

# Scrupulous ANONYMOUS

October 2017

Vol. 54, No. 10



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

## **“Lord, it is good that we are here.”**

BY FR. THOMAS M. SANTA, CSSR

**R**ecently I was rereading the wonderful story of the transfiguration of the Lord as it is told to us in the Gospel of Matthew 17:1-8.

For Peter, James, and John, it must have been truly spectacular to be in the presence of the Lord, revealed in all of his divine glory, and with two of the greatest prophets in Jewish history, Moses and Elijah.

No wonder Peter was able to exclaim, “it is good that we are here.” Not that I think I can improve on Scripture, but I think Peter could have said a little more. He could just as easily have said, “Jesus it is really easy for us to be here with you like this. It is easy to believe you when you look like this. When we can see you like this, it is easy to see and understand the ramifications of what you have been talking about.”

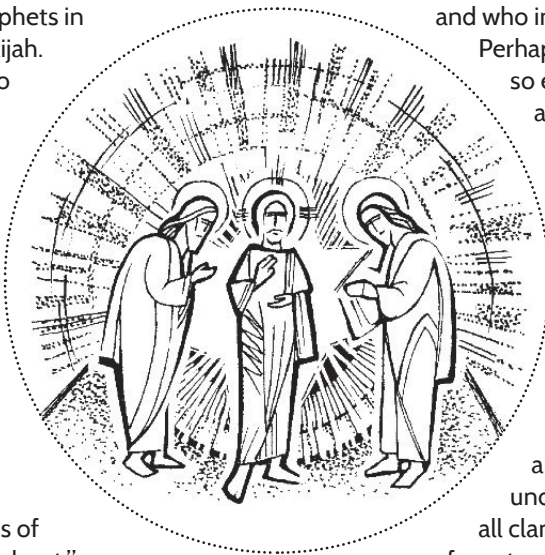
I can't help but contrast the divinity of Jesus portrayed in the transfiguration with the humanity of Jesus that the apostles experienced every day. I can't help but ask myself, *Which Jesus is easier to believe in, which Jesus is easier to follow?* Is it the Jesus who appears before the apostles dazzlingly white, clothed in glory, and in the

presence of greatness in Moses and Elijah, or is it the human Jesus, dirty, hungry, surrounded by the poor and the unwanted?

I think we'd all agree that it's much easier to believe and to follow the Jesus who's divine, who's so obviously great, who's filled with power, and who invokes awe and wonder.

Perhaps for this reason we're so easily able to recognize and respond to Jesus, who comes to us in mystery, who dispenses grace and healing, who exhibits those things that we clearly identify as miraculous and powerful, the Jesus who finally is to come again, in all of his glory, at the end of time to punish the bad and to reward the good. We understand divinity, and we all clamor to be in the presence of greatness. Thus, we understand it when Peter proclaims, “Lord, it is good that we are here.”

Where is the lesson for us in the transfiguration? Perhaps it's one that's difficult to accept and understand. Except for this one moment, this one experience of transfiguration, Jesus didn't reveal himself to his apostles in his divinity. His call, his



invitation to follow, was not an invitation to follow that came billowing from a cloud, surrounded by angels singing and trumpets blaring. His call to follow and serve wasn't presented to his apostles or us with the noise and the volume that demands attention and that earns applause and favorable comments of, "Wasn't that great," or, "Isn't he wonderful." Rather, his invitation was and is presented without drama, with no fanfare, and often is so quiet and gentle that we may well miss it.

I can't imagine a person, even the most hardened sinner, even the person who all of us might unanimously identify as evil, who wouldn't fall to his knees if presented with the transfigured Jesus. Who among us, even those who seem not to care and who seem not to be paying attention to anything of importance, would be able to ignore such a display of divinity? We have to admit the truth of it because it's so obvious. But just because it's obvious doesn't mean it's the chosen way.

I'd love to be able to experience the transfigured Jesus. I'd love to be able to say the words of Peter, "Lord, it is good that we are here." I want the experience of transfiguration in my life because it would make everything so much easier. How could I struggle with belief if I had *seen* the Lord before me exhibiting wonder and power? How could I ever tire of proclaiming the gospel, or choosing to

do what is right, or going the extra mile, even with someone I have difficulty with, if I had experienced the presence of the Lord in such a way?

But yet it seems that my experience of faith, my call to belief, will not be so simple and so obvious. There will probably never be the certitude that comes with the experience of transfiguration. This is the way that the Lord wants it to be. Thus, the only conclusion I can arrive at is that there must be something essential for faith in the struggle to believe. There must be something about the silence that seems to come from the heavens that is essential to grow in faith, even when the heavens are bombarded with prayer. There must be some clue, some direction, some way that I am challenged to learn and to live that will only come from the ordinary. The dramatic, that which demands attention, seems not to be the way of the kingdom.

Members of SA, I hope you find it reassuring to know that it is perfectly natural to struggle with belief. It is a normal part of the spiritual journey to wrestle with doubt. What isn't part of the normal faith journey is the anxiety, at times even the severe anxiety, that accompanies the doubt and the struggle. That feeling and emotion is rooted in the sickness of scrupulosity. Again, I must remind each of our readers that we're not talking about sin when we speak about this kind of struggle and this kind of

In Gratitude for  
Your Donation...

