



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.

Are You Ready?

Mary's Perspective:

Over the course of the years of *Sustaining the Journey*, one of our most popular workshops has been what we call "But I'm Not Dead Yet!". In it, we address many things surrounding the end of life: our faith regarding death, funeral planning, wakes, thoughts about finances, power of attorney, cemetery considerations, etc. Part of the reason it's popular is that this is a journey we all will make at some point. Typically, our blogs try to offer inspiration and provoke thought. This one addresses some basic nuts and bolts, born from our personal experiences. To be clear, I am not a lawyer nor an expert in elder care. I write this from the perspective of having recently lost a parent. What I share is intended to prompt you to learn from my experience and hopefully tend to the matters at hand in a timely fashion.

I have played literally hundreds of funerals over the years, and have met with a lot of grieving families. I'm comfortable talking about music and Scripture, and the funeral liturgy. When my mom was in her late 80's, at her request, we had a family meeting and planned her funeral. She talked about her wishes regarding funeral home, church, cemetery, and such. She chose the music and readings for her funeral Mass. She wrote her own obituary. When the time came, my sister and I were very comfortable in the choices we executed because they were my mom's decisions.

Sometime after having children, my parents had their wills prepared, and made sure as adults that we knew the contents. When my dad passed away some 16 years earlier, my mom took the time to get her affairs in order. She made sure the house deed had "transfer on death" designation – this was helpful, as it avoids probate. She consolidated her financial assets into just a few institutions and made sure each account had beneficiaries designated. This was also very helpful, and again avoids probate. She made sure to add a signer to her checking account, designated medical power of attorney, and chose a durable power of attorney. I respect the efforts she made then, even as I was unaware how smart those moves were.

When it came to the house, my mom often said the greatest gift that her mother gave to her was clearing out her "stuff" and downsizing to an apartment. Alas, my mom also consciously decided not to pass that gift on to her own offspring! She knew that nearly nine decades of a life well lived accumulated a lot of stuff – not to mention the house that holds said stuff – and I think it was a little daunting for her to consider how to disseminate or dispose of so much. Now that she has gone home to God, the process



continues to be daunting. It's hard to separate the memories from the physical items, set sentimentality aside, and make responsible decisions that respect her desire to help others and our personal desires not to accumulate even more stuff in our homes! There is a reason there now exists an entire industry that addresses estate liquidation.

My point is quite simple. We all know that eventually life on earth ends. Making some decisions now, while your brain is sharp and your body is young enough to move around, will immeasurably help those you love when your time comes. If you haven't already, engage the help of the proper experts to document your desires. Make sure the executor of your estate knows how you would like things disseminated. Take the time to update your accounts to designate beneficiaries or do what is necessary to avoid probate. Put all your documents together in one binder, to make it easy for those entrusted with implementing your wishes. Figure out who you trust and who is willing to serve as your voice if/when you become unable to express it yourself. Plan your funeral. (We can help with that if needed.) Remember a wake is for the living.

Start purging some of the stuff you don't need, use, or want. Perhaps start the process as spring cleaning, but let your progress motivate you to keep going. We all have plenty of stuff, often more than we need. Consider others who may really be able to use your excess and donate what you can – but also respect those who say no, thank you. That avocado green mixer or pink lava lamp might just not be their taste or needs! Remember that experiences and memories are more of a treasure than trinkets and tokens. The process may not be the most pleasant, but there is freedom in not feeling weighed down and peace of mind in knowing you've saved others from a burden.

Are you ready?

Bob's Perspective:

Besides corporal issues, there are spiritual issues to think about, as well. The Season of Lent is a great time to take stock of ourselves, especially as we look to our preparations for the future. This isn't just about "doing something" for Lent, or "giving something up." Rather, it's about taking stock of how we use our time, treasure, and talent. Reflecting on Jesus' parable about the Pharisee and the Tax Collector is a good way of helping to access our situation. Are we resting on our laurels and comfortable settling for our accomplishments being good enough, or are we unabashedly taking stock in ourselves, looking honestly, and asking our Lord to help us to improve?

Of time, treasure, and talent, many people use treasure as their lifeboat. While I'm certainly not suggesting that donating to the Church or other charities should be curtailed, the



question is: are we truly sacrificing, or are we just giving from our excess? There's nothing wrong with giving from one's excess – it is helpful (and many times necessary) for their wellbeing. But nobility requires more.

So maybe we need to look a little more closely at time and talent. For the sake of discussion, let's take, for example, liturgical ministry. We all (hopefully) go to Church on a regular basis. There are a number of pieces that need to come together for worship to be done well.

Ushers greet (and sometimes converse with) the assembly members as they enter the Church, and maybe hand out bulletins. The role may include helping to take up the Offertory collection – but you're there any, so why not volunteer? That doesn't take a tremendous amount of time. It may mean showing up to Church a few minutes earlier, or staying a few minutes after to help straighten things up for the next Mass. As the saying goes, many hands make for light work. It's a very unassuming role, but it is immensely helpful in setting the tone for fine worship.

Readers are also a necessary part of a quality worship experience. Admittedly, it takes a bit of preparation, in that the scriptural passage should be reviewed and practiced before coming to Church. The preparation time doesn't have to be excessive or inconvenient. As a matter of fact, it could be as easy as keeping the reading next to your easy chair. When the commercials come on (which most people ignore anyway) turn down the sound and take a few minutes to prepare. If you're going to Church anyway, maybe volunteering to be a reader could be helpful, not only in proclaiming the word to others, but also deepening its meaning in your own life, as well.

There are also roles for Sunday Choir, Funeral Choir, and Cantors. While there are certainly requirements about rehearsal and schedule, remember what St. Augustine said about singing is praying twice. If you're going to be in Church anyway and like to sing...well, think about it.

Besides the liturgical ministries, there are a plethora of other organizations and events that need your time and talent in order to be effective and successful in the mission of the Church. Some of these have very minimal requirements, while others are a bit more involved – but if you're going to be there anyway, your help will be greatly appreciated!



So, it comes down to this: Are you like the Pharisee who rested on his laurels, taking an “I’m good enough” approach to your spiritual life, or are you like the Tax Collector who looked into himself deeply, and opened himself to God’s call?

Are you ready?