

Scrupulous ANONYMOUS

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Scrupulous Anonymous
One Liguori Drive
Liguori, MO 63057-9999

A Holiday Bouquet

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

Holiday tables often feature vibrant, colorful centerpieces with soothing scents that complement festivities and make shared meals all the more memorable. In honor of this tradition, I'm offering SA readers a virtual holiday bouquet to enliven the spirit and allow us to celebrate together.

Our bouquet includes a sampling of the following flowers:

Carnation



One of the most popular flowers, the carnation will be the foundation of our bouquet. It's traditionally symbolic of love and fascination and perhaps might encourage our holiday spirit.

Not only are *we* loved—we are people who love others. The fascinating interplay and communication that is part and parcel of relationships invites us to step back and give thanks to God. Our cares and concerns are undoubtedly heightened because of the stress that accompanies the holidays, but it's important nonetheless to be thankful.

The dynamics of relationships are powerful expressions of the grace of God at work in our lives. The carnation in our

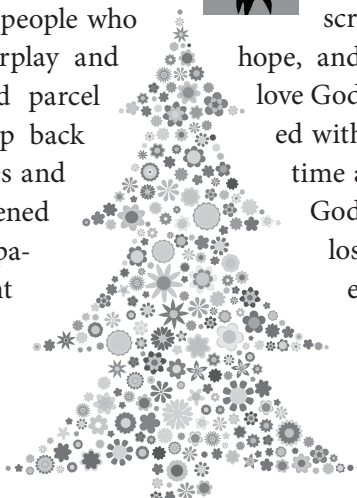
holiday bouquet reminds us of this abundant and fascinating grace.

Iris



This flower traditionally symbolizes faith, hope, and wisdom. People with scrupulosity have great faith, a lively hope, and abundant wisdom. You want to love God, you hope to one day be fully united with God in eternity, and you take the time and effort to learn and study about God. Admittedly, people with scrupulosity can expend a little too much effort—indeed, sometimes the effort is all-consuming—nevertheless, *at the core of your personhood is a basic goodness.*

People with scrupulosity aren't bad people. They're



good people who struggle to know and accept their own goodness. Let the iris in your holiday bouquet remind you that you're a person of faith and hope filled with the wisdom of God.



Orchid

This exotic flower traditionally symbolizes rare and delicate beauty. One or two in our bouquet will gently invite us to reflect on the moments in our lives when we've been free of anxiety and guilt.

For scrupulous people such moments seem far out of reach, but in reality we do have profound moments of the seemingly unreachable. An orchid in our holiday bouquet may remind us to hold on to the realistic hope that all will be well.



Sunflower

The sunflower reminds us of the love and devotion we offer as we try to serve God in ways big and small. Scrupulous people have a hard time believing they adequately give adoration and praise to God, but it's true: Through God's grace, we live and move and exist.

God's grace reflects back to God the abundance of his life and his love made manifest in our lives. We should be thankful that this interaction between the Creator and his creature isn't dependent on how *we* perceive or understand it. The sunflower in our bouquet reminds us that we *do* warmly give praise and adoration to God even though we may not be fully aware of it.



Stargazer Lily

The stargazer lily traditionally symbolizes innocence and purity and is commonly associated with honor and aspiration. Innocence and purity remind us of the condition

of our souls when we were called into life by God. This state of being is celebrated in the sacraments of baptism and reconciliation.

Despite our failures, our weaknesses, and our sins, we aspire to honorably serve God as best we can. The act of living—of being a human being—includes many bumps. We all scuff up our original innocence and purity; what sets us apart from one another is how we respond to the reality of our experience and how we acknowledge our need for God's constant grace and blessing.

The stargazer lily reminds us of what we were *and* how we will be again one day as a result of God's sanctifying and actual grace.



Rose

Because the rose comes in so many colors, each has its own traditional meaning—but each rose generally symbolizes love. In our bouquet, the rose reminds us of our love for God and of God's love for us. Even though we struggle and often doubt that we're lovable, and even though we're much more inclined to see why we're unloved rather than loved, it's important to remember that our perception of ourselves isn't God's perception of us.

God delights in his creations. God delights in each of us and in all of our efforts, even those that are incomplete or less than perfect. The addition of the rose to our holiday bouquet reminds us of everlasting and eternal love.

During this holiday season I pray that you experience love, fascination, faith, hope, wisdom, rare and delicate beauty, warmth and adoration, innocence and purity, honor and aspiration, and finally, everlasting and eternal love.



Light for All the World

The following is adapted from *The Essential Advent and Christmas Handbook: A Daily Companion* (Liguori Publications, © 2000)

Almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth, we believe you are our Father and that you can make us your children, who are worthy of you as brothers and sisters who lead one another closer to you and walk in your light.

We believe you've shared all your wisdom, your holiness, and your love with your Son, your eternal Word. By sending him to be our brother, you've given us everything.

We believe in Jesus Christ, Light of Light, true God, and true human. Through him and in him, we share in your own life.

We believe you've called us into your light by sending us your Son and the Spirit of Truth. If we entrust ourselves to you and are guided by the Holy Spirit, we will not walk in darkness. We will become, for each other, a humble light that points to you, the One who is Light of Light.

Father, we praise you for having glorified your Servant, Jesus Christ, who has given his

life for his sisters and brothers. For all of us, you made him the source of everlasting life. We thank you for having called us to abide in Christ, and to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Amen.

In the eyes of the Beholder, our God, we are no more beloved or important for our spiritual nature than we are for our loving service to others. We're a mix of natural piety and practical service. Jesus reminds Martha and Mary and all of us that there are times to respond to the world of the spirit and times to be caught up in the practicalities of daily living.

We'll spend our lifetimes trying to get the right mix. In the meantime, it's good to remember, "Thou are not caged, but fitly stalled in clay!"

From *Through Another Lens: Reflections on the Gospels, Year C*,
by Barbara Jean Franklin, ASC (Liguori, 2009).



SCRUPULOUS ANONYMOUS MAILBOX

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Q Now you did it. Just as I finally found some peace with my practices, you write that we shouldn't pay attention to old advice. I'm 85 years old. I don't need this new anxiety.

A Don't make my statement into a new catastrophe. I didn't direct anyone to discard any practice that helps or gives comfort.

I was trying to point out the importance of perspective. An author of 50 years ago didn't know about the research that has resulted in today's psychological and spiritual directives. So when you're looking for direction, be more inclined to trust the advice in newer texts.

Old texts are sometimes reissued with a new cover, giving the impression that the "new" book reflects current thought and practice even though it doesn't. In the case of a cookbook, the worst result would be a compromised dinner. But with a book about scrupulosity, the result may range from merely unhelpful to

even harmful. If you check the publication date, you'll avoid being fooled by a new cover on an old book.

Q The holy days of obligation during Advent and Christmas seem to change from year to year. How do I keep them straight?

A Some feast days are always celebrated by the universal Church as holy days of obligation, while other days are celebrated according to local custom and the direction of the bishop.

Christmas is a holy day of obligation everywhere, with no exceptions, but the feasts of the Immaculate Conception and Mary, Mother of God, may not be.

The best way to know what to do is to pay attention to the announcements at Mass or call your parish or archdiocesan office.



2010 Scrupulous Anonymous Retreat

Friday, May 14, 2010 – Sunday, May 16, 2010

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

Redemptorist Renewal Center, Tucson, Arizona

**For more information, visit www.desertrenewal.org
and click on "Events Calendar" or call 520-744-3400.**

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