

THREE MINISTERIAL CONVERSATIONS

Pam is a woman of about 30 years of age, who after a retreat began to explore a growing call to religious life. She felt God's touch and love during that retreat in a deeply profound way, which was a new experience for her. After leaving the retreat, she felt she needed to get a full time job as she continued to discern a religious vocation. Initially, she was baffled about what job to get or how to get one, since she wasn't happy with her present part-time job of caring for an invalid. She prayed about it and eventually decided to go to an employment agency. These conversations happened after her meeting with the person at the agency.

Conversation A – "M": Me

M: So, how are things going?

P: I went to the employment agency. The lady I talked to there asked me all kinds of questions about what I had been doing and how I liked it. I also told her about my desire to enter religious life. She said that I seem to her to be a person with strong moral principles who wants to give, not just take; and so I wouldn't be happy working for some big corporation. She suggested social work and said she would prepare a resume and give me some leads as to where I could apply.

M: How did you feel after the session?

P: Well, I felt very happy because I felt hopeful...that maybe things would look up. I know the reality of the job search can be a long process but I am not focusing on that now. I'm just happy that I went to the agency on my own initiative.

M: So you felt really happy and you were glad you took the initiative.

P: Yes, I was. I guess I felt that maybe I had something to contribute after all. The next day I was at mass and I prayed that the Lord would be with me in the job search and give me the stick-to-itiveness it takes. When I went home, I received a phone call telling me about a possible journalism job. At first I was very hesitant but I did call back later to say I was interested. I guess I was somewhat afraid.

M: Afraid of what?

P: Oh, I don't know. Afraid of failure, I guess. Afraid of a job where I wouldn't be using my degree...afraid I might not make it.

M: Do you think you might be possibly afraid of success, also?

P: Hm...I never thought of that before...Why would I be afraid of success?

M: Maybe you're afraid if you are a success you will be happy and that is an unknown. Unknown can be scary.

P: Yeah...that's true. Your question about being afraid of success is hitting something in me.

M: Do you know what it is hitting you?

P: (Speaking very slowly) I'm afraid that if I'm a success I won't be real, be me...I didn't know I was so afraid...so insecure. I'm also afraid that if I am a success, people will reject me.

Conversation B:

M: How are you feeling today?

P: Well, I had this talk with Mary and afterwards I walked through town sharing with the Lord the feeling that came out during that conversation. It has to do with my job search. I realized that my fear of failure was really a fear of success – how if I were a success I could be rejected by others and myself. It's a subtle dynamic in me.

M: Can you talk about a time or times that you felt like a success? What was that experience like for you?

P: I felt a success when I was editing articles for Jane. Jane was so supportive of me, really valued my opinion and felt I did a good job.

M: How did that affect you? How did you receive her support and affirmation?

P: I did feel alive in that role. And I felt more myself, more who the Lord wanted me to be.

M: You felt alive and who the Lord wanted you to be?

P: Yes, and I'm struck now as we're talking by how all the jobs I've had since college are doing things I never thought I'd be doing. Yet, I did them very well. And I sensed the Lord's presence with me during those times.

M: You sensed the Lord's presence and affirmation of you?

P: Yes...it was like an experience I had the other day that I wanted to tell you about. Last Sunday, Paul, my brother, gave me a rose. He often does thoughtful things like that. It was funny, though; I felt like the Lord rather than Paul gave it to me this time. I put it in a vase and I was struck by how it started opening up that day, blooming.

M: Say a bit more about this.

P: Well, I sensed the Lord gave it to me to show something about my growth. For months, I have only been able to see the negative. But it was like the Lord wanted to show me something positive about myself and that I am really growing. It really surprised me! And I found myself saying to Him: "Lord, you never want me to stop growing, becoming who I am, more who You're calling me to be. That's why You gave me the rose. You want me to bloom so I can share this gift of the rose with others".

M: How did you feel saying that to the Lord?

P: I felt peaceful, encouraged, confident...At that moment I didn't feel fearful. I could feel His love so deeply that day – washing away my fears. And you know, I'm feeling the Lord's love pouring into me and washing away my fears now again as we're talking.

Conversation C:

P: Sue, I'm glad we set this time to talk. I've wanted to share with you about my appointment at the employment agency.

M: Yes! How did it go?

P: Good. (Tells the details) Afterwards, I felt hopeful that I had some real job possibilities and that I was finally doing something to find full-time work. I've been really praying things will work out.

M: And I've been praying with you. I know what it's like to begin a job search. Remember me, last year at this time!

P: Yes – but I also remember the kind of trust in God you had at the time. How were you able to just put everything in God's hands like you did? I'm so afraid...

M: You're feeling really afraid, huh?

P: Yeah...and I'm finding out, not only of failure but of success. Sometimes it's hard to get in touch with what's really going on.

M: Does praying about it help?

P: Well, now that you mention it, maybe I've been talking and thinking about it more than really praying about it.

M: Praying about it is what really helped me – you asked earlier what had helped me when I was job hunting. I must have prayed Psalm 23 every day for a month!

P: Psalm 23?

M: Yes, "The Lord is my Shepherd. There is nothing I shall fear..." When I felt afraid, this prayer helped me to remember God's presence with me...even when I didn't feel it.

P: I had forgotten that beautiful prayer. Do you have a copy of it? Maybe having set words to say will help me when I get worried and fearful.

M: Here it is—I'll be glad to give it to you. And why don't we begin by praying it together right now?
