

Scrupulous ANONYMOUS

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Ten Commandments of OCD-Based Scrupulosity

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PART 3 OF 3

In this third and last installment, I propose four more commandments to help us understand scrupulosity as a religious manifestation of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). Understanding the daily struggle with scrupulosity doesn't automatically make everything better, but it's a start in the right direction.



Seventh Commandment

Extend the same compassion to yourself that you routinely extend to others.

People with scrupulosity are some of the most understanding, forgiving, compassionate people I've ever encountered. During scrupulosity retreats, group members give the gift of patience as stories are shared, the gift of forgiveness when it's needed most, and the gift of compassion in the form of sincere hugs of acceptance and encouragement.

The compassion I routinely witness on retreat

weekends reminds me of the compassion we experience with close friends and family. It's difficult *not* to extend understanding and compassionate embrace when you know what it means to suffer, to be filled with anxiety, to long for understanding and acceptance. I wish scrupulous people could be with other scrupulous people in ordinary times instead of only in extraordinary moments.

It's hard to extend the same compassionate understanding and acceptance to yourself, but it's essential—and worth the struggle and effort—to try to experience it. And if you can't find anyone to hug you, close your eyes and let Jesus hug you.



Eighth Commandment

Learn to laugh often and with enthusiasm.

Sometimes a smile or a giggle does the trick, but often the most appropriate response to something funny is nothing less than a deep-belly, laugh-out-loud howl from the core of your being, a laugh that attracts attention and is contagious.

And there's the rub for people with scrupulosity: Noticeably loud laughter is often stifled because it attracts attention—if you're noticed, perhaps you'll be noticed in a way that exposes your scrupulous condition.

A comedian once remarked that when a laugh is called for and you don't respond, you "owe a laugh." The energy you should have released builds within you and is expressed in other ways, some

less desirable than others. So don't stifle your full and enthusiastic participation in life. *God enjoys our laughter and our celebrations.*



Ninth Commandment

Relax: Scrupulosity is not contagious.

People with scrupulosity often fear accidentally passing their condition to their spouse, children, and grandchildren. Their fear is real, but scientists have yet to find a genetic or chemical imbalance that triggers OCD/scrupulosity.

The evidence does suggest that people with scrupulosity are very aware of their behavior and make every effort not to encourage such behavior in the people they love.



Tenth Commandment

At least once a day, recall your love of God and God's love for you.

Perhaps this is the most important commandment of all. Every day, sometimes more than once, remind yourself that you're loved by God exactly as you are—not as you might one day be. I live each day because God holds me in his loving hands and enables my life. I cannot control the life force within me. It comes entirely as a gift of God's grace and love each moment of the day. It's because of God's love for me that I am alive—not only at this moment, but also in the eternal life to come. I am in God, and God is in me.

The contemplative saints of our spiritual tradition—Saint Teresa of Avila, Saint John of the Cross, Saint Alphonsus Liguori, Blessed Teresa of



Calcutta, and so many more—have shared with us the most important teaching moments of their lives. In these moments, these great men and women realized that any separation they perceived between the human person and the creative God is the ultimate illusion.

We rest entirely and completely in God. Separation between ourselves and God is unsustainable when we accept our total and complete dependence on God. This is the ultimate manifestation of unity and integrity that human beings are blessed with as a result of God's gift to us. God is love, and we abide in the love of God each day and for all eternity.

Please note: Along with the other commandments on the Scrupulous Anonymous website, these new commandments are designed to help you. However, if they don't, put these new commandments aside and stick with what is useful and necessary for you. Focus on what works for you.

To view more commandments for the scrupulous as well as past newsletters and other information, visit Liguori.org, scroll down to Spiritual Newsletters, and click on Scrupulous Anonymous.

Holy Saturday of Grief

The following is adapted from *Why Do You Weep? Finding Consolation and Peace in Times of Grief* by Larry Kaufmann, CSsR; Seán Wales, CSsR; and Russell Pollitt, SJ (Liguori Publications, © 2012).

Our hearts are torn open when a loved one dies. We wait for a word from God to be spoken into our pain. And the word we usually hear is...nothing but silence! Indeed, the silence of God.

To enter into the silence that results from grief and to stay with that silence takes us to the very beginning of creation, to the formless, empty void described in the Book of Genesis. Slowly, quietly, and gently during days of grief and loss we begin to hear the soft wings of the Holy Spirit at the dawn of creation, bringing to birth and mothering new life in the midst of darkness and death. God's Spirit brings life out of the dark void of nothingness.

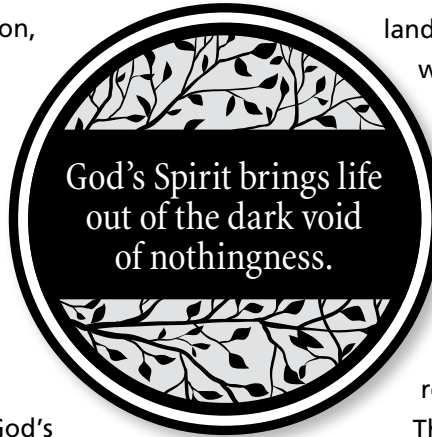
There is another "silence" we can enter in the midst of grief. In the wordlessness of bereavement, we also find ourselves in the dark silent tomb of Holy Saturday, where Jesus was buried after his death. It's a necessary place to be for a while (and only a mourner knows how long that "while" should be). A Christian funeral is a celebration of the death

and resurrection of Christ as we pass with him from our own Good Friday to share in his Easter Sunday.

But perhaps we too easily pass over that middle Saturday—the longest day—of silent waiting. Hope needs to bide its time, yet we fail to dwell on that time when Jesus is truly dead among the dead, cut off from the

land of the living, gone from this world into eternal silence. To hurry past that Holy Saturday to the triumph of Easter Sunday is to deny the harsh reality of Jesus' death and perhaps our own. Yet without the ability to grieve, we can have no capacity for real hope.

The death of a loved one plunges us into the full meaning of that Holy Saturday, a day of wondering when God will act, a day of feeling the absence of God, a day when all our theories and pious thoughts are silenced. Holy Saturday has been called "the forgotten day." Yet it is an amazing day of destiny. Holy Saturday has also been called "that dark space where the tomb becomes the womb, that uncertain time when the light creeps in."





SCRUPULOUS ANONYMOUS MAILBOX

One Liguori Drive • Liguori, MO 63057-9999

Q *On Sundays, may I combine trash from different rooms into one large trash bag to be put outside? May I wash my hair on Sundays if there isn't time during the week?*

A Yes, of course. There is absolutely no reason you can't pick up your trash, wash your hair, or perform any other routine tasks necessary for life—even if you did have time to do them on other days of the week. "Keeping holy the Sabbath day" doesn't mean you sit motionless until the day passes. God wants us to engage in and enjoy life. Life, and by extension the Sabbath, is not intended to be a burden that is endured.

Q *Are any SA retreats scheduled for 2012? I've been looking forward to a retreat and hope you've been able to work something out.*

A I've scheduled two retreats (see below) for the members of SA. I've revised and updated the material since the last retreat, so I believe it will be an even more useful retreat weekend than ever.

Of course, the most important blessing of an SA retreat weekend is that members experience each other and share their journey and their struggle with others who understand. Anything else that happens on the retreat weekend is of secondary importance.



2012 Scrupulous Anonymous Retreats Presented by Fr. Thomas M. Santa, CSSR

Friday, Oct. 26 – Sunday, Oct. 28
Redemptorist Renewal Center, Tucson, AZ
For information, call 520-744-3400 or visit
desertrenewal.org and click on RRC Calendar

Friday, Dec. 7 – Sunday, Dec. 8
Perpetual Help Retreat Center, Oconomowoc, WI
For information, call 262-567-6900

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