

Scrupulous ANONYMOUS

PUBLISHED EACH MONTH BY THE REDEMPTORISTS

SEPTEMBER 2015

Vol. 52, No. 9



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

WE NEED YOUR HELP

We urgently need your prayers and financial support to maintain our website and to continue offering this newsletter in print for our many members who don't have Internet access. To send a check, please follow the instructions on page 4. To donate with a credit card, go to ScrupulousAnonymous.org and click on the Donate button. Thank you for your past and continued support of this important ministry!

Exaggerated Responsibility

by Fr. Thomas M. Santa

People who live in the “developed” world enjoy the gift of being accounted for, of having our personhood registered, acknowledged, and counted. We’re not anonymous. We have a sense of self. We understand who we are as individual people and who we are in relationship to others. We make decisions and are capable of implementing them, for good or for bad. Our individuality is a privilege.

Many people never enjoy this privilege. They don’t know what it means to make a choice based on their own feelings, desires, and preferences. In some cultures, the idea of individuality is so mistrusted that those who stand apart from the crowd and strike out on their own are involuntarily separated from family and community—and even killed.

But at this point in history in this part of the world, most of us are free to make our own decisions and enjoy or suffer the consequences. We’re also free to set aside our own demands and perceptions to be in relationships. Letting go of our own way of understanding and experiencing another’s is ultimately satisfying and life-giving. We’re happier and more complete when we’re in relationships with others, but relationships demand that we become more truthful, more vulnerable, and ultimately more intimate.

Jesus didn’t live in this culture of individuality we hold so easily. His teachings are anchored in a tribal culture and are therefore best understood within the context of community and family and not from the individual perspective of modern culture.

It's very important that people with scrupulosity understand this distinction. They labor under the burden of an exaggerated responsibility of self that isolates them as they strive to be perfect, pulling them away from relationship and into an almost parallel reality that is unsustainable by anyone.

This isn't sin, but a significant psychological disorder that denies individuals a healthy sense of self and relationship. They avoid the experience of relationship—trust, vulnerability, and intimacy—because they perceive it as loss of control.

The pull and tug of scrupulosity constantly raging within them can become debilitating. Depression, isolation, and constant worry and anxiety are a daily experience. Eventually the disorder claims a perverse victory that results in a hollow shell of a person drained of all life and for whom day-to-day living is more of a burden than a joy. Scrupulosity is an all-consuming, cruel, relentless master who is never satisfied.

But there's a twist in this story: The disorder itself suggests a path—extremely difficult to be sure, but still a path—that leads us to re-

ject isolation and embrace relationship. When a person sets aside the fear and the anxiety of the moment and tries to be as truthful as possible with another person—to admit a sense of vulnerability—the doorway to intimacy is opened. Only through intimacy and profound spiritual truth can we recognize and accept that we're loved and accepted exactly as we are and not as we one day might be. Only then can real healing be possible.

People with scrupulosity often fear that sharing their true feelings will push others away, but nothing could be further from the truth: No matter how wounded we are or painful it may be, it's not the connection that repels others—it's the isolation.

God's grace invites us to reject isolation and the exaggerated sense of responsibility of self that supports it.

God's grace invites us to embrace connection and the relationships that enable us to experience God's grace.

Grace abounds at the moment of connection, not at the moment of isolation.

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

Friday, Sept. 25 – Sunday, Sept. 27, 2015

Cedarbrake Catholic Retreat Center
5602 Highway 317
Belton, TX 76513
254-780-2436
www.bit.ly/SARetreat-Austin

Friday, Jan. 15 – Sunday, Jan. 17, 2016

Spiritual Life Center (Wichita, KS)
7100 East 45th Street North
Bel Aire, KS 67226
316-744-0167
www.bit.ly/SARetreat-Wichita

Reflection

Adapted from [Grateful Meditations for Every Day of Ordinary Time \(Weeks 23–34\)](#)
by Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney (Liguori Publications, © 2013).

It is so easy to get lost. We lose ourselves when we try to buy happiness with clothes, houses, cars, and the latest video games. We lose ourselves when we take advantage of others as we build a lucrative career. We lose ourselves when we ignore the poor, the starving, and the homeless. We lose ourselves when we are verbally, mentally, spiritually, or physically abusive. We lose ourselves when we refuse to share our plenty with those who have nothing. We lose ourselves when we allow the hurts and wounds from life experiences to close our hearts to love.

Who we are is the mystery of creation, the mystery of God's love manifesting as individual human persons made in the very

image of God's own love and goodness. Who we are is a living expression of this loving, compassionate, kind, forgiving God. Who we are is a call to be the hands, voice, and comfort of God in the world. How easy it is to lose sight of who we are and our mission to bring love and healing to our broken world. How easy it is to forget we are God's people and lose ourselves in our efforts to be secure, safe, and successful.

Yet God never loses us. God is with us always, waiting for us to wake up and realize who we are. God is ever patient with our weaknesses, ever joyful when we remember who we are and turn to God in gratitude for God's mercy and love.

Ponder: When have I felt mentally, emotionally, or spiritually lost?

Prayer: Lord, I am grateful for your gentle, guiding ways. Save me from losing myself. Help me to find my way to your heart of goodness.



SCRUPULOUS ANONYMOUS

MAILBOX

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NEWSLETTER@LIGUORI.ORG

Q *Father, you made a terrible error in the July issue. We read the newsletter not to receive liberal viewpoints, but rather to receive good conservative and orthodox teaching.*

A I am sorry to disappoint you, but I disagree with your perception of my response. I didn't offer a *liberal* directive. I offered a *sensible and pastoral* directive. My answers to all the questions I'm asked are anchored firmly in the orthodox, traditional, and pastorally sound practices of the Church. I would never stray from this perspective, because it would be a disservice to our readers.

Q *I read that serious cruelty to animals is a mortal sin. When I see things on the road that could be small rodents, snakes, or turtles, I try to avoid them, but sometimes it's impossible. Is that cruel, and therefore a mortal sin?*

A No, not by any stretch of the imagination. You are not engaging in cruelty to animals in any manner. What about the millions of microbes that are routinely dying on your skin, on the ground in front of you, on the chair that you are sitting on at this moment? The only difference is that you can see the dead animals on the road, but you cannot see the dead microbes. Both were living beings at one time. It's not cruelty but rather a harsh reality of life, and it's unavoidable.

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