

# Scrupulous ANONYMOUS

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A MINISTRY OF THE REDEMPTORISTS  
SINCE 1964

## *We Begin with Hope, Promise*

FR. THOMAS M. SANTA, CSSR

One of the most fascinating rooms in any publishing house is the archive. At Liguori Publications, age seventy-six, we have preserved one copy or more of every book, pamphlet, newsletter, and magazine we have published. We also have copies of magazines and other material that the Redemptorists published before Fr. Donald Miller and company trekked from Wisconsin to Missouri to set up shop on our current campus in 1947.

A walk through this room reveals products that indicate the state of the Church and the People of God at the time they were published. Prominent during the years immediately following the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) are such titles as *Keeping Your Balance in the Modern Church*. Perennial favorites are books that describe *How to...* Others rekindle memories, such as the best sellers *Good Old Plastic Jesus*, *Handbook for Today's Catholic*, and one of my favorites, *How to Survive Being Married to a Catholic*. I would suggest that some of these books are timely and necessary today.

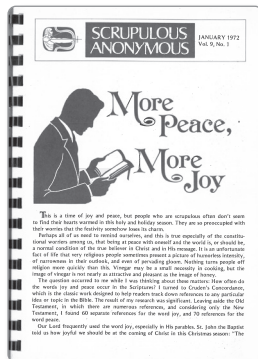
Further exploration of the archive room shows stacks of *Scrupulous Anonymous* newsletters, a publication ministry of the Redemptorists for sixty years. We have produced 721 of these monthly bulletins (including this one), each chronicling the

understanding and experience of scrupulosity from the perspective of the priest director and his answers to questions in the "SA Mailbox" from people with the scrupulous disorder.

Early *Scrupulous Anonymous* newsletters have a compassionate and understanding tone. It seems the original intention of SA was just to offer encouragement and support to those who suffer. Later, an element of persuasive nudging was added to the compassion and understanding. The texts essentially said, "Try this, and try that, and see if it helps." Still later was a return to tradition, repeating the sage advice of St. Alphonsus Liguori, himself

a man with scrupulosity. After a few years of this perspective, a change was introduced that offered a strong appeal to the Church's moral teaching tradition. There were a couple of years where the bulletins seemed to be suitable for any kind of spiritual suffering and were not necessarily useful for the scrupulous.

Recently, a distinction has been made between a "tender conscience" and OCD (obsessive-compulsive disorder), reflecting a profound change in the understanding of the disorder. This change was also reflected in the professional journals of medicine and psychology, with an



emphasis on ERP therapy and “inference-based cognitive behavioral therapy.” References to the importance of good medical care, psychological counseling, spiritual direction, and prescription medicine are also common themes. From the perspective of orthodox Catholic moral theology, the understanding of “diminished capacity” and how it relates to the individual use of free will has become even more important.

We have also moved well beyond that which has been collected in the archive. Today we might best understand that the new archive is not in a physical room but rather in “the cloud.” Digital transmission and the use of social media are now critically important for the effective sharing of information. Liguori Publications has not ignored this dynamic, effectively introducing new and different forms of delivery for the important messages and support of those who suffer with the scrupulous disorder.

Thanks to a monthly email service, this newsletter is now available to a much wider audience than it was in years past. Today we mail about 2,700 printed copies a month. Years ago, it was easily more than 20,000. Find us on the web at [scrupulousanonymous.org](http://scrupulousanonymous.org). Our two pages on Facebook are called “Managing Scrupulosity” and “Understanding Scrupulosity.” A crowd-funding platform for those who desire to support this ministry can be found at [patreon.com/catholicocd](https://patreon.com/catholicocd), or you can use a simple donation button on the website(s) through PayPal. To mail a check, please see the information at the end of the “Mailbox” page. We are grateful for all the support, no matter how it comes to us.

A recently added, exciting component to the *Scrupulous Anonymous* ministry is an opportunity for individual spiritual direction through [managingscrupulosity.com](http://managingscrupulosity.com). This site, active for about two years, has proven helpful, effectively extending the ministry’s outreach in ways that could not have been imagined sixty years ago. In addition, teaching videos are accessible on YouTube by searching “Catholic OCD.” More than

thirty videos on a variety of subjects are available free, with more added frequently.

Planning for the future and what might be possible is important as we take advantage of the opportunities in front us. A list of Catholic therapists who are sensitive to the needs of people with scrupulosity is in the planning stages and should be completed soon. A list of priest confessors who are trained to minister to the scrupulous has long been a dream for those who do this work. It once had been all but impossible to create one, but there seems to be an opportunity to make our dream a reality.

