

CONVERSATIONS WITH  
BROTHER LAWRENCE  
EVERYBODY IS  
DOING IT -PT. 3



LARRY SLATER

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## Everybody Is Doing It – Pt. 3

When we last left Brother Lawrence, I was speechless. I couldn't even begin the next line as you might have noticed. Brother had been speaking in front of a class of junior high kids about cheating. The discussion was that “everyone is doing it so what's the big deal.” Of course, our dear Brother did not agree and took it upon himself to answer with a patented “teaching moment” that I'm sure those kids will not easily forget.

For some reason, God only knows, Brother asked one of the students to push a thumbtack into his palm and in typical junior high fashion he found a boy to do it. Before we knew it, in it went then out it came. Please allow me to repeat myself just a bit to “set the stage.”

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, looking into each face's eyes with a look of love. Then he spoke.

“What do you see?” he asked.

“A lunatic.” said one boy with spattered giggles about him.

“I thought there would be more blood.” said another.

“For a minute I thought about the movie Stigmata.” said an introspective young lady.

“What do you remember about it?”

“That sometimes a person is visited with a great blessing by

exhibiting the bloody prints where Jesus was hanged.”

“Don't you know that hanging is by the neck and would not leave any blood?” This came from a boy who obviously was NOT Catholic.

“Friends, as you may recall our Lord was crucified by being nailed to a rugged, wooden cross that the Roman's used to kill condemned prisoners. It was a most gruesome death and as I recall no Roman would be condemned to death in so horrible a fashion. It was reserved only for the enemies of the State. In most cases the criminal hung there for hours and do any of you know what the actual cause of death would be?”

“You would need a autopsy to determine that with any certainty.” This came from a very studious looking young lady.

Turning to me Brother Lawrence cast a perplexed look.

“CSI” the girl said again.

His expression didn't change.

“Television.” I mouthed.

“Oh.” was his silent response.

“Well, yes you are quite right but since there wasn't any modern equipment to make absolutely certain what the cause of death was, we have to rely on historical accounts. Do any of you know what those tell us?”

No one even ventured a guess. I suspect that reading historical accounts of the crucifixion is a high priority for junior highers.

“I believe Brother that history tells us that a person died of suffocation when crucified.” our resident historian Brother Noll chimed in in an attempt to rescue Brother's “teaching moment.”

“You are quite right Brother. They hung there under the scorching sun, and it does get very hot in the shadeless places where they would normally crucify criminals, for hours.

That's why Jesus said he was thirsty and was given wine."

"My Dad said they didn't drink alcoholic wine back then." This came from another obviously non-Catholic boy.

"Yes, well Jesus would have hung there getting so tired that he could no longer push up from his nailed feet to free his lungs to breath. Gradually he would have sunk lower and lower until his lungs could no longer take any more air in and he would have died; suffocated." With these last words Brother Lawrence hung his head to his chest as most of us Brother did also; out of respect.

"But what about the sword in his side?" again interrupted the non-Catholic boy. He was beginning to annoy me.

"Yes. What about it? This was done to hasten the death of Jesus so he would not hang there longer then was necessary. And as you recall, blood and water spilled out of his side. I don't know exactly at this time what the meaning to that is but it is symbolic of something very important." I think Brother was baiting the students because I'm sure he was quite aware of the significance of the blood and water coming out of the side of Christ on the Cross.

"Brother. I remember a painting showing the crucifixion and someone was catching the blood and water coming out of Jesus' side in a fancy cup." This came once again from our introspective young woman.

A satisfying smile crossed his face. "How insightful my dear. You are quite right. I DO recall this painting and yes it would explain some very important things. Those of you who are Catholic," even Brother became aware from some of the responses that not ALL our young students were Catholic, "know from the celebration of the Eucharist that the priest holds up a chalice that is not unlike the one you saw in the painting. As he prays, he asks God to change the wine into the Blood of Christ so that we can all partake and become one with our Lord's suffering."

“Now did you just notice that I said “suffering?” Usually we say we celebrate our Lord's death and later resurrection, and we surely do, but when we become followers of Jesus, we also identify with his suffering meaning we must learn to suffer as well.”

“Not much of a PR job if you ask me.” I heard this whispered response come from our young non-Catholic.

“But what about the tack in your hand Brother? What does that mean?” Ah our insightful young friend to the rescue.

“What do you think it means, my friend?”

“Weeeellll. If you are putting a tack in your hand that looks a bit like the nail marks in that must have been in Jesus' hand, then you might be thinking that would help you know what it must have felt to be crucified; a little.”

“My child, you are wise beyond your years. God has indeed gifted you. And yes, you are right. While my demonstration may have been a bit melodramatic, it was to prove a point and it is this. When we do something to hurt someone else, we are hurting our Lord, not unlike the soldier did when he drove those nails into his hands.”

“But we were talking about cheating Brother, have you forgotten?” Again, from THAT boy.

Brother Lawrence chuckled a bit along with some of the other Brothers who are well acquainted with Brother's long, winding routes to make a point. I was also wondering what all this heavy theology had to do with some innocent cheating.

With a wry smile on his face Brother continued. “Everyone sins. That is a fact. I sin. You sin. My Brothers sin; some more the others.” With that he turning his grin to me.

“And we all suffer for it. Now our sins may not seem that big a deal to us, but to God they are a VERY big deal. In fact, that is why he went to the Cross in the first place, so we would not have to suffer as he did.”

“You mean that if we sin, we have to be crucified?” Again, that boy, but I was beginning to warm up to him.

“Yes, I DO mean that. In fact, we read in the Bible that the “reward” for sinning is death.”

“Whoaaaa! Isn't that overkill Brother?” The boy.

“Not from God's perspective. I know this is getting a bit deep so let me quickly come to my conclusion about cheating the I'll leave the rest to your teachers or we could be here all day. God has given us some rules to teach us what sin is. Over the years these have been simplified so they are more easily remembered. Now some of you may have heard about the three sins put thusly; lie, cheat and steal. This often refer to criminal behavior and there indeed are wrong behavior. Did you notice the word “cheat” in that little trilogy? Right in the middle between lying and stealing. The reason is it is really a little of both; lying and stealing. But all three-hurt people in one way or another. When we hurt anyone for our own benefit we are sinning and God takes that very seriously. His example was to take our hurts upon Himself so we would not hurt, NOT inflect hurt on others so He would not hurt. When we hurt others, we are hurting God, simple as that. It is not different then hammering the nails into His hands ourselves.”

“Or putting thumbtacks into your hands.” I was beginning to like this boy.

“Yes. But I would gladly put a small thumbtack into my palm IF it keeps you from hurting others by cheating and consequently hurting yourselves.”

“Now my friends, we must be going as I'm sure our dear bus driver already has the bus idling in the parking lot. Actually, we should have left an hour ago.”

With that we all hurried off to our lives, the students to their lives of constant learning how to live in the sinful world, and we Brothers to our lives of praying against the sin in this beautifully created world.

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