

CONVERSATIONS WITH
BROTHER LAWRENCE

ROSA



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Rosa

There was a knock on the door of the small meeting room. The head of Brother Dave appeared at the door and said that Brother Lawrence had a visitor. Visitors are not that common here at the monastery since we are, as they say, off the beaten path. None the less Brother Lawrence excused himself and followed Brother Dave out of the room. What transpired I learned several months later when everything had been resolved and permission was given from the other party. Who that person was, I am now sharing with you.

The visitor, I was to learn, was a friend of a friend of Brother Lawrence whom he had advised a number of years ago. I won't go into that incident now but only mention it to establish Brother Lawrence's connection with this young and very lovely Mexican woman whom I will call Rosa.

Rosa sat in the public room where the Brothers meet visitors from the outside world. But he quickly guided her to the outdoors, saying that it would be more private, and of course giving him an excuse to visit his beloved garden.

"I just love an excuse to visit the garden here at the front of the monastery," said Brother Lawrence trying to set Rosa at ease. It was obvious she was distraught and Brother instinctively knew she was in need of advice about something.

"I no bother you Brother, but most urgent. I need advice or die."

"Now my child. You will not die, as I'm sure there is nothing THAT wrong or your uncle would have come himself."

consoled Brother.

“It most bad. I now know what I do. I no else to go. Uncle say you wise man. Can help Rosa.”

“Then don't waste any more time. Please tell me everything to unburden your soul.”

“My job. I house-cleaner. I new to America. I earn money clean rich people houses. Uncle find people I clean for. I help buy food and buy gas so go to more houses.”

“Tough work as I am well acquainted with house cleaning here at the monastery.”

“It most tough work. Rich ladies no want work tough. Rich Ladies hire people like me do work for them. Work no bother Rosa Brother. Lady I clean house tough on me.”

“How so Rosa?” Even from this distance in time I could almost see Brother's face get a little flush thinking that some rich, white woman was harming this poor defenseless girl.

“Oh Brother. She very nice lady and Rosa very happy clean for her. She go church and talk nice to Rosa. Is very beautiful house. Senora build herself. Many windows. Many light. Rosa dream have home someday beautiful as Senora's. She not live much. She and Senor go see beautiful places and family. No one home. Rosa work fast. Rosa very honest. Never eat Senora's food, even hungry. Senora say yes but I no eat. I want job.”

“Well, this sounds like a very nice job for you. Does she pays you well?”

“That trouble Brother. I need job bad. Uncle get small price for work, more small then white women work. They clean much bigger houses. Ask much money. Rosa needs money. Uncle ask small money.”

“I guess that is understandable my dear. But I'm afraid that can lead to some problems down the road.”

“Yes! Now we down road. Senora tell Rosa Senora and Senor cut off.”

“Do you mean “cut back.”

“Yes. She say “cut back”. She say cut back Rosa's money or no job for Rosa. Oh Brother. I NEED job! I NEED money for food, gas. Then Rosa get better job. It most distressing for me.”

Brother knew she meant “distressing for me” but the poor girl was almost in tears and correcting her English would not be the loving thing to do.

“Yes I can see that. Have you tried to get another cleaning job?”

“Senora have church friend. He say he make much money. He say no have job. He Senora work. Not Senor. He say no money for Rosa but Rosa can clean house. Maybe little money.”

“Now that does not sound like such a good deal. He has no money but you can work for him anyway.”

“That what Uncle say. I no know rich Americans. Rich but no money for Rosa.”

“Yeeesssss. Have you tried to talk to the Senora, Senora at your current job, about needing the money?”

“I no want make Senora trouble. I tell Senora I work smaller money. Then she do Holy Lobbies. I work. She no cut off.” (Hobbies. Hobby. Lobby. You get it.)

Brother tried not to smile while the “lobbies” associations whirled in his head. “Yes. Well. That did not help YOU much. I'm sure that this forces you to make some sacrifices.”

“Oh Brother. It worse. This week Senora say Rosa I do good job. Want keep Rosa. But Senora do little house-work. No need Rosa more. They cut off work.”

“Do you mean “cut down” your hours?” Brother found himself guessing more and more about what the poor, emotional girl was trying to say in her halting, broken English.

“Oh Brother, it more money gas go Senora's house. Small

money clean house. I no want Senora's home dirty. Senora friend. Senora ask white women clean house. They busy. No help Senora. Rosa help Senora.

What I do Brother? Rosa NEED money. Senora and Senor go Holy Land. Not back two week. I tell Senora? I take smaller money? Senora house clean. I more money. I say Rosa no clean Senora's house? No money? “

As Brother Lawrence frantically tried to piece together the English equivalents to her broken English, he too got more “disdressed.”

“Most hard for Rosa. Come to America Brother. Everyone so rich! Rosa so poor. I live Uncle's. They very good to Rosa. Rosa want give money to Uncle. Room. Food. I sleep room with cousin. In Mexico family no money. Nothing. Only dreams. What Rosa do Brother? Rosa know or die.”

“Now my child you will not die, and I will help you. It will take a bit of praying for me to understand what Our Father wants his child to do, but He will show us. You can rest assured He will. We must have Faith.”

“I DO Faith Brother. But must know.”

“Yes, indeed we must DO Faith. But this is a very tricky situation. And it really isn't my place to tell you how to run your business, but since your Uncle is such a good friend of mine and he would not send you to me unless he trusted my decision, I will try to decide the right thing for you to do.”

Brother was not at all sure just how much Rosa understood from this, but none-the-less he would say the words and maybe Rosa would understand their meaning through his sincerity.

That night as I made my way to my cell, I saw Brother setting by the fireplace. The fire was out but I could still see him in the moonlight. I thought he was asleep, but then the reflections of his eyes showed me he was awake and thinking. I could only surmise that it was about his visitor. Not

wanting to be nosy, okay, nosier than usual, I passed ghostlike leaving Brother Lawrence to his thoughts.

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