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Graciously Grant Us Peace

by Fr. Thomas M. Santa, CSSR

Last July I explained why the Mass prayer “look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church” brings me so much comfort and reassurance. In this issue, I want to talk more about the rite in which this prayer appears, the rite of peace:

Lord Jesus Christ,
who said to your Apostles:
Peace I leave you, my peace I give you,
look not on our sins,
but on the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with your will.

The priest prays the rite of peace after the assembly prays the Our Father, which sums up the faith and hope of the Christian community exactly as Jesus intended. The Our Father is a prayer of reconciliation, praise, and petition. The rite of peace seems at first glance to also be a prayer of petition, but it's not. The Our Father has been prayed, and our reconciliation has been established. In celebration of this great gift of reconciliation *already received*, the priest prays,

“Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church.”

This simple prayer has the power to remind us of the awesome gift of God's grace we celebrate in the Eucharist. It reminds us of what has been accomplished for us by Jesus' sacrifice. It also reminds us of the reconciliation that now exists between each of us and our heavenly Father, reconciliation that has already been accomplished for us by Jesus' death. Reconciliation isn't something we hope for; it's something we celebrate as a gift of God.

People with scrupulosity should reflect often on the reconciliation God has given us. We've *already* been reconciled, just as we've *already* been loved and have *already* been forgiven.

This reconciliation isn't yet celebrated in the fullness of the promise of our salvation, because the human-community journey hasn't been completed. But that doesn't diminish the gift of reconciling grace we've *already* received.

It would be a positive and very helpful spiritual discipline for people with scrupulosity to repeat this prayer often, either verbatim or personalized:

“Look not on my sins, either real or imagined, but rather on my faith, as weak and as fragile as it may be.” This spiritual discipline can help us focus on what is important to remember and celebrate.

Most of us needn't be reminded of our sinfulness, of how we fall short, of how we don't measure up to our expectations. Remembering that we're loved and forgiven exactly as we are—not as we one day hope to be—is a step forward in a maturing faith life. Yes, there is sin. We don't deny that. But there is also grace, and grace abounds because of our heavenly Father's love.

The passage that follows “look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church” is also helpful in daily reflection: “and graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance with your will.” When we emphasize what we've *already* received from the Lord as grace—instead of obsessing on what

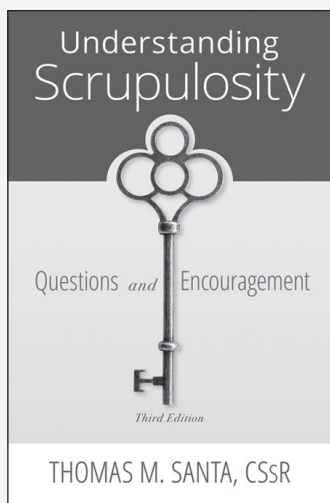
we *perceive* to be lacking—we promote a more focused experience of the peace God promised us.

I'm more anxious when I imagine what might be, good or bad, than when I reflect on what has already occurred. Peace and hope seem more possible when I reflect on what God has already done for me instead of worrying about people, experiences, and circumstances over which I have no real control.

You've no doubt heard that you can look at a glass as being half full or half empty. That's true, but your attitude doesn't affect the amount of content that's actually in the glass.

And so it is with the abundance of God's grace. The reality of God's grace and blessing isn't affected by our individual perspective. Despite what we see and feel, God continues to bless us and mold us daily into his people and into his kingdom.

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It's here!

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

Based on 50 years 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 call 1-800-325-9521, or go to Liguori.org.

Surrender

The following reflection is adapted from *Faithful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time (Weeks 11–22)* by Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney (Liguori Publications, © 2013. All rights reserved).

Sometimes we just wear out. We're tired, spiritless, sad, and lacking in hope. We find it difficult to meet our daily obligations. We doubt we have a purpose. We wonder if life will always be bleak.

Sometimes we carry heavy burdens. We may have health or financial problems. We may be caring for elderly parents who are becoming more frail and forgetful every day. We may be in a dead-end job with no hope for advancement or a higher salary. We may not have a job and be unable to find one. We may be alienated from our family and feel the grief of having lost our roots. We may live in a community whose values are at odds with ours, and we feel alone and friendless. We may worry about terrorism, war, and slavery. We may view natural disasters such as tornadoes and tsunamis as signs that God is punishing the world.

Ponder: What burdens do I carry?

Prayer: Lord, teach me to lay down my burdens and rest in the comfort of your love.

Practice: Today I will be faithful by resting from worry.

Perhaps the heaviest burden we carry—and the thing that wears us out most—is thinking that we have to make sense of life. Yet we haven't been called to figure out life; we've been called to have faith in God's love and goodness. We've been called to entrust our thoughts, emotions, and actions to God. We've been called to surrender to God's will of love and mercy.

We've been called to come to Jesus, to turn to him in our weary and burdened state and be at rest in his heart of comfort and compassion.

People of faith believe life is protected and held together in Christ's love. We trust that no circumstance, no disaster, and no power will ever separate us from this love. The reassuring presence of Christ's love restores our hope; it strengthens us to continue the journey of life.

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.





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Q *I'm always bothered by the skimpy outfits people wear to the beach. Where is their modesty and self-respect?*

A The norms of what is and isn't acceptable in our culture changes constantly. This isn't limited to beachwear. It's making you unhappy, worried, and anxious.

Normally I would suggest you absent yourself from occasions when you feel this way, but that would be counseling you to live a life of isolation. A better counsel might be for you to try to be a little less harsh in your judgment of others. It won't change the scenery, but it will make you less anxious and perturbed, and that may be all we can hope for in this situation.

Q *It's a mortal sin to skip Mass on holy days of obligation. What happens to the sin if the holy day changes and the obligation is removed?*

A If you were sitting in my office asking me this question, I'd encourage you to work it out for yourself.

If something is truly a mortal sin in the fullest extent of the meaning of "mortal sin," changing the day or the venue wouldn't change the seriousness of the sin. Therefore, it must have some other meaning and application.

I think you already know the answer in your heart, and you don't need me to confirm what you already know.

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