

On Scrupulosity, VI

The effective use of Sacred Scripture does much to further a man's conversion, and heal him of scrupulosity. "*Qui ignorat scripturas ignorat Christi.*" St. Jerome once said. "He who is ignorant of the Scriptures is ignorant of Christ." It's no wonder so many leave the Faith; they hardly know what it is. It is no wonder that so many drift to the East...they have almost no knowledge of Christ. Remember that the first teachers are the parents, and they above all must teach their children the Scriptures. Without knowledge of the basics of Sacred Scripture, a Catholic will be blind. "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths." (PS 118.105) Our Lord Himself led the way, and provided us a perfect example of how to live, by (amongst other things) studying the Scriptures all His life, and alluding to them constantly.

"Faith then cometh by hearing; and hearing by the word of Christ." (Rom. 10.17) The Faith is God's gift to the one who actively hears or listens; the one who turns his will to the Lord. The Faith which is the result of this turning, gives the scrupulous man (and every other believer) the protection needed to resist the constant, nagging accusations of the enemy, who seeks to discourage and cause despair. "In all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one." (Eph. 6.16)

In addition to praying without fear,

and resting in the Lord, and knowledge of Sacred Scripture, turning to God involves praying without ceasing. A priest has this laid out for him in his Divine Office, so that from morning to night the priest has regular times of prayer. For the laity who are not bound to the Office, to pray without ceasing does not mean that we discontinue all other activities except prayer, but to be recollected; aware of the presence of God and His omniscience.

First, to have this recollection, it is necessary to speak to God throughout the day as we would speak to a loving father. St. Paul reminds us that we should speak to God using the word "Abba," or father (one can still hear Arab children calling for their dads by this word over in the Middle East).

Second, the majority of the prayer of the scrupulous man should be outside of himself if you will; praising and thanking God, and praying for others. "In all things give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you all." (1 Thess 5.18)

Third, he must spend time just listening to God like St. Samuel the Prophet. "And the Lord came and stood. And he called, as he had called the other times: Samuel, Samuel. And Samuel said: Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." (1 Kg 3.10) If the scrupulous spend periods of time listening to the Lord, they will learn how to *be* and

not simply *do*. This will also help them discern between being tempted and consenting to temptation.

Fourth, devotion to Our Lady is a sure path to the Lord. Mothers know how to calm worried or hurt children. Our spiritual mother knows precisely what to do to calm us.

Fifth, concentrating on the mercy of God through the Diary of St. Faustina and praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet helps cut through the thorns of anxiety.

Sixth, and this perhaps goes without saying, frequent confession and communion are the pre-eminent paths to holiness for everyone. But the scrupulous man will wonder if his confession was satisfactory, if his past sins were really forgiven, and if his communions were good. The director must be firm with this. St. Alphonsus Liguori was more than firm; he was rather tough about it: "You make me tremble with your fear that all your confessions and communions are sacrilegious. Do you not see that it is thus that the devil has deceived you in making you believe this? You should believe what so many others and I have told you, that in these matters of doubt and troubles of conscience you are foolish, extravagant, and incapable of forming judgment. This is what you should believe. You must then trust what has been told to you. For myself, I plead in the name of God, and your confessor will tell you the same thing: Continue to

communicate regardless of all your doubts, no matter how strong or obstinate they may be. And do this on my responsibility; yes, I am answerable for this to God, for your conscience is substantially known to me."

The belief that a strict or perfect following of the Old Law will save one is wrong. The Old Law served well as a teacher (or pedagogue as the Douay Rheims translation puts it), who often corrected and punished. Man was confined or shut up by the Old Law, to separate from sin. But the New Law serves to enable us not just to avoid sin, but to go to God as a loving Father. "But before the faith came, we were kept under the law shut up, unto that faith which was to be revealed. Wherefore the law was our pedagogue in Christ: that we might be justified by faith. But after the faith is come, we are no longer under a pedagogue. For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." (Gal 3.23-26)

Not that we want to think of these words like a smiling TV evangelist. God is not a pal, and He will not be mocked. G. K. Chesterton had it right when he spoke of the Old Testament as the story of the awful separation of man and God, and the New Testament as the awful union of God and man.