The start of each new year presents an opportunity to reflect on what has passed and look forward to what might be on the horizon. For the ministry of *Scrupulous Anonymous*, the new beginnings of 2024 are full of hope and promise. The most important hope and promise remains very much a necessary part of what we do each day. We rely on the powerful movement of the grace of the Spirit of God to bring healing and wholeness to those who suffer.

Each day, we learn more about the management of the disorder. Each day, people who have suffered begin to experience the hope and calm provided by effective psychological and prescription therapies. Each day, some manifestation of the grace of God is keenly felt and experienced. We are always thankful. ✨

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***The ministry for the scrupulous  
has more services now than ever.  
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# Moving Forward in the New Year

**M**any of us, Lord, live too much in the past, rehashing in our minds all the things that have gone wrong in our lives. We dwell not only on the past, but on the worst of the past. We have a need to beat ourselves over the head with all the “what-could-have-beens” in our lives. How many times do we go over the mistakes we’ve made, the failures we’ve experienced, the arguments we regret having had? Why do we do it? Why do we make ourselves feel bad?

The Bible tells us to forget those things that are behind us (Philippians 3:13–14). It says simply to admit that we are not perfect, to forgive ourselves for any mistakes we have made, and to just get on with our lives.

## MY PRAYER

Help me, Lord, to take your advice to put the past in the past, to simply let go of bad memories and troubled feelings and get my life moving forward again. I know that I wasted too much time trying to figure out why things happened as they did, what I could have done differently to avoid bad situations—and on and on.

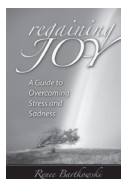
I guess I must keep remembering, Lord, that I can’t fix or change past mistakes by constantly worrying about them. Don’t let me go on continuously blaming myself for something I did—or failed to do—in the past. Don’t let me allow myself to be bullied by guilt.

Let me realize that my life will be much easier and more pleasant if I can more willingly embrace the concept of “forgiving and forgetting” and give up my habit of dwelling on the past. Teach me, Lord, how to live my life more fully in the present.

## MY RESOLUTIONS

Whenever I begin thinking about past mistakes, Lord, I will convince myself that I had done the best I could with what I knew and felt at that time. I will give myself credit for at least recognizing the fact that I do resort to poor judgment at times. I will simply forgive myself, try to improve, and quickly move on.

With your guidance, Lord, I will be smart enough to protect my health by refusing to subject my mind and body to unhealthy, mentally, and physically damaging emotions brought on by rehashing past mistakes, hurts, and failures. I will distract myself from these emotions by putting on some uplifting music and immediately getting busy with something that I enjoy doing or at least don’t mind doing. ✨



**ON SALE!** If you liked this book excerpt and want to read more of *Regaining Joy: A Guide to Overcoming Stress and Sadness* (© 2007 Renee Bartkowski, Liguori Publications, 815805), visit [Liguori.org](http://Liguori.org) or call 800-325-9521. The sale price is a steal at \$1.99!

## LET IT GO

O Lord, please help me let go.

Let go of bitterness,  
let in forgiveness.

Let go of worry,  
let in peace.

Let go of fear,  
let in hope.

Let go of pride,  
let in selflessness.

Let go of hurt,  
let in love.

Let go of hurriedness,  
let in this moment.

Let go of indifference,  
let in compassion.

Let go of property,  
let in generosity.

Let go of this false self,  
let in my true self.

Let it go,  
let you grow.

Source: *On a Bench of Wood: Reflections of God’s Grace*, © 2012 Daryl Madden (Liguori Publications, 821530)

# Mailbox

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

**Q.** *Is there a moment of transition when venial sin becomes mortal sin? Is it possible to provide an exact measurement? In seconds would be most helpful. I feel that this might be very important to understand.*

**A.** No, there is no such measurement, since that kind of reality does not exist, except in the scrupulous mind. Venial sin does not morph into mortal sin. Something that is not gravely serious does not suddenly become gravely serious through the passage of time. Counting seconds and then doing the math is a waste of time and not required or advised.



SHUTTERSTOCK

**Q.** *When I search for answers about scrupulosity on social media, I am confused about who to believe. Please advise.*

**A.** Much contradiction exists in social-media commentary about scrupulosity. One person makes one point, and another dismisses it and then makes a point that contradicts the first point. This is highly frustrating for sufferers and for myself and others in the ministry of helping the scrupulous.

Dueling commentary is an unfortunate reality. There is a theological war being fought in the trenches of social media, and unless you know and trust the credentials of the commentator, you can become confused very quickly. The best advice for the scrupulous is to not engage in this warfare. Resist the urge to gather content, no matter what it might say. Content is not the friend of the scrupulous. You have enough to contend with.

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