



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.

## What Team Am I On?

*Bob's Perspective:*

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time presented itself as being extraordinary in the juxtaposition of several events: (1) the NFL Playoffs, (2) a documentary about Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, and (3) the Gospel for this particular Sunday.

**TEAM 1.** The NFL playoffs. I enjoy watching football. I'm not all that interested in winners and losers this season per se, but I do enjoy viewing good strategic competition. As I sat back in my easy chair on Sunday evening, I flipped back and forth between some of the games. As I watched one football game in particular, I noted that the commentators were much more interested in next season's draft, trade possibilities, and point spreads, than in actually calling the game. Becoming a little annoyed, I quipped to myself, "I don't care what you knuckleheads think, just tell me what's going on." I finally turned off the game and watched a few episodes of the Three Stooges – which (sad to say) made much more sense than the commentators. Once my mood improved, I flipped stations to the documentary.

**TEAM 2:** During the week, I was moved by the death of musician/songwriter David Crosby. CSN&Y was very influential in the early days of my musical development – especially in my "band days." Although I wasn't always in agreement with some of their philosophical/political platforms, I couldn't help but be enthralled with the craftsmanship of their music – in particular, their vocals. All four of them were prolific songwriters, as well as performers. Up until the early 1960's, (with the exception of the Beatles, the Beach Boys, Bob Dylan and a few others) there were basically two camps – those who composed songs and those who performed them. It was relatively rare for song writers to perform their own compositions in the mainstream. David Crosby, Stephen Stills, Graham Nash (and, for a time, together with Neil Young) were pioneers in opening the door for singer/songwriters (especially in the United States) to move to the forefront of the music scene. Although in the beginning of the CSN project things ran smoothly, the relationship among the trio (and later with Neil Young) was tumultuous, to say the least. There were numerous times throughout the years that the band splintered or completely broke up due to both professional and personal differences. After cooling down periods of various lengths, they always seemed to conclude that individually they were good, but together they were great – and would then work to reconcile their differences for the sake of the team. However, after a short while, things would heat up again – another break up – another reconciliation, and so on. In 1977, Graham Nash



wrote a song called “[Wasted on the Way](#),” which reflects on the petty difference and arguments that hindered the unity of their group.

**TEAM 3:** Through the course of the evening, my mind wandered back to the Gospel passage that was proclaimed earlier in the day ([Matthew 4:12-23](#)). Jesus made his way to Capernaum and began assembling his team, with Peter, Andrew, James, and John, challenging and inviting them to become “fishers of men” – an extraordinary event when you think about it. The members of Jesus’ team gave up their livelihoods, their families, and ultimately their lives for something greater than could ever be imagined.

**The Upshot.** So here we have illustrations of three teams:

- The first team ignored its intended purpose of describing the game, and instead went off on a misguided tangent. At first glance, they may have appeared to be entertaining, but lacking focus, they pretty much circled the drain – again, being topped (at least in my mind) by the Three Stooges (Nyuk...nyuk...nyuk).
- The second team did much better in the overall scheme of things. However, while they had a common goal, the self-interests and egos of the individual members impeded their progress. Although no one can argue with their success, I wonder what more they could have contributed (or even how much greater their contributions would have been) had they not “wasted time along the way.”
- The third team consisted of a small-town Rabbi with vision, charisma, and spirit, followed at first by four common fishermen who committed themselves fully. The goal was succinct, and the message was clear and attractive – so much so that they picked up more team members and many more followers along the way. And with that, the world was forever changed.

So, what team am I on? What team are you on? What team are we on?

*Mary’s Perspective:*

How many times have you heard (or used) the phrase, “think outside of the box”? Perhaps it was in reference to finding a new approach to making your business successful. For many, it has been the charge for ministries and clubs trying to regain momentum after the hard stop of the pandemic. We think outside of the box when we want to open our minds to new ideas, unrestrained by the bounds of “how we’ve always done it” (whatever *it* is).



I've recently become aware of several instances of thinking outside of the box, specifically within my own arena of liturgical ministry. I know of a parish that has committed themselves to the recommendations stemming from the book [Rebuilt](#). (From the Rebuilt website, "it is a movement aimed at impacting the minds and hearts of parish leaders so they can refocus on reaching the un-churched, creating a clear discipleship path, and rebuilding their parish culture.") This parish has focused on developing teams of volunteers who provide a welcoming presence to visitors and parishioners, starting in the parking lot and extending throughout the church.

I know of a parish that is hosting an afternoon jazz band party, so that people will at least cross the threshold of the church – and hopefully have a positive experience that will make them want to come back for other events, including Mass. I know of a church that has hired a consultant to evaluate the leadership teams they have established, and assess why they just haven't taken the number of registered parishioners to the next level. I know of a colleague who has written a musical play about Jesus' ministry. She brings this large-scale production to various parishes in exchange for a free-will donation.

On a broader level, the Catholic Church in the United States is in the midst of a National Eucharistic Revival. It is a grassroots movement to restore understanding and devotion to the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. In conjunction with that, the USCCB is hosting a Eucharistic Revival Music Competition, encouraging music writers to compose a hymn "to renew our zeal for the great gift of the Eucharist through music, which is so apt for expressing the ineffable." There is a monetary prize for winning entries.

Two years ago, we were socially distant, contemplating how to attract folks back to parish life once the pandemic was over. We even wrote blogs about it, pondering the types of events and activities that might unite the community once again. Back then, and again today, I observe that all of the extra stuff – programs and jazz band parties and contests – are just that: "stuff." They are peripheral to our primary purpose: worship. Are all of our events necessary because liturgy is somehow lacking? Revival suggests something is dead. Is that the (perhaps unintended) message we're communicating about Eucharist?

For a number of years, I have been a member of a professional association of liturgical musicians. Each year, they host a convention with a variety of unique opportunities. It's pretty clear to me that this year's conference has been planned by folks charged with thinking outside of the box. (There is a pre-convention organ crawl that includes travel by bus and by plane, and an overnight stay, that will cost over \$300 per participant.) All of this has gotten me musing. Do



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I really need to be part of a club, or writing music for a competition, or thinking about parish life from a corporate perspective? To quote a dear friend, where are we going?

What it comes down to, for me, is *enough*. Seriously, enough. I don't want to have to think of clever new programs or participate in movements or somehow reinvent what we do to encourage people to join. Whose team am I on? The one that shares faith in Jesus. I don't feel like that needs spin, or chapter membership, or consultants and leadership teams.

Transforming lives is not as measurable as sales and cost of goods sold. But why do we need a gimmick or a program? Isn't Eucharist enough? If we open ourselves to be active participants in God's plan, we have the potential to transform the world by our lives. Do we allow God to use us? Are we open enough to trust his direction, and fearless enough to rely on his grace?

We have a leader – one who laid down his life for us. We can all be members of his body. Or, to use Bob's word, team.

Isn't that enough?