

CONVERSATIONS WITH
BROTHER LAWRENCE
EVERYBODY IS
DOING IT -PT. 2



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Everybody Is Doing It – Pt. 2

When we left our “situation” last the Brothers were on an excursion to one of our local Catholic schools. We like to get out once in a while and mingle with the youth. It gives us perspective and allows us the opportunity to answer questions about the religious life. Of course, I suspect that we are also doing a bit of recruiting for the diocese since the ratio of priests to parishes is getting quite low.

But during our bus ride my dear friend Brother Lawrence and I got into a bit of a tiff when we started to discuss the subject of cheating. My perspective, being one much younger than Brother and one closer to the actual cultural attitude one finds today in religious and non-religious life, is that cheating is more of a game than anything. And it is definitely NOT a Sin as Brother Lawrence maintained, a bit too adamantly if I do say so. In fact, I thought he was not being very Christian, questioning my actions as if I intentionally desired to hurt people and cause them pain. Cheating does not hurt people unless you get caught and I have always been very good at that; not being caught that is.

Anyway, the bus ride was very quiet after Brother's little outburst and I suspect the tension was more than the other Brothers could take, being as they are normally cloistered away from stressful situations. But all was right once again when we disembarked and entered the mayhem that is elementary school.

Little kids everywhere and teachers trying their best to coral

them, efforts that would have made the most seasoned cowboy proud, if I had ever known an actual cowboy. We were meet at the door by the principal and ushered into the second-grade class of a Miss Saturday, presiding as teacher. Miss Saturday was very attractive with long flowing raven hair and dark seductive eyes that drew you into their sphere and made you forget your name. At least I forgot my name when I was asked to introduce myself. Did I mention I am much younger than most of the other Brothers?

Soon each of us was seated next to a second grader, helping them with an Art project, having the times of our lives. All our disagreements were long forgotten as each of us Brothers took on the role of mentor and friend, so much like our Lord does for each of us.

Lunch time came all too quickly. Glancing back at Miss Saturday as the other Brothers pushed me out the door and onto the lunch-room, I almost tripped over my feet. Ah, the power a woman has over a man. We each made our way through the lunch-line and all sat together in our usual order. When in marched in our new friends in single file with the lovely, a-hum, their teacher Miss Saturday leading the way, we all sat together once again, this time at the lunch table answering their questions and getting to know them even better. Once again controlled mayhem broke out with questions flying along with snorting milk and spitted up peas. I hate peas.

All too soon we Brothers were told we were needed in the junior high class so we bade adú to the smiling Miss Saturday and the waving children. The halls barley contained our group as the principal guided us to a room bursting with red freckled faces.

Junior high was not a favorite time for me as my face didn't agreeably compare with those junior higher on TV, but I survived anyway; barely. This time I stood against the wall with most of the other Brothers as the eldest Brother,

Brother Lawrence, was asked to stand at the front before his accusers, err, the class and answer some questions. There was of course the normal fair about what did we eat, what did we do, where did we sleep, etc. Then Brother turned the tables and asked the class a question.

“What you think of cheating?”

As you might expect, my face got a bit red and my head dropped to my chest, but my ears were wide awake.

One student thought it was no big deal. Everyone did it once in a while.

Another mentioned the news story about how teachers are cheating on the standardized testing system so they could keep their jobs. She said cheating must be okay if teachers were doing it but only to keep their jobs.

Another said it didn't hurt anyone so what was the big deal.

Another said even if it were true, and cheating was a Sin, then God would forgive us anyway since He was a loving God. (I smiled a bit as I remembered saying the same thing. Smart kid.)

With his head down listening, Brother did not answer right away. Then he spoke, “Can someone hand me a thumb-tack? Anyone?” A student in the front stood up and handed Brother a small thumbtack.

“As you can see, or maybe not if you are in the back, this is a very small thumb-tack; barely a quarter-of-an-inch long. The point though is nice and sharp. Is it a new thumb-tack? Does anyone know?”

“Teacher just unwrapped the package this morning.”

“Good. Will one of you please come up here and help me a bit?”

A tall, good looking boy got up and sauntered to the front towering over Brother's squarish frame.

“You are...?”

“Paul.”

“Hello Paul. Glad to make your acquaintance.” Holding his hand out with the thumb-tack's red top prominently displayed. “Would do me a favor and push the thumb-tack into my palm?”

“What? Are you, crazy?” recoiled the student. “I will not do that. It hurts. I've had it done to me before, accidentally. Only some crazy person, from a monastery, would do it on purpose.” These last words he said under his breath but I heard them just the same.

Unfazed, Brother Lawrence responded. “Possibly. But humor me and just push the red thumb-tack into my palm.”

“No way!” The boy quickly sat down, muttering to himself.

“Will someone else please come up here and help me? Anyone?”

“I'll do it.” came a reply from the back as another boy jumped up and hurried to the front. “I'm not afraid.”

With a quick glance at the thumb-tack the boy poked his finger at the red bulls-eye and in went the thumb-tack. Brother winced and then held up his palm for all to see. The red dot shone brightly in his pail palm and a slow trickle of red liquid appeared from below it. Brother held his arm out straight to his side and the class was transfixed at the sight, trying to see just how much blood would drip out. Junior highers are go gruesome. I love them so.

“Did it hurt Rob?” asked Brother.

“Not a bit. But I beat it hurt you plenty.” he answered with a grin.

“You are right my friend. It did hurt and it still hurts. Will you do me another favor and pull out the thumb-tack?”

Without hesitation, Rob pulled out the tack and handed the bloody shaft, point up, to Brother who took it in his up-turned, bloody palm.

“Thank you, Rob. Now would you please sit down.”

Rob strolled back to his desk with an air of accomplishment

on his face. He had gotten the attention so many junior higher's crave and now I'm sure he thought of himself as some sort of hero.

I turned towards Brother Lawrence standing in front of the class, all eyes transfixed on his face, searching for any sign of anguish or pain. Instead Brother simply stood there, saying nothing, but looking into each face's eyes with a look of love. Then he spoke.

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