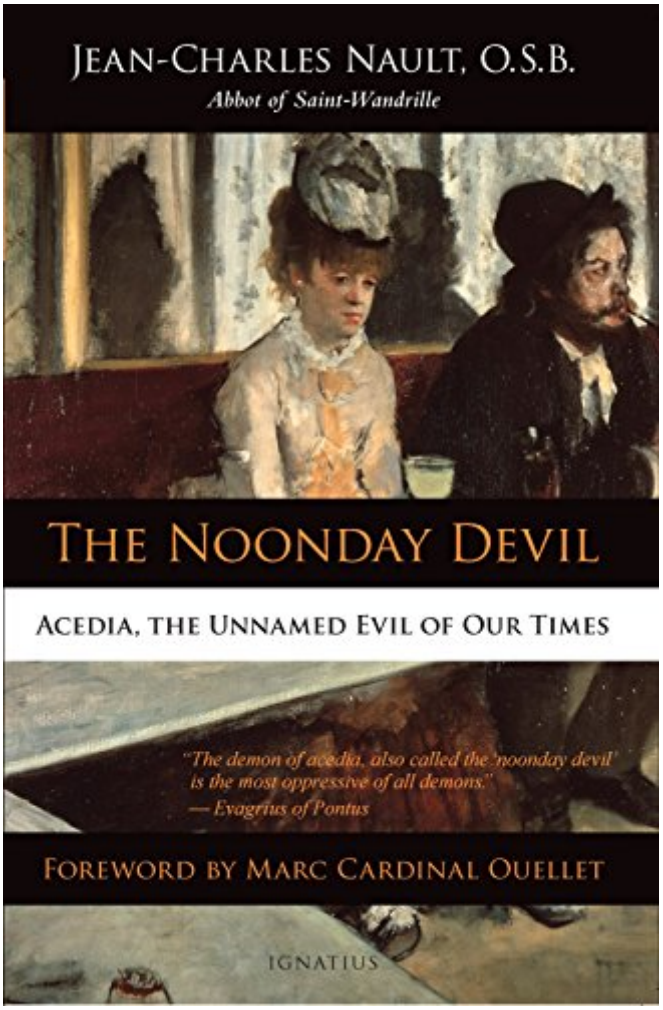
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The Noonday Devil: Acedia, The Unnamed Evil Of Our Times



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Synopsis

The noonday devil is the demon of acedia, the vice also known as sloth. The word Ã¢â ¬Å“slothÃ¢â ¬Â•, however, can be misleading, for acedia is not laziness; in fact it can manifest as busyness or activism. Rather, acedia is a gloomy combination of weariness, sadness, and a lack of purposefulness. It robs a person of his capacity for joy and leaves him feeling empty, or void of meaningAbbot Nault says that acedia is the most oppressive of demons. Although its name harkens back to antiquity and the Middle Ages, and seems to have been largely forgotten, acedia is experienced by countless modern people who describe their condition as depression, melancholy, burn-out, or even mid-life crisis.He begins his study of acedia by tracing the wisdom of the Church on the subject from the Desert Fathers to Saint Thomas Aquinas. He shows how acedia afflicts persons in all states of lifeÃ¢â ¬â • priests, religious, and married or single laymen. He details not only the symptoms and effects of acedia, but also remedies for it.

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Customer Reviews

The Noonday Devil is a shorter version of a longer study of acedia done by the author, a French abbot. While it seems geared mainly for monks and students of theology, I found it quite helpful and recommend it, even to people who are not tied to monasteries or Catholicism.The book is a rich source for understanding the causes of the struggles many have with weariness, depression, feelings of being overworked, the perpetual need for change, and the desire to constantly fill oneÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s life with distractions to avoid the sensation of meaninglessness.While the language used in various parts of the book can be somewhat scholarly, the information is presented simply enough for almost anyone to grasp. There are many wonderful quotes and anecdotes throughout the book.IÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ll admit feeling a little daunted reading about a subject that took an entire book to truly define. Acedia is a complex subject with a wide range of symptoms. In a way, it is both an affliction AND a sin. As the book notes in depth, the word ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“acediaÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• itself fell out of use throughout history and was replaced in lists of vices with words like ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“slothÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• or ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“sadnessÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• that capture only an aspect of the bigger affliction of acedia.Acedia is essentially spiritual laziness, as well as an indifference toward (and possibly a disgust with) the things of God. It leads to a loss of enthusiasm in oneÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s Christian witness and ultimately causes a lack of caring about the possibility of oneÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s salvation. This (and much more) is all stated more profoundly in the book, but I say it here to indicate the importance of understanding the subject of acedia.Just knowing whatÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s afflicting you is often a huge step toward overcoming it, and this book is a very helpful way of getting to know this particular enemy.I would recommend reading through the entire book, for while there is a specific section on remedies for acedia, itÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s not the only point in the book where helpful advice is given for combating it. I would have liked for these sections to be longer, but the book is more about acedia as a general subject matter than merely being a book about overcoming it.Fair warning: the book is only 200 pages, and over 50 of those pages are spent on Saint Thomas AquinasÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ thoughts on acedia. This in itself is a good thing, but I feel it could have been much shorter. There are two main points this chapter was presenting, but while those points were being made, the author provided the reader with a summary of the thought of Saint Thomas, a lot of which is not nearly as accessible to the average reader as the rest of the book. The chapter is certainly worth the effort, but after reading this book a second time, I realized that most of this chapter could be skipped without losing any of the vital message of the book, as its main points are summarized well at the end of the chapter.Chapter 4, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“Acedia in Different States of Life,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• is especially compelling, as it

lays out the various ways acedia can affect monks, priests, married and single people. No matter your state in life, you can benefit from reading each part of this chapter since you will easily see parallels between, say, what a monk might endure as a result of acedia, and what you personally are going through.This book is not the definitive word on spiritual warfare in general, but it strikes against the modern-day ignorance of such a powerful sin and gives us a taste of the hope we will experience when we begin to fight against acedia. As the desert father Evagrius is quoted in the book: ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“After the fight [with acedia] comes a state of extraordinary peace and an inexpressible joy.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•

Terrific book. Read it twice. Filled with practical advice and easy to read. Even the parts about Monks was applicable to all us others

The best single source on the spiritual topic of acedia. Acedia is a Greek word that names a state of languor or torpor, of unconcern or dissatisfaction with one’s condition or action in the world. In a strong case it can keep one from being able to perform one’s duties. The term acedia was used first used in Christianity by monks and other ascetics who lived solitary lives, and were tempted to become listless and inert, or begin longing to be elsewhere or to do something other than what they were doing. Evagrius numbers acedia as of the eight bad thoughts, and St. Thomas Aquinas (following Gregory the Great) numbers it as one of the seven capital vices (so-called because they are the source of many kinds of sin). Though related to depression, acedia is not considered entirely the same in the monastic and Christian tradition. It is usually seen as naming a fault, which is subject to one’s will, rather than simply a psychological state. Acedia is to spiritual health something like what depression is to mental health."The Noonday Devil: The Unnamed Evil of Our Times" thoroughly illuminating and practical.

The devil would prefer that you not take the time or energy or money to read this book. If you are too tired, too disinterested, too busy, then the devil has you right where he wants you. Read this outstanding book and take back your life and win the battle for your soul.

Just what I needed to snap me out of my spiritual siesta!

An outstanding book which hits on the head the underlying "sin" or problem in our world. The author writes in a very conversational manner almost as though you were sitting in on a workshop. For

serious ministers of all denominations, I would recommend this book.

I find Dom Jean-Charles Nault's exposition of acedia both scholarly and practical. It is challenging as all of us are at sometime subject to spiritual "sloth, sadness, disgust with the things of God, a loss of meaning of life, despair of attaining salvation," as he defines this "unnamed evil of our times." Though somewhat laborious in the beginning (so I found it), it becomes more practical as time goes on. I found most helpful Thomas Aquinas' solution of the Incarnation as well as some advice for priestly life (I am a priest) most helpful. I will recommend this book to others on this subject, though I must say, I do not beleive it is written for everyone due to its technical and scholarly nature in moments.

Excellent book, it opens our eyes about something that is so common in our days but that we don't know how to deal with it nor even identify as a dangerous temptation.....!

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