



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)

Reflecting and Directing Life

Bob and Mary's Perspective:

In researching for a teaching, we came across the following quote by William Penn:

*No pain, no palm;
no thorns, no throne;
no gall, no glory;
no cross, no crown.*

It's a lot to unpack, but true – without sin, there wouldn't be need for redemption.

Our conversation of the past few weeks, as we were drawing closer to Holy Week, revolved around the fact that these holy services of the Paschal Triduum are not mere reenactments of historical events. Rather, they are enactments of events that are happening here and now. God lives outside of time, and yet always in our time.

On Palm Sunday, we heard:

*I am among you as the one who serves.
It is you who have stood by me in my trials;
and I confer a kingdom on you,
just as my Father has conferred one on me,
that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom... (Luke 22:27-30)*

When we cross the threshold of the church to come inside for worship, we are, in a sense, enacting crossing the threshold into the kingdom.

The lesson of Holy Thursday wasn't the washing of the feet of 12 men. It was about selflessness. It is about serving the needs of our fellow human beings, because they inherently deserve dignity. It is about putting others first, raising them up, and showing them that they have worth beyond what they think. Yes, Jesus was subservient, but he did it while lifting others up. In workshops, we talk about the



difference between yanking someone up by the hair verses gently giving them a boost from beneath. We are called to lift others up, so that they can shine. In the gospel of John, "He must increase; I must decrease." (John 3:30)

When we think about friends and mutual acquaintances, they often fall into one of several camps – those relationships that are lifegiving, and those that suck the energy out of the room. We all know someone who leaves us feeling like we just want more time together, because we laugh or solve the problems of the world, and we feel better after time spent with them. We also know someone that we might shift directions on a sidewalk to avoid because we just know the conversation will be draining and leave us feeling dumpy. There is a third type of person – the one who sees qualities in you that you might not see in yourself. That's the person who challenges you to think outside the box, to reach a little higher, or to try something new. This is the person who believes in you and knows you will be successful, even when you don't believe in yourself.

Who does that sound like to you?

Jesus gave the law, but also encourages us to think outside the box – to bring the law to life. He encourages us to adhere to the law not just because of ritually following rules, but for the betterment of life.

So, considering this week and the Triduum, why are we doing this? Ritual only for the sake of "following the rules" is hollow. In these post-Covid times, we find ourselves re-evaluating everything we do. We are a changed people, and our rituals are reflecting that. But if we hold on to traditions without substance, they become meaningless. Consider this story...

A young couple gets married. Like many, they have a wedding registry that includes all kinds of household gizmos. The bride is very happy to receive a Dutch oven, similar to her great-grandmother's – a large pan in which she hoped to cook many roasts for family dinners in the coming years. She asks her mother for Grandma's wonderful roast recipe, with the carrots and onions. Mom provides the recipe, and the first instruction is to cut off the end of the roast – about 6 inches. Then, with the right mix of herbs and seasonings, vegetables and love, a wonderful family meal is prepared. Mom is impressed at the good quality, and how the bride's roast comes out just like hers, and like her mother's and grandmother's before her.

At some point, the bride wants to tweak the recipe, to make it her own. She asks her mother a little bit about why some of the ingredients are necessary, and about why cutting off the end of the roast makes a difference. Mom isn't sure, so she calls Grandma.



The answer is that Grandma's Dutch oven was originally *her* mother's pan, which is smaller than the bride's, and therefore the full roast wouldn't fit, so Great-Grandma cut off the end. The recipe handed down from generation to generation, or the ritual, was worthwhile – but parts no longer had purpose.

What rituals do we have in life that we follow without question or insight? Do they still have purpose? Ritual both reflects life and directs life.

We are in the midst of the holiest time of year, when we call to mind our need for redemption. Are we going through the motions without substance? Will our Lenten practices change who we are *after* Easter? Have our Lenten observances, holy week celebrations, and daily rituals become more of a perfunctory checklist than a betterment of life? Have the rituals of this week reflected who we are, and also directed who we should become?

Will the events of this week make a difference?

Mary is always the one who wants the concrete example, so she'll ask the next logical question:

How?