

Content Is Not Your Friend ***PART TWO: PRACTICAL RULES***

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This month's newsletter, October 2024, is the second of two parts. It continues the discussion about depriving your OCD of content that was addressed in the September 2024 newsletter. Included are some practical rules for how you can do this.

As a direct result of more than thirty-five years in scrupulosity ministry, I am ruthless about the application of what a person needs to do to manage his or her scrupulosity. I will not compromise when it comes to applying the required pastoral remedy. I understand that many scrupulous people are often crippled by the doubt they experience daily, and I understand that, for some, what I propose as a remedy sounds like nonsense. However, I will not compromise.

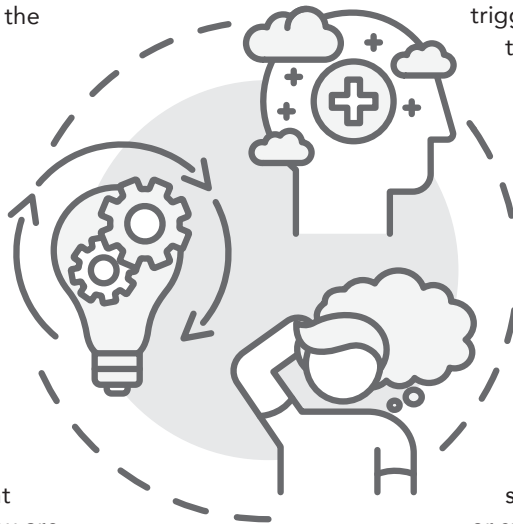
After last month's newsletter, I hope we arrived at a mutual understanding that content is not your friend. When you are struggling with OCD/scrupulosity, the content that demands your attention is the trigger. Your OCD does not have any loyalty to

the content itself; it cares only about your anxious response. Any attempt at trying to answer the many questions the content generates is a waste of time. Listed here are some of the practical rules that you must apply to be able to resist triggers and that will help you learn to manage your scrupulosity.

1. Examination of conscience. If you experience stress, anxiety, doubt, and confusion when you are examining your conscience, stop. You cannot engage in this spiritual practice. There are no exceptions.

2. Confession. If you go to confession more than once a day or numerous times per week, stop. That is not spirituality or spiritual discipline—it is OCD.

You are not experiencing grace but are becoming exhausted and overwhelmed by your OCD. It is unnecessary and not required.



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If you struggle to determine whether something is grave, mortal, or venial, stop. This is your scrupulosity at work, wreaking havoc within you.

3. Forgotten details. If you finish your confession and remember some detail you believe should have been mentioned, stop. This belief is a lie. This content is not your friend—it is OCD. Refuse to consider the details; just move on. What is done is done, and nothing more is required.

4. Holy Communion. If you experience scrupulosity when you are standing in the Communion line, convinced you are in sin and cannot receive holy Communion, stop. Receive holy Communion, no matter what you feel.

5. Mortal or venial sin? If you struggle to determine whether something is grave, mortal, or venial, stop. This is your scrupulosity at work, wreaking havoc within you. You have a diminished capacity to freely choose; that diminished capacity routinely defaults to the most serious sin and claims responsibility for committing the sin.

6. Prayer. If you pray and find yourself endlessly repeating prayers to make them “perfect,” stop. Be silent and refuse to engage the trigger. You do not need words to pray; it is enough that you are present in the sacred space of prayer.

7. Permission. If you find yourself frozen in place, believing you need permission from God to make a move, stop. Force yourself to walk away and continue what you were doing. Refuse to ask permission. It is not God who requires permission—it is your OCD.

8. Impulsive thoughts. If you have an impulsive thought that disgusts you, admit that you are disgusted, then stop. There is no need to think about it, digest it, and figure out the details. There is no need to determine if you “entertained” the thought. You do not entertain bad thoughts; your OCD does.

9. Sexual feelings. If you experience a sexual feeling, even arousal, thank God for the fact that

you are alive and healthy. Stop condemning yourself. Stop trying to figure out if you caused the feeling.

