

Scrupulous ANONYMOUS

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Scrupulous Anonymous
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IMPORTANT NOTICE

We are updating our mail list, and we need your help. To continue receiving the Scrupulous Anonymous newsletter by mail, please use the enclosed return envelope to send us your name, street address, city, state, and zip code. If you can, please include \$1 to help defray the cost of maintaining our database. This is not required, but it will be most appreciated. If we do not receive your information by December 15, 2015, we'll assume you no longer wish to receive the newsletter and remove you from our list. Thank you!

Are You Hungry Enough to Believe?

by Fr. Thomas M. Santa

When Blessed Mother Teresa heard about a family who hadn't eaten for four days, she took rice to their home. The mother divided the small amount into two equal portions and told her son to take one portion to their neighbors because they hadn't eaten for four days either.

At first glance, that story may not seem to have a Christmassy theme, but it's actually one of the greatest Christmas stories imaginable.

There have been moments in my life when I've been generous and moments when I've been keenly aware of others' needs, but never have I not eaten

for four days. Never have I been grateful for only a small pile of rice. Never have I been presented with the opportunity to give not out of my abundance, but "out of the little bit that I have."

It's simply an accident of birth that I've never experienced what that family experienced. I was born in a country of wealth and prosperity, and I've been given the opportunity to grow, flourish, explore my talents and abilities, and make choices about what I like and don't like, will and won't do. I've been blessed with abundance.

Or perhaps not.

Is abundance always a blessing? If we've never been as hungry as the Indian family in the story, should we be grateful? Of course—but even when we're filled, we can lack the ability to clearly see and understand. Hunger has a way of helping us separate the important from the essential. Without hunger—physical or spiritual—it's hard to be fully aware of God's presence and our absolute dependence on God for all that we are.

In John 6:51–58, Jesus tells the people that he will fill their hunger, that he will feed them and nourish them, because he is the “Bread of Life.” The people have experienced the miracle of the loaves and fishes and have been filled until they can eat no more, with enough leftover scraps to fill twelve wicker baskets. Because they have already been filled, the crowd struggles to understand what Jesus means when he identifies himself as the Bread of Life. Since they are no longer hungry, they don't listen.

Perhaps the challenge of this gospel story is to pray to never be so stuffed, so comfortable, and so

filled that we no longer hunger for that which truly gives us life.

At Christmas, many of us are filled with abundance of everything—good food, good gifts, good company of family and friends. It can be hard to remember that sometimes blessings aren't so accessible. It can be hard to remember that even in this season of abundant joy, some people feel alone, isolated, and alienated from everything around them.

If we are truly blessed to feel filled rather than empty, it's a good spiritual practice to be grateful and to remind ourselves that only Jesus, our Bread of Life, can satisfy our true hungers.

For those who struggle with the reception of holy Communion, this is *not* a time to deprive yourself of the sacrament.

Christmas *is* a good time to remember Pope Francis' teaching that the Eucharist is not a reward for the perfect, but a remedy for those who yearn to be filled and made complete.

Scrupulous Anonymous Retreat

Presented by Fr. Thomas M. Santa, CSsR

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 *Joyful Meditations for Every Day of Advent and the 12 Days of Christmas* by Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney (Liguori Publications, © 2010).

God knows our whole self—physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. God knows we need attention. God knows we need food, clothing, water, and shelter. God knows we need money to pay our bills. God knows we need to relax and enjoy life. God knows we need to find healthy ways to release our anger, sadness, fear, and shame. God knows we need to feel loved and to express the deep love inside us.

We can trust God to feed us when our human and spiritual needs are unfulfilled. We may have developed the habit of being self-sufficient, thinking we can meet our own needs. We may have been taught that if we want something we must earn it or do it ourselves. Yet God's compassion anticipates our needs and longs to fulfill them. Often it is through the kindness of people—friends or strangers—that God's compassion comes to us.

Ponder: When have I experienced the compassion of God?

Prayer: Lord, I am hungry for so much. Teach me to trust that you are meeting my every need. Bless me with the compassion to reach out to others who are physically and spiritually hungry.

Practice: Today I will bring canned goods to a local food pantry.



SCRUPULOUS ANONYMOUS

MAILBOX

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NEWSLETTER@LIGUORI.ORG

Q *I have many blasphemous thoughts throughout the day. Any person, object, word, or phrase can set them off. I'm tormented by all of this mortal sin and have despaired of ever being free of this affliction.*

A Your only hope for peace of mind is to realize that you're suffering not from sin of any kind, but from the psychological affliction *scrupulosity*. You have no moral responsibility for any of these thoughts.

Instead of fighting your perceived mortal sin, seek the help of a medical professional. We've made great progress with medical help for scrupulosity, and there's no reason to deprive yourself of treatment. Call a doctor and make an appointment. This is a much more grace-filled action than simply living with despair.

Q *When I go to confession, the priest cuts me off many times and tells me to confess my sins, not my husband's. I'm just trying to explain why I do what I do and what I have to put up with. Why can't the priest be more patient?*

A It seems to me that the priest confessor has been very patient with you and has discerned that you are more comfortable talking about your perceptions rather than your actions. He's encouraging you to talk about yourself, not about your husband. Perhaps he could be a little more diplomatic, but I think his heart is in the right place. Why not try celebrating the sacrament without any reference to your husband and see how that goes for you?

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