

CONVERSATIONS WITH
BROTHER LAWRENCE
FAMILY
TRADITIONS



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Family Traditions

I write this as the holiday season approaches and thoughts begin to turn towards our families. Brother Lawrence once told us about his own views on family reunions at a seasonal festivity we had here. I think that we all need to listen and to learn.

Family reunions are not my favorite social function. I know that these people and I share the same bloodlines or at least have chosen to join our family of their own free choice. However, they still have a way of making me not want to be there. I hope it's not the same with your families.

For example: I'm sure you know the drill. When you arrive there is the smiling, the hugging and the "How are ya's". After the brief uncomfortableness or trying to fit in a year's worth of living in five seconds there comes the call to the inevitable feasting. But in my family, this is not a joyous time.

First there is Uncle Fred who thinks the turkey should be dipped in the broth and is not afraid to make his view known. Then Aunt Mary, who thinks it should be basted lightly with lots of spices, added starts to argue with Uncle Fred. Soon they are both in a huff and nether one will eat with the other. Cousin Jim pips up about how the recipe for cranberry sauce must be followed exactly as his great, great, great, grandmother made it and Cousin Ann thinks the new recipe she discovered in the latest magazine with the new healthier ingredients is so much better. But to prove their points neither one will taste the other's food. And then there is

Grandma Mabel who thinks there should be much dancing and singing when they all get together but Grandpa Frank thinks that there is too much noise already and wants more quiet. Consequently no one knows what to do and everyone is uneasy. Then someone thinks there should be more salt in the potatoes and someone else thinks the pumpkin pie is too spicy for their taste. Eventually everyone is shouting and accusing each other of all kinds of untruths and the kids duck for cover. I can't blame the kids for not wanting to be there. They pick up immediately when someone is angry. Maybe it is a defense mechanism since they are so vulnerable.

As a kid who would want to go to such a gathering even with all the cajoling about how they should go because they need to keep the family traditions alive. Why is there so much surprise when young adults do not choose to identify with a family but at the same time think family is a good thing. Substitute religion for family in the previous statement and you have the answer to why researchers say 17% of adults between the ages of 18-24 having no spiritual preference. Would you want to claim a family that was constantly fighting over everything?

All of us who share the blood of Jesus and are called by His name should be ashamed at the way we fight amongst ourselves. We were chosen by God and we choose to be with God. Yet even this identification has been a reason for disputes, anger and sometimes hurt. In all this turmoil the one who sits back and laughs the loudest is Satan; our old adversary. Isn't it about time we start to worry about being agents of God's peace instead of soldiers for Satan? As Brother Lawrence said, families are important and given to us by God. Those in the family have the marks of their ancestors; both good and bad. But why do these differences have to cause us to lose our faith if all we need to do is realize within our differences there is much similarity. We should learn to enjoy our many different experiences and

backgrounds. If we do, we will be the richer for it and our children will be able to carry on the family traditions; all of them. Remember what the pagans used to say about the early Christians? When all the pagan groups were vying for power and position the pagans looked over at the Christians and exclaimed: “See how they love one another.”

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