

CONVERSATIONS WITH
BROTHER LAWRENCE

IT'S JOY NOT YOJ



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It's JOY Not YOJ

“Jesus and others and you. What a wonderful way to spell JOY.”

I was singing under my breath as I swept up the kitchen after a long morning.

“J is for Jesus, he takes first place.”

Boy was I glad to be done with those dishes.

“O is for others you meet fact-to-face.”

And Brother Dominic was more demanding than normal today.

“Y is for you and all that you do.”

Now after prayers it will be time for me to rest.

“Put yourself last and spell JOY.”

“What is that you are singing Brother?” asked Brother Lawrence who appeared out of nowhere. Well, actually he was just coming in from his herb garden and I was so focused on my sweeping I hadn't notice him. But the former sounded better. :-)

“Oh, it's just something I learned when I was a child. For some reason I seem to remember the songs I learned then more than the lessons I try to learn now. Why is that Brother?”

“Unlike the old, the young are always eager to learn. It seems as we age, we think we know all we need and lose the eagerness to learn more. But the older we get the more we should realize how little we know.”

“I'm sorry Brother, but it has been a trying morning and my mind is not up for any mental exercises.”

“You prove my point Brother.”

“I do?”

“Let me hand these herbs to Brother Dominic and then I'll set to rest these weary bones for a few minutes.”

Brother Lawrence walked over to Brother Dominic who seemed quite pleased with Brother Lawrence's delivery. Brother Dominic loves to put in various seasonings into our food and I must say it is quite tasty. It was very soon after that Brother Lawrence came back and set down on the wooden bench that served as our seat at the dinner table.

“I'm sorry Brother for being a bit too obtuse before. Whenever I work in the herb garden I am so alone with my thoughts and am used to grappling with them that I sometimes forget others are thinking differently than I. My intentions were to enlighten, not confuse.”

“Oh, that is quite all right Brother. It is just that I didn't think it should not be so much like school here in the monastery. I never did like school that much. It all made my head hurt so.”

“Well, learning is a part of life and for some of us it is the major part of it. It becomes the end of our life as we make our ways to the end and there will be our Lord and Savior waiting for us ready to usher us into our reward.”

“I just hope he grades on a curve for me.”

Brother Lawrence chuckled.

“Don't worry Brother. There will be no way you can flunk this course of life. Just work to be prepared for our next journey.”

“Brother, I know that we can't earn our way into Heaven so why do you try so hard to learn more. Is not just getting there enough?”

“More than enough Brother. More than enough. The

Psalmist says it is better to be far in the back, by the entrance into Heaven, to sleep just inside the gates than in most luxurious palaces here on earth. I do not fear about not getting into the abode of our Lord, only that I will not be prepared for the work we will do there.”

“More work! Oh Brother, I was so hoping that work would end once we get into Heaven. I don't see what any of us could do to make Heaven better.”

“But that is where you are wrong Brother. God has created Heaven as his home and earth as his footstool but that does not mean we, his highest creation, will not have a part to play in Heaven. Have you not read in the Revelation where all of Heaven will bow down, throwing all their rewards at the feet of our Lord, and sing his praises till the very walls of Heaven will echo with his glory? We will indeed have work to do but not like the work we do here on this world. Since the Fall, work has been, well, a chore for want of a better word. It involves blood, sweat, toil and tears to paraphrase Winston Churchill. None of that is very nice. But work was never meant to be a chore. It was meant to be a service to our God and a joy to give at that. Only Sin could change it from something good to something difficult.

“I have said many a time that in everything I do I try to do for my Lord. If I only bend down to pick up a stray piece of straw I do it in joy to my Lord. Work was what our first ancestors did in the Garden of Eden as the story goes. They didn't just sit around and let the animals keep up the Garden. Their job was to tend the Garden making sure everything remained in its place.”

“And here I thought the Garden of Eden was paradise, filled with all the good things of life and all for the humans.”

“Where on earth did you learn that Brother?”

“I don't know. I guess because that is what I would want paradise to be if I lived there. No work. No learning. No one

telling me what to do. I was sort of hoping that would be what Heaven would be like.”

“Well, I'm sorry to say that for you Heaven will be quite different then you imagined it to be. Now mind you, no one knows for sure what Heaven will be like although God's Word does hint at what it will be like in various places. That is one reason to study and learn so you will know what to expect.”

“Yes, I guess you are right. But right now, all I want is to get done with these chores and get some rest.”

“And we should get to prayers Brother. Come on are we will be late and you don't want to test Brother Prior's forgiveness again.”

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