

Scrupulous ANONYMOUS

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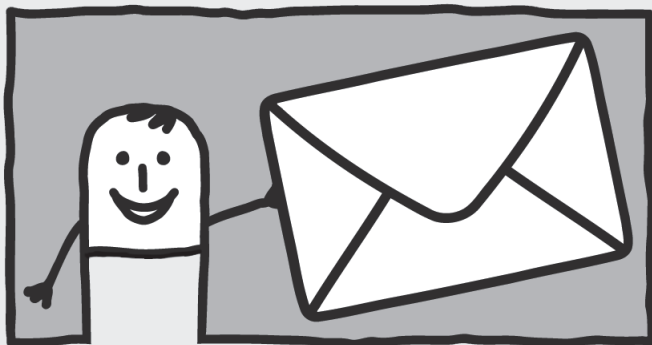
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The SA Mailbox



by Fr. Thomas M. Santa, C.Ss.R.

It's been awhile since we dedicated an entire issue to reader questions, and it's perhaps most appropriate to do so during the dog days of summer. The letters that follow represent the concerns and questions you've sent to us.

Q *Father, can you meet with me? I want to love God and not be constantly afraid of offending him or of hurting someone. Someone out there must understand my twisted thinking. Perhaps it's you.*

A Thank you for your confidence in me, but it's not possible for me to meet with you. It would also be counterproductive, and you wouldn't receive the peace you seek.

Trying to meet with me or trying to find someone who understands you completely is actually an obstacle to God's grace working in your life. You're *already* in a relationship with the person who knows you best—you. You needn't look in any other direction. To do so is the ultimate distraction from your spiritual path.

Pray for the ability to accept yourself exactly as you are, at this moment, at this time and place. You *already* are the person God loves, exactly as you are *today*.

Try to love yourself as God *already* loves you. I guarantee that this is the only path that will lead you to peace and serenity.

That being said, it is nevertheless important to have a stable and long-term relationship with a confessor, a spiritual director, or some kind of mentor who can advise and support you. However, that's an entirely different kind of relationship than the kind you're asking about.

Q *The president of a company whose products I buy gives a large donation each year to an organization disapproved of by the Catholic Church. Is it a sin to do business with this company?*

A No. There is no reason to discontinue your use and patronage of this company's products. Even though a portion of your fees contribute to the profit share of the president, you are not promoting, encouraging, or donating to the organization in question.

Obviously a relationship exists between the fees you pay, the profits of the president and the company, and the donation, but that relationship is minuscule. If you buy the company's products for a purpose other than to enable the donation, it's totally acceptable to continue doing so.

Also, remember, you have no direct knowledge of the other sources of the president's wealth and other charitable gifts—the president may, for example, contribute to other causes supported by the Church. So be at peace about this and continue to enjoy buying and using these products.

Q *I have an interest in early railroads of the 1830s and 1840s. Through my research I discovered that Pope Gregory XVI said railroads were the "work of Satan." Were the people who worked on the railroads in those days sinning? Is this time period off limits for me to study?*

A You're not sinning by studying the railroads of this time, nor were the people who worked on them.

Pope Gregory XVI (1765–1846) did indeed dislike railroads and most other technological inventions of his day. Scholars attribute his dislike not so much to the technology, but rather to his suspicion that it was used to great effect by the people who favored the overthrow of the papal states and the end of the monarchical rule of the pope in these territories.

His distrust was probably well founded: The papal states were lost with the unification of the Italian State in 1870, and some of the victorious Italian troops who secured the territories were transported by railroads.

Look at this as more of an interesting footnote to history rather than an occasion of sin for you and also for the people of that time and place. Continue your research and your study in peace.

Q *This may sound a little strange, but I thank God every day for my scrupulosity. About two years ago I started praying the serenity prayer, and the words "the serenity to accept the things I cannot change" prompted me to begin this practice. What do you think about this practice?*

A I admire you for the courage it takes to make this prayer a central part of your spiritual practice, and I applaud your willingness to be open to the grace of God in this manner.

Part of the struggle of scrupulosity is the seemingly constant battle to overcome the compulsion associated with it. Many people are emotionally and spiritually drained as a result of this minute-by-minute struggle. To have the courage to resist the struggle and to accept scrupulosity as a part of your life is praiseworthy.

I imagine that as a result of your prayer you are now able to engage your scrupulosity from the position of a person who does not *struggle* but who rather *observes* how scrupulosity is manifested. You've probably learned to recognize the different levels of intensity, measured the depth of feeling and anxiety, and monitored how you react to certain situations. Scrupulosity has not become



a welcome guest in your home, but you've learned to accommodate it with some peace.

Continue saying the serenity prayer. I believe you've made the right decision.

Q *I just discovered the SA archives on Liguori Publications' website. Thank you for providing this wonderful service. It's refreshing to have this kind of encouragement and wisdom just a click away!*

Scrupulous Anonymous newsletters from the January 2000 issue through the current issue can be accessed through the Liguori Publications website (www.liguori.org). Scroll down to the bottom of the page, find the heading **Spiritual Newsletters**, and click on the **Scrupulous Anonymous** link below it. Here is a wealth of information and advice you may find helpful. To view back issues of the newsletter, click on **View the Archives** and choose an issue to download.

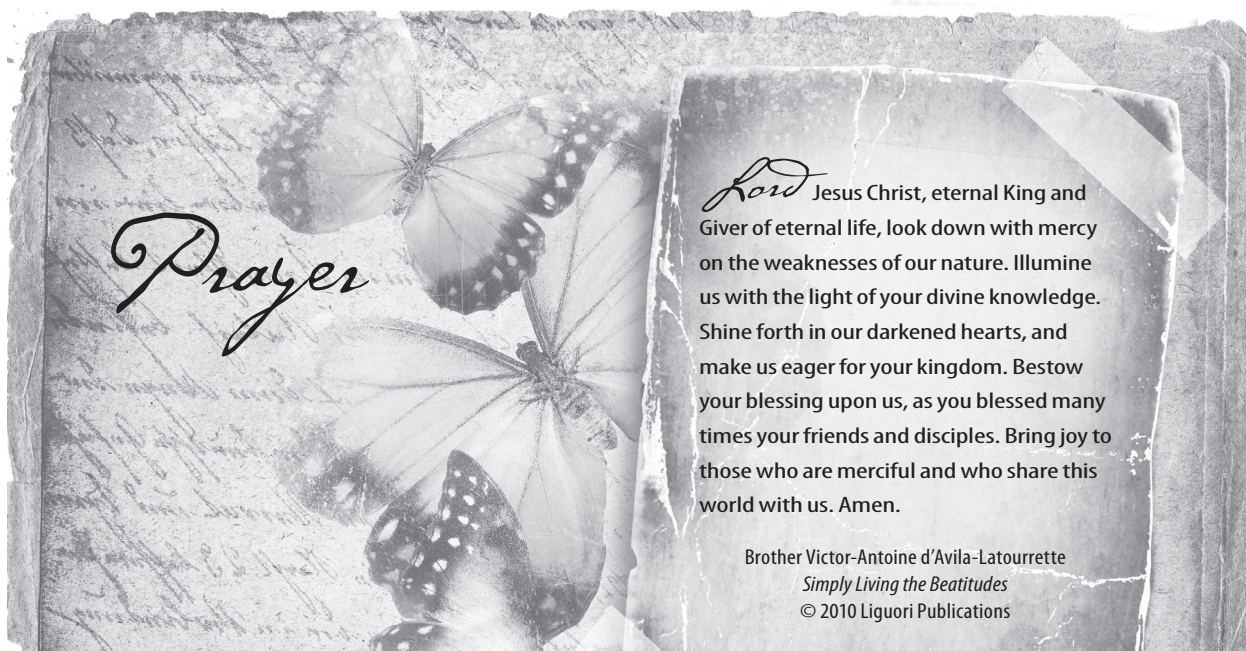
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Available for purchase from Liguori Publications is the book *Understanding Scrupulosity*. Many people have found this book to be very helpful not only for themselves but also for members of their families. Some SA members have even bought the book and presented it as a gift to their pastor, inviting him to read it and share it with other members of the pastoral staff.

Thank you for helping me remind SA members about these very important and essential resources.

Please send your questions for Fr. Santa to *Scrupulous Anonymous* Mailbox, Liguori Publications, One Liguori Drive, Liguori, MO 63057. He is unable to respond to individual letters but will answer the most common questions in the SA newsletter.





Modeling Mary

The following is adapted from *The Eucharist and the Rosary: Mystery, Meditation, Power, Prayer* by Matt Swaim (© 2010 Liguori Publications).

The first reception of the “Good News” or “Gospel” of Jesus Christ came not to a prominent religious leader nor to an established prophet or scribe, but rather to a Jewish peasant girl, Mary of Nazareth.

Faith and works found their intersection at the moment of the announcement of Jesus’ conception in the form of Mary’s response to Gabriel, “Let it be with me according to your word” (Luke 1:38). These spoken words from God marked the entry point into history of the Incarnate Word of God.

The spoken and written word is the primary way in which we communicate. Jesus, the Word himself, is therefore God’s greatest communication to humanity. In Mary’s reception of the Gospel, the Word was not merely a message or abstract principle, but Someone Incarnate. He took form inside her, developed, matured, and became accessible to those outside of Mary. In the same way, when we hear the Gospel announced to us at every Mass, we should be attentive, responsive, and willing to allow the Word of the Lord to implant himself in *us*, to grow, and to mature to the point of making us able to share him with others.

And in taking the Eucharist into our bodies as Mary took Jesus into her womb, what is for us an intensely intimate moment of receiving holy Communion becomes a potential avenue of grace for the world.

When we talk about Mary as the model for Christian life, we must begin by focusing on this pinpoint of Christian history: There was a nanosecond in time where the Creator of the universe took on embryonic human flesh in the womb of a virgin and that the hinge upon which all history swings is the Annunciation. Kingdoms have risen and fallen based on what happened in that brief conversation between Mary and Gabriel.

The soil is a factor when it comes to projecting the harvest. When we hear the Gospel announced at Mass, we must, like Mary, remain fertile and receptive to what we are witnessing, because the Word of the Lord is a sown seed, a tangible investment that God makes in us through the person of his Son. It is our job to present ourselves as an environment in which the spoken word can manifest itself as the lived Word, by modeling ourselves after Mary, the immaculate template for all Christians.

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