

CONVERSATIONS WITH  
BROTHER LAWRENCE

MONDAY



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# Monday

Monday morning makes my brain hurt. It's not so much that it comes after Sunday, which is always done, or that it means a long workweek until next Sunday, when we can rest. It is more than that. My mind and body just don't know what to do; whether to rest or work. Having to pray the Office at the set times does make it a bit easier to know just what I'm here for but it does not help to keep my brain alert or know just what day it is as they all simply blend seamlessly into each other.

The call of the more mundane aspects of our lives here at the monastery fills our lives with purpose. As I have written before, there is a never-ending need for work to be done. Work is not a bad thing, or so says Brother Lawrence, but something that is done to the Lord rather than to please men. Working in the kitchen or in the gardens or in the stables or anywhere is as much a spiritual service as kneeling in the sanctuary six times a day and praying the Office. That may be true, as most things are that Brother Lawrence teaches, but I still say Mondays and work are not my favorite things.

I invite you to listen in on a conversation Brother Lawrence and I once had when I got to complaining about all the work that needed to be done. It started on a Monday morning, of course, not unlike this morning.

“Brother, I do wish this was not a Monday. I could sure use another day of rest to prepare for today.” My drooping eyes witnessed to the tiredness in my slouching frame as I entered

the kitchen.

“Six days shall ye labor and on the seventh you may rest.” That has always been one of our rules here at the monastery for these many years and I dare say they shall not change just because you find them so irksome. Rules are there for a reason and work is there for a reason and reason is the guide that God gave us to keep us.”

“Yes, yes Brother. I'm sure you are right, as usual, but I REALLY don't want to think that much just yet. My brain is tired from my sleepless night and my body is wondering why it had to stay awake so long.”

“Maybe what you need to do is determine why your brain would not let you sleep last night rather than complain about having to do your work.” Brother said this as he busily gathered his tools and made ready for the garden. Then he gave a full look at me and sat down.

“All right now. I have a little time before I'm due out in the garden today, so tell me what was bothering you last night.”

My boney bottom fell onto the hard bench at the kitchen table, my heavy head dropped into my hands and my languid lids fell shut. Or at least they did for a moment until I heard a slight rustle of paper. One eye peaked out as I saw Brother Lawrence bring out a white wrapped square of heaven from his pocket. For those of you not familiar with the taste of a Bun candy bar, I pity you. There lie before me a Vanilla flavored wonder and I pounced on it. Ripping it apart, my first chop stopped me short as the flavor burst in my mouth. Okay, so I'm overdramatizing it a little, but this WAS my first Bun candy bar in over a year and to have one given me on a wicked Monday morning favorably compares with a bountiful Christmas morning from my youth.

Did I mention that Brother Lawrence is my favorite Brother? Now you know why. To part with a Bun candy bar on a Monday morning makes Brother Lawrence my hero.

And it certainly did wonders for my attitude. Nothing like the combination of whipped vanilla, crunchy peanuts and tart chocolate to change your disposition. It hadn't taken me a minute before the empty wrapping lie before me and my mouth was spilling out my troubles to the good Brother.

“I don't know what to do Brother. Should I tell him or not? I don't want to hurt Brother Dominic but if I don't tell him it might hurt him even more and more importantly, he might get mad at me and make me do even more nasty, smelly work he has kept just for such an occasion.”

Looking up at Brother Lawrence I saw the simple smile that has calmed many a perceived problem in my life. “Brother Mark, what am I to do with you? You act as if Brother Dominic is your enemy and he is nothing of the sort. In fact, he has told me on more than one occasion that you are a harder worker than I was when I was strong enough to work in the kitchen. Of course, he is right, but that does not hurt my feelings. It makes me proud of your efforts. If you tell him that you think he puts a little too much oregano in his tomato soup I really don't think he will unleash the fury of Hell on you. In fact, he may need some honest feedback to know whether other Brothers feel the same way. I know Brother Dominic has one goal and that is to make the best food possible for the Brothers here at the monastery and if they find that his recipes are a bit too spicy for them, I'm sure he will be considerate enough to change them a bit. You give too little credit to our hard-working Brother.”

“Oh, I do love Brother Dominic and his gift of turning our rather bland produce into such tasty food, especially his pies. Oh, how I LOVE his cherry pies. And his pumpkin pies. Just the right mixture of spices that turn mush into Heaven. And...”

“Yes, well, my garden awaits and I must get to it or the weeds will choke all the good spices that Brother Dominic

uses to make his masterpieces.”

“And I must get to the kitchen to help Brother Dominic. Now when he asks me what I think of the tomato soup or some other dish, I will just tell him without worrying about hurting his feelings.”

“May I suggest Brother, that you don't just blurt out your opinion but say it in a loving way, such as “I think it may be a BIT too much oregano Brother.” That will be enough.”

“Yes Brother, you are quite right.” I hurriedly added over my shoulder as I ran towards the kitchen. That Brother Lawrence. Sometimes I think he talks a bit too much. After all, we DO have WORK to do.

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