

CONVERSATIONS WITH
BROTHER LAWRENCE
EVERYBODY IS
DOING IT -PT. 1



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Everybody Is Doing It – Pt. 1

Teachers do it. Students do it. Taxpayers do it. Traders do it. Preachers do it. Crooks do it. Everybody is doing it.

What am I talking about? Let's let Brother Lawrence clarify.

From time to time the Brothers from our monastery volunteer at one of the Catholic schools in the area. Many of us are very educated and there is no better place for a student, of any age, than to be then in school. Of course, the School of Life is a place we all reside, but for some of our Brothers a school of mortar and bricks is still home.

On this particular day several of us, including my favorite Brother, Brother Lawrence, set off in a school bus sent especially for us from Saint Vincent's School. A bus is really no place to hold quiet conversations so most of us simply gaze out the windows at the countryside as it slides by. But it is also times like these that cause Brother Lawrence to reminisce about his early days before the monastery. There is much to learn from those years as we shall see in later letters.

“When I was in school, I never rode the bus, instead I walk the short distance to school each morning and afternoon. But now I find myself bumping along this gravel road that leads to and from our secluded home to a place not far in distance, but much farther in time. Since I seldom venture very far from the monastery these days, I view these brief excursions as a mini vacation of sorts and enjoy them immensely. Too often our “worldlier” brethren miss God's beauty all around them as they rocket down the highways, surrounded by their

metal cocoons, insulated from the world of God, hidden in their made-made environments. Don't get me wrong Brother, I am not against technology. I only wonder at what people will substitute for the real blessings that God has given us. But enough about my societal judgments.”

I could see from that far-away gaze, that his eyes were not seeing the scenery before us but a scene in his distant past. How often we learn more from the past than from the present when so much is hurtling by. We went on like this for some time. Then the solitude was broken by a Single word, “Rubbish!”

“Brother?”

“Oh, sorry. I was just thinking back to when I was in University. You know, I didn't go to University right away, but much later in life.”

“No, I didn't know.”

“Well, that's for another time. Anyway, when I was at University, I remember hearing about a scandal that affected me quite deeply.”

At this my mind began reeling. What kind of scandal could affect dear Brother Lawrence so much? Could it have been a student's death? Maybe not so drastic. What about an accident that caused him great physical pain and continuing medical or mental problems? I say that because I have noticed that Brother has been limping more lately and maybe this was the cause of his pain now. Or it may have been a great financial catastrophe that resulted in his almost having to give up his dream of higher education.

“What could that be Brother?”

“An instructor was caught cheating.”

At this I smiled. Of course, something as trivial as that would cause Brother Lawrence so much consternation. What is of no consequence for most humans is of great concern to Brother Lawrence.

“Why would something so trivial as cheating cause such an outburst? Why, at my school, everyone cheated at one time or another. If you needed to get just a few more answers correct to pass the test you glimpsed out of the corner of you eye to a smarter friend’s test paper. Or maybe you were about to flunk a class so you hired another student to write your paper for you. Or maybe you just wanted to sleep in after a rather joyous night out so you buy another student's lecture notes. After all Brother, God is a loving God and would not condemn us to Hell for something so trivial as a little cheating. He will forgive us and everything will be the better for it.”

I was saying all this while looking out the bus window. As I finished, I looked back at Brother Lawrence who was at this time nearly red with controlled rage.

“Rubbish! I will not stand for such lies to be said in my presence. What you are saying is not true. Not EVERYONE is cheating. Not everyone is doing it, for whatever reason. Cheating is not a “victimless crime” as some have said. It harms people. It causes great harm to not only those who are cheated but also to those who DO the cheating.”

“Brother,” I stammered. “I did not mean to cause you so much anger but you are speaking now like one of those old “fire and brimstone” Protestant preachers we here on the radio sometimes.”

“Yes, you did. Maybe you did not MEAN to, but you did none the less. And your ATTITUDE is causing me more concern then what you said. How could you so casually condone Sin?”

“I did nothing of the sort Brother. I merely said that everyone cheats a little now and then. It is no big deal. Cheating is more of a game. If you can cheat a little and get away with it, you win. If they ever accuse you it is hard to prove so there is not much of a downside is it”

“Cheating a LITTLE! A GAME! That is like being a LITTLE

pregnant. You either are cheating and Sinning or you are not.”

“When did I ever condone Sin?’ I asked defensively. “Cheating is not Sinning.” I shouted.

“Oh, it isn't? What happens when you take something forcefully away from someone? Is that not stealing and is not stealing a Sin.”

“Stealing is indeed a Sin, at least I think so, but how do you get away with calling cheating Sin? What am I taking from anyone? Who gets hurt?”

By now the other Brothers were all staring at us as our voices had risen well above the roar of the engine and the noise of the road. Even Brother Edward was awakened from his sleep. We left our “discussion” there. The rest of the trip to the school lasted at least until eternity but really only about another half-hour.

You may wonder if there was a resolution to our disagreement but for that you must read my next installment.

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