part of yourself is key to managing scrupulosity. The disorder is seldom cured, but many people learn to manage it and become healthier and happier. Each success story is rooted in the deliberate decision to actively nourish the healthy wolf and give less energy and attention to the ravenous wolf.

It's a daily struggle supported by God's abundant grace in good spiritual practice and disciplines.



Hot off the Press!

The new edition of Fr. Tom Santa's highly acclaimed book *Understanding Scrupulosity* is here!

Based on a half-century of questions and answers from the *Scrupulous Anonymous* newsletter, *Understanding Scrupulosity: Questions and Encouragement* addresses sin, thoughts, dreams, fantasies, and sexuality, as well as confession, self-worth, prayer, and God's grace.

This third edition includes new information on identifying and understanding behaviors associated with scrupulosity and explains medical breakthroughs in treatment.

To order, go to Liguori.org.

Take Time to Adjust

The following reflection is adapted from [Spring Meditations](#) by Fr. John Bartunek (Liguori Publications, © 2016. All rights reserved).

St. Ignatius' [spiritual exercises](#) provide “rules for the discernment of spirits” that can help us see more clearly what is going on in our souls.

One of his rules involves transition. The idea is simple: In the midst of calm and clarity, we see things more objectively and make prudent decisions. In times of turbulence, our vision is obstructed and our emotions agitated. It's the worst time to reevaluate and reverse decisions made in calmer times. We need to patiently wait for calm and clarity to return.

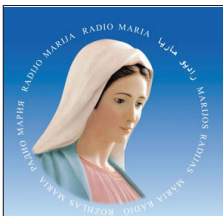
Moving to a new city and a new job, for example, is a transition full of pains and difficulties. We should be suspicious of thoughts of throwing in the towel and going back to the way it was. The decision to move was made in a time of calm and clarity with reflection and discussion. To change it or question it during the turbulence of the transition is unwise.

When we end a relationship for good reasons, we should be patient with ourselves during the immediate aftermath, humbly acknowledging that we're going to be emotionally vulnerable for a season and therefore avoiding major commitments for a while.

When we lose a loved one, a season of transition will follow—for a longer or shorter duration depending on many factors outside of our control—when we need to exercise a lot of patience and avoid rash decisions.

In these cases and so many more, we need to give ourselves time to adjust.

What transition are you going through right now? Take time this week to stop and think about it. What is it demanding of you? How are you handling it? How would being more patient with it affect your daily living?



Listen to Fr. Tom on Radio Maria USA

Fr. Tom Santa's live call-in show, "Understanding Scrupulosity," is back on Radio Maria USA Thursdays at 11 am ET.

To listen: Go to radiomaria.us and click How to Listen.

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

To e-mail a question to Fr. Santa: Complete the form at radiomaria.us/scrupulosity.



SCRUPULOUS ANONYMOUS

MAILBOX

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

Q *I understand it's a pious Catholic practice to make a general confession before a significant life change. I'm getting married. Is this confession appropriate for people with scrupulosity?*

A Congratulations on your upcoming marriage! I pray that you and your future spouse will be blessed and nourished by the sacrament of marriage.

A general confession isn't a good idea. It's always been the pastoral counsel of the priest-directors of SA that this kind of confession is potentially harmful for people with scrupulosity. Do not engage in this spiritual practice on this occasion or any other as long as your scrupulosity continues.

Q *Is there a cure for scrupulosity, or will I have it the rest of my life? I get so discouraged.*

A Many useful cognitive and behavioral therapies have been useful in managing scrupulosity. Drug therapy is also helpful in conjunction with regular psychological and spiritual counseling.

I would never say there is no cure for scrupulosity, but managing it is a more attainable goal and often the most positive outcome you can expect. And never underestimate the power of God's grace.

So, when you look at the big picture and see what's possible, there is more to be encouraged about than discouraged.

Look inside for exciting news!

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.***

© 2017 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).