

Practicing the Presence of God

by Brother Lawrence
Conversation Two

by Ms. Catherine Lambert, O.P.

Preface: Silly to have a preface to such a short reflection, but, nonetheless . . . After reading some of the other reflections for this chapter and for chapter one, I found mine to be quite different in tone - and I wondered why. As I mention below, I can't remember when I first read this book but it made a strong impression on me. It was, perhaps, the right book at the right time. . . It obviously spoke to me and my circumstances then and yet it still does.

I hope it is not TMI . . . but what I really hope is that you decide to dive into Br. Lawrence's simple - but very weighty - message. Give it a chance, mull it over, see where it might fit into your lives - forget those surfacy 'devotional questions' and take your own questions to it. It would be pretty easy just to brush this one off, but I'm telling you you'll lose something that could become very dear . . . if only you will listen with your heart, not your head; if you'll study it with your feelings, if you'll learn it with your soul.

Brother Lawrence very often mentions that he has no anxieties. This is something that is very familiar to me. I have found that I can put down anxieties, worries, and fears of all sorts if I just remember that *I'm* not running the show.

I have habitually referred to myself a 'fatalist'. But it is *Victims* who succumb to faceless 'Fate'; or rather to a 'Fate' that has many faces... just pick one. My mother taught me from my very beginnings that I was not in control of my life. Her wicked tongue scourged my soul. I can show you the *scars* snaking through it. Scar tissue doesn't stretch, you know. It keeps you from moving freely in some directions. Sometimes... it keeps you from *breathing*. When I finally escaped my childhood home, I was still pinioned within my mother's powerful personality. I was her captive no matter the distance between us, I was her *Victim*.

I was almost forty when I had a sort of *semantic* epiphany: Suddenly, I realized that I wasn't a *Victim* of that emotional predator, my mother. I was a *Survivor!* I can only think that God finally stepped in with the obvious after patiently expecting me to figure it out on my own, proved to be a longer project than even *He* was prepared for.

So, I give over my will not to *Fate*, but to *God*... that's who *Survivors* align themselves with. It took years more to begin to trust that God has my best interest at heart. I'd never met anyone like that. God is unique in the most surprising ways. I talk to Him about that sometimes. Though mostly, I just admire His artistry – He makes the most *beautiful* things!

I started *talking* to God after I first read *The Practice of the Presence of God*. I don't quite know when that was . . . but it was *such* a good idea, I thought. I pray, of course – though not as regularly as I wish I did; as regularly as He deserves. But I also sometimes manage to turn my interior running monologue into half of a conversation with the Divine.

They say it's okay to talk to yourself, because, of course, it's the only way to get a really *good* conversation going. How much better to talk to God instead! Now *there's* a *really* good conversation! I whack all my complaints and worries right into His side of the court. Then He casually bats them back to me with their trajectory adjusted *just so*.

God bless you, Br. Lawrence; God bless you, Sir.