

Although sharing much common ground when it comes to philosophy and ministry, often Mary and Bob find themselves approaching ministerial concerns from different angles... *He said - She said* is a venue to share differing perspectives and provide food for thought.

One and Done

Mary's Perspective:

I have a daughter who is thoroughly involved in the theater. She has immersed herself in every aspect of productions, from technical directing to wiring the lights to actually performing. She volunteers hours of her time tending to the details. She cues lighting changes to specific beats of music, helps design and construct the set with an eye to how the performers will manipulate each piece, and helps with stuck zippers and other such costume issues so that each performance happens as flawlessly as possible. When performing, she rehearses consistently and brings all of her energy to the stage. On occasion, she gets paid for working in the theater (running lights or sound), which she considers a "win/win" - earning money while doing something she loves!

