

# Scrupulous ANONYMOUS

PUBLISHED EACH MONTH BY THE REDEMPТОRISTS

FEBRUARY 2017

Vol. 54, No. 2



Scrupulous Anonymous  
One Liguori Drive

Liguori, MO 63057-9999

[ScrupulousAnonymous.org](http://ScrupulousAnonymous.org)

## Healthy Perspective Is Key

by Fr. Thomas M. Santa, CSSR

**O**nce in a while, often without warning, I experience a feeling that is deeply rooted within me. I'm always surprised at the depth of the emotion that comes with it. Sometimes it reinforces my understanding that I'm blessed and loved, but occasionally it comes from a darker place, speaking to me about being hurt, abandoned, or unloved.

Obviously I much prefer the feelings that remind me of the love, enduring relationships, people, events, and circumstances I count as blessings and grace. These memories of being loved and accepted remind me of what is truly important and nourishing in my life. They give me the energy to keep moving forward, to dare to risk and imagine that it can happen again because it has happened before.

The darker feelings come from deeply rooted memories of hurts both real and imagined, disappointments, and fears and anxieties that are part of everyday life. These memories are also blessings and moments of grace, but it takes more effort to claim them as such.

A healthy perspective helps me understand that blessings *and* challenges are essential to life.

Difficult, challenging memories are signposts that mark my journey to fulfillment and purpose. A healthy perspective invites me to reflect on these experiences and be open to the lessons they teach. The Greek philosopher Socrates is quoted as saying, "The unexamined life is not worth living." I wouldn't go quite that far, but you see what I mean.

**R**eflection can be tricky for people with scrupulosity. After all, reflection requires us to momentarily dwell on the past, and we're instructed to avoid doing that because we confuse the art of reflection with making inaccurate personal judgments of severe fault and failure. Our perception of ever-present sinfulness dominates our interpretation of our experience, and any strong feelings that accompany our interpretation make it worse.

But while reflection can be difficult in the face of scrupulosity, it isn't impossible when you have a healthy perspective. This doesn't mean conquering your scrupulosity. It means learning to manage it.

There is a substantial difference between the two. Scrupulosity is a deeply rooted disease that isn't always successfully treated despite our best efforts.

But while it's true that not everyone with scrupulosity overcomes it, it's also true that everyone with scrupulosity can learn to manage it.

Successful management of scrupulosity means 1) learning to acknowledge and accept the feelings that come with being human and 2) learning to resist the urge to make a judgment about those feelings.

Scrupulosity-powered judgment always leads to assumption of sin, usually mortal or at least serious. People who manage their scrupulosity acknowledge this rush to judgment and understand that it needn't dominate their reflection. They learn to postpone judgment for as long as possible, spending as much time as possible actually feeling the feeling.

Imagine you have a strong feeling of anger. When you manage your scrupulosity, you try to identify why you are angry. What is it that makes me feel this anger? When have I experienced it

before? How have I put this anger into perspective? Is my anger justified, or is it a result of being confronted with my own behavior?

Asking yourself questions of reflection leads to the development of a healthy perspective and is far more helpful than determining and dwelling on sinfulness. True reflection involves giving yourself permission to feel the feeling and resisting the temptation to make a judgment about sin.

**L**earning to manage scrupulosity is a long and difficult path, but one that's most certainly worth taking. A helpful spiritual director, confessor and, of course, medical professional can help you find a healthier experience of what it means to be human.

And part of the experience of humanity is feeling intense, dramatic, and unexpected emotion.

*[ScrupulousAnonymous.org](https://www.scrupulousanonymous.org)*

## ***That's Love***

The following reflection is adapted from [Arthritis Novena to St. Alphonsus Liguori](#)  
by Fr. Byron Miller, CSSR (Liguori Publications, © 2016. All rights reserved).

When asked, “What is love?” a six-year-old girl replied, “When my grandma got arthritis, she couldn’t bend over to paint her toenails anymore. So my grandpa does it for her even though he has arthritis too. That’s love.”

Jesus’ compassion for the sick and suffering shows us that people with illness have a special place in God’s heart. As part of the healing process, the Divine Physician offered people with afflictions the surety that they are worthy of God’s love. And to feel profoundly loved by God is to love him in return, according to the patron for people with arthritis, St. Alphonsus Liguori.

Christ endured much pain on the cross for love of us. Alphonsus wrote that “it is not so much the sufferings of Jesus Christ as the love he showed us in enduring them that obliges and all but constrains us to love him,” adding, “Lord, everything that I see on the cross invites me to love: the wood, the form, the wounds in your body; and above all, your love invites me to love you and never forget you.”

For the last forty years of Alphonsus’ life, a spinal disease curved the vertebrae of his neck until his chin was buried permanently on his chest, producing a deep, easily infected wound. He also had chronic respiratory ailments, sciatica, poor vision, partial deafness, scruples, and depression. He was completely crippled for the last twelve years of his life.

His doctor was astounded by his ability to handle pain: “Witnessing his peace, we felt pain had no power over him. Even if his only pain were the wound in his chest that was infected to the bone, it would have been enough to drive another person mad. Never once did I hear him complain.”

Why didn’t Alphonsus complain when the pain was nearly intolerable? “After many treatments, I remain in about the same condition except, perhaps, that I am in greater pain than ever,” he wrote to another priest. “The doctors do not seem to know what to do next, and so I have decided to leave things to God.”

That is love.



SCRUPULOUS ANONYMOUS

# MAILBOX

ONE LIGUORI DRIVE • LIGUORI, MO 63057-9999  
NEWSLETTER@LIGUORI.ORG

**Q** *When I go to confession, I feel my preparation wasn't enough and that I need to examine my conscience more. It's like a never-ending process. I end up in doubt and fear and anxiety.*

**A** You've just described the scrupulous condition. Let me assure you that no amount of effort will satisfy this feeling of inadequacy. The key to managing your disease is to give yourself permission to believe that your feeling of inadequacy it is not a sign of ill-preparedness or a measurement of your desire for forgiveness. It is a manifestation of the disease of scrupulosity.

**Q** *Our parish priest often speaks about being wary of unorthodox teachers who want to lead the people of God astray. How can anyone be sure they're receiving true teachings? Why is there no guarantee?*

**A** I hate to say it, but it seems to me that your pastor is expressing his own fears and anxieties. Unorthodox teachers are not lurking behind every bush or shadow. The Church effectively monitors those who teach and preach in the name of the Church, and people who are truly unorthodox in their teaching soon find themselves relieved of any official position in the Church. Be at peace as you continue to meditate on the Word of God as you receive it.

[ScrupulousAnonymous.org](http://ScrupulousAnonymous.org)

*Please help us continue **Scrupulous Anonymous** and other Liguori Publications ministries by making a tax-deductible donation or remembering us in your will. Our legal title is Redemptorist Fathers dba Liguori Publications, Federal ID 43-0653409. To make a donation, please use the enclosed envelope or mail to Liguori Publications, One Liguori Drive, Liguori, MO 63057.*

© 2017 Liguori Publications. All rights reserved. **Policy on Copying or Distributing: Individuals** may download, print, copy, and/or share issues of *Scrupulous Anonymous* provided 1) you don't remove this copying/distributing policy and 2) you don't seek or accept payment for the copies. **Nonprofit organizations** may quote SA in publications offered at no cost as long as you identify *Scrupulous Anonymous* as the source and include the issue number or date and the publisher (Liguori Publications, ScrupulousAnonymous.org). **For commercial or other purposes**, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior written permission of Liguori Publications. Liguori Publications, a nonprofit corporation, is an apostolate of the Redemptorists (redemptorists.com).