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Mary and Bob often find themselves sharing common ground when it comes to philosophy and ministry. When approaching ministerial concerns from different angles, He Said - She Said is a venue to share differing perspectives. WE Said reflects some mutual food for thought.

(And then again, sometimes we're exactly on the same page - just sayin' - Bob)

## **Make a Friend and Dance Silly**

*Bob and Mary's Perspective:*

A few days after Christmas, one of our fellow parishioners, after a very brief and sudden illness, died. As liturgical musicians, we experience this as a sad – but not uncommon – event. Typically, we play the funeral and move on. However, this time was different. This time, the deceased was a vivacious, lively, wonderful seven-year-old little girl. Her brief life, and the celebration of her new life, touched countless others and has left a lasting impact.

Next month marks two years that we have been offering Two for Tuesday reflections. We started those as a way to look back at the despair and try to move forward with inspiration. In many ways, it feels like our post-pandemic life is somehow heavier. The challenges are bigger. The economy is foreboding. The amount of loss is nearly unbearable. The darkness is, at once, incomprehensible and suffocating. The funeral of this little girl was like a microcosm of the depth of despair and grief that many of us have felt incessantly for months now.

It's important to note that this isn't the end of the story. We need to pay attention to the details, because God is in the details. While this family was facing their darkest days, moments of grace weaved throughout. A beloved priest, due to "coincidences" beyond his control, was able to pray with the family and anoint this little girl on Christmas morning, before she went home to Jesus. Faced with the reality that their little girl was gone, her parents made the brave and selfless decision to participate in organ donation. Their darkest days provided an unparalleled ray of new life to families who would surely be facing the same unfathomable loss. Their little girl literally lives on, both spiritually and physically in others. In the face of overwhelming grief, rather than shrink inward, this family opened themselves to allowing hundreds to express their sympathy and grief throughout a wake and funeral.

Our trials and tribulations, hopefully, are not nearly as painful as losing your little girl. But we do not trivialize the challenges we all face; there is certainly heaviness laden in our days. Caring for an elderly parent, trying to support a wayward teen, making difficult business decisions that impact others' employment, trying to manage multiple jobs just to make ends meet, even staying positive in a negative world poses options. Do we turn outward, or shrink inward? We have the choice either way. Does the seed grow and blossom into something beautiful, or does it fester into a poisonous weed that chokes us?



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Turning outward allows for love and healing. Turning inward suffocates and chokes us. This little girl's parents turned outward and let the seed blossom again. We have opportunities every day to dwell on the negative, or to find the grace woven throughout.

Did you ever walk down a sunny path on a beautiful, comfortable day, and just lose yourself in your surroundings? You take in the smell of the water, the sounds of the birds singing and the wind rustling through the trees, and you admire the beauty of nature. Did you ever stand on a hilltop or mountain top, and just take it all in? Perhaps it was standing at an overlook on a vacation, or in the park. Sometimes things melt away, and you're overtaken by the vastness and the beauty. Not that the troubles of life don't matter, but, for that moment, they aren't pressing. You recognize that there is a way – maybe you don't recognize exactly how, but you feel the Divine present.

Perhaps the setting is a morning where a thick fog blankets your surroundings, and life is so still you can hear your own breathing. For a moment, you just surrender to the peacefulness. Don't question, just be. It's at those times that we realize we don't need to figure it all out. God has it already figured out.

How many times have you worked at something over and over, tried so hard, and don't feel like you can accomplish the task? At some point, you throw your hands up (at least proverbially) and say, "God, I can't do this. Please. You."

When we are seven, the world isn't so heavy. We naturally gravitate to being barefoot, appreciating rocks and planting flowers, and giggling at silly jokes. Everyone we meet is a new friend. It doesn't take a reminder or a written inspiration or a bumper sticker or meme to make us laugh, dance, and feel light-hearted. Our biggest cares may have to do with a loose tooth, a boo-boo on our knee, or whether we're having mac and cheese for dinner. Sweet songs, pretty flowers, and the color purple all capture our imagination. We don't need someone to teach us what love is – because we feel it instinctively.

Sometimes, we adults get so mired in the details that we begin to think everything requires effort. Decisions all feel monumental and irreversible. "Should" and "Need" replace "Giggle" and "Dance." We begin to feel like we have to control it all, and when we don't feel in control we become anxious, sad, frustrated, and downright grumpy. How overwhelming!

Our message today is simple. God has the details figured out. Trust that. Lean into it. Then, find the peaceful oasis – your sunny garden in the middle of everything – and dance.