## A One-Year Subscription to *Liguorian* Magazine

Are you looking for hope, inspiration, and spiritual guidance? *Liguorian* magazine was founded in 1913 as a mission of the Redemptorists, and our award-winning magazine is still as vital today. In 2016 the Catholic Press Association bestowed these awards on *Liguorian*:

First Place, National General Interest Magazine

First Place, Best Seasonal Issue, December 2015  
(see photo)



In gratitude for your donation of \$50 or more by December 31, 2017, the Redemptorists will give you a one-year gift subscription\* to our magazine. \*Offer Available for New Subscribers Only

response. What we're referring to is the experience of scrupulosity that is at the root of the emotional upheaval. Just because a person *feels* bad does not mean the person *is* bad.

As I concluded my reflection on the transfiguration story, I found myself wondering what Peter, James, and John did when they came down the mountain after this experience. What

were their thoughts, what sense did they make out of all of this, and what questions were they left with? Did the experience of transfiguration make an obvious difference in their lives, or was it something that was difficult to comprehend? We'll never know, and we haven't been told. What we're left with is simply the story and the words of Peter, "Lord, it is good that we are here." ✨

## Mary at the Hour of Death

ST. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI

**W**hy is the patronage of Mary so powerful? Because she is the Mother of God. Saint Theophilus, bishop of Alexandria, wrote: "The Son is pleased that his mother should pray to him, because he wishes to grant her whatever she asks, in order to repay her for the favor he received from her giving him a human body."

This was revealed to Saint Bridget, who one day heard Jesus say to Mary: "Ask from me what you wish, for your requests can never be rejected." Jesus then added the reason for this by saying: "You refused me nothing while I lived on earth; it is just, then, that I should refuse you nothing now that you are with me in heaven."

The devout Pelbart says that Mary invites all, both the just and the sinners. As we read in 1 Peter 5:8, "like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour." But Mary goes out looking for someone to save. In fact, adds Richard of Saint Victor, she anticipates our supplications, and obtains aid for us before we ask for it.

Another pious writer states that Mary is more anxious to obtain graces for us than we are to receive them. That is why, he says, we will always find her hands full of mercies



and graces. And according to Saint Bonaventure, Mary's desire for our welfare and salvation is so great that she feels offended not only by those who do her positive injury, but also by those who neglect to ask favors of her. ✨

### Prayer

*O great Mother of God, you pray for all, pray also to your Son for me. Tell him that I am one of your clients, and that you are my protectress. Tell him that in you, after Jesus himself, I have placed all my hopes. Tell him, too, to pardon me, for I am truly repentant of all my sins. O Mary, my Hope, in you I trust. O great Mother of God and Mother of mercy, behold at your feet a sinner who has not once but often lost the grace of God. I come to you now asking not for earthly goods, but for the graces I need to save my soul. It is through the merits of Jesus and through your intercession that I will be saved. Do not ever cease to pray for me, especially when you see me in danger of again losing God's grace. Mary, have pity on me! Amen.*

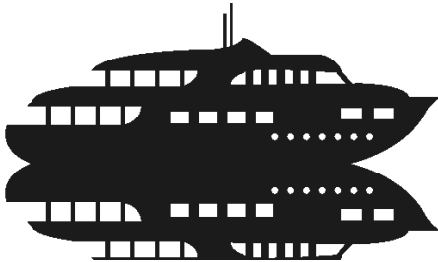
From *Preparation for Death: Prayers and Consolations for the Final Journey*, Excerpts From Saint Alphonsus Liguori, edited by Norman J. Muckerman, CSSR, © 1998 Liguori Publications. Visit [Liguori.org](http://Liguori.org)

# Mailbox

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

**Q.** *I sometimes enjoy a couple of beers as I relax after a hard day's work. I've noticed that when I'm drinking the beer I seem not to experience my usual struggle with anxiety. Now I'm wondering if I should stop drinking the beer because I may be "self-medicating."*

**A.** I'm not recommending that anyone drink beer or any other alcoholic beverage as a way of managing his or her anxiety and scrupulosity. I think what's important in your question is not the beverage but the relaxation that results. If you enjoy the beer, then go ahead and drink the beer. Put your feet up and relax. That's good for everyone, and it seems it results in a particularly healthy benefit for you. A little respite from anxiety and worry is a good thing.



**Q.** *I know you have answered this question many times before, but I really need a clarification. Is it OK to go on a cruise with my family and friends if there is a possibility that we'll miss Sunday Mass because there will be no opportunity to fulfill our obligation? I really want to go on a trip with my family, but I can't guarantee that we'll be able to attend Sunday Mass.*

**A.** Yes, it's perfectly acceptable to go on the cruise. Most cruise lines provide an opportunity for Mass, often even daily Mass, in order to accommodate their Catholic passengers. However, even if no Mass is offered, you may still book the cruise. You aren't required to exert superhuman effort to fulfill this obligation. Common sense and normal procedures and opportunities are essential to life, and this is an example of where this basic rule applies.



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 donate by credit card, please go to [ScrupulousAnonymous.org](http://ScrupulousAnonymous.org) and click on Support the Ministry. To donate by check, 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](http://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](http://Redemptorists.com)).