10. Sabbath rest. If you find yourself constantly wondering about what is or what is not an acceptable activity for a Sunday, stop. This is not spiritual; it is a trigger for OCD and anxiety.

11. Signs from God. If you hear a voice or see a sign that makes you think God is talking to you and directing you to act in a specific manner, stop. Your OCD makes it impossible to trust the voice you think is God’s voice. Your OCD is lying to you and causing you stress and anxiety.

The list is endless. I have given you only some examples, but hopefully you understand the point. Whatever content is the trigger for your OCD, stop it! It does not matter that your content trigger might be something beneficial for people without OCD. For you, it is not.

In closing, I repeat: content is not your friend. Content is the trigger for your compulsions and obsessive thinking. Content is what makes you ruminate about the past and dread the future. Stop it—close the *Catechism*, put away the Code of Canon Law. Stop listening to social media commentators who are clueless about scrupulosity or who dismiss mental illness and blame it on demons. You do not need this type of content; you do not need to be triggered in this manner. Learn to be confident in your own decisions. Seek the help of a good spiritual director and/or confessor. Include your loved ones in at least a basic awareness of your struggle. All of these things are good and necessary. But, most importantly, you must stop engaging in triggering content. Starve the beast and isolate the content that triggers your suffering. ✨

O God of Loveliness

SAINT ALPHONSUS LIGUORI

O God of loveliness, Lord of paradise,
worthy are you to be adored.
So grace-filled is your beautiful face,
that a mere glance fills me with bliss.

You are the Triune God, yet undivided,
you are the one I dearly love,
creator God, of earth and sky
O, how lovable you are, my dearest Lord!

And only thinking that you are my God
fills my heart with intense joy
and my spirit plunges in the sweet abyss
of your love divine.

No earthly desires have I
and nothing seems to cause me real grief;
I value not the world,
 though made of gold, for
I have set my heart of you,
 my greatest treasure.

My dearest God, my infinite good,
life of my soul, with all my heart,
 I adore you.

Because of you I no longer desire
 earthly pleasures;
it is for your love alone
 that I languish and die.

Had I all the hearts that could fill
 the world's arenas
and could they all together form a choir,
then such would be the fervor of the love
within my breast.

O loveliness supreme and beauty infinite,
O ever flowing stream and ocean of delight,
you are my truest life,
you are the only object of my love.

For you, death itself I find acceptable,
and every cross becomes my resting place.
And if, in eternity, I could love you still,
e'n hell, with you, I would not fear. ✨

From *O God of Loveliness: The Poetry of St. Alphonsus*, edited by Patrick Corbett, CSsR (St. Pauls Publications, 2017), 963988. To order, visit Liguori.org or call 800-325-9521.



Q. *I have a young infant, and I nurse the baby. Is it a sin to nurse in front of my husband, my mother, or members of my family?*

A. No, it is not a sin to nurse in front of others. It is a beautiful and wonderful experience for you and your family. For your infant, it is essential nourishment. Give thanks to God for the life of your child and for the ability to nurse your child in the presence of people who love and care for you both. Many people are deprived of this peaceful experience. You are blessed.

Q. *Is there a basic standard that I should use for determining when restitution is necessary? I find this requirement very confusing.*

A. The basic measuring tool for a scrupulous person to determine restitution is very clear and simple: you do not need to pay restitution. Unless—and this is the only exception—your confessor brings up the subject of restitution, you should understand that it is not required. This is a classic “rabbit hole” for doubt and anxiety and will not be a helpful spiritual practice for you. Leave this concern alone. It does not apply to you or to your situation, regardless of what you feel.

Additional Resources Online for Those Seeking Help

Liguori Publications offers resources online that people with scrupulosity have found very helpful:

For helpful videos, please visit [YouTube/Catholic OCD](#).

For pastoral care and spiritual direction opportunities, please visit [managingscrupulosity.com](#).

For direct support and to access new helpful videos, please visit [Patreon.com/CatholicOCD](#). (Patreon offers a direct mail feature that can be used to answer your personal questions and concerns.)

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