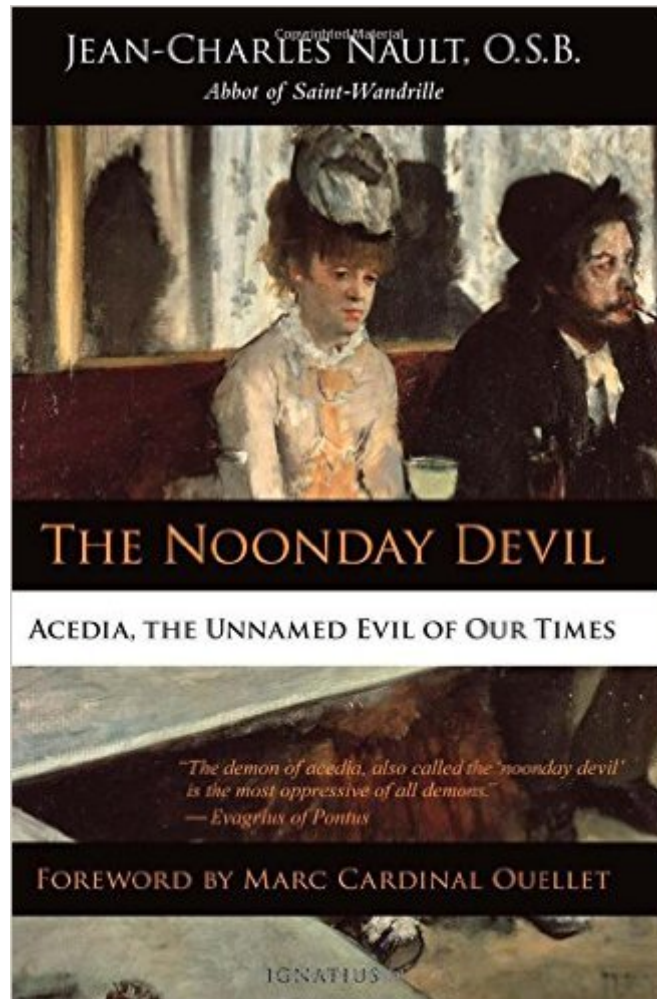


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The Noonday Devil: Acedia, The Unnamed Evil Of Our Times



Synopsis

The noonday devil is the demon of acedia, the vice also known as sloth. The word *œsloth*, 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 meaning. Abbot 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 life—priests, religious, and married or single laymen. He details not only the symptoms and effects of acedia, but also remedies for it. "The simple, direct style of this work makes the reader feel involved and challenged to consider anew what is essential in his existence." - Cardinal Marc Ouellet, Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops (Rome) "A must read for anyone who takes the spiritual life seriously. Christ's passion and death on the cross is the most perfect answer to the terrible evil that tells man his very existence is meaningless." - Mother Dolores Hart, O.S.B., Author, *The Ear of the Heart*

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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 one'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. I'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 "acedia" itself fell out of use throughout history and was replaced in lists of vices with words like "sloth" or "sadness" 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 one's Christian witness and ultimately causes a lack of caring about the possibility of one'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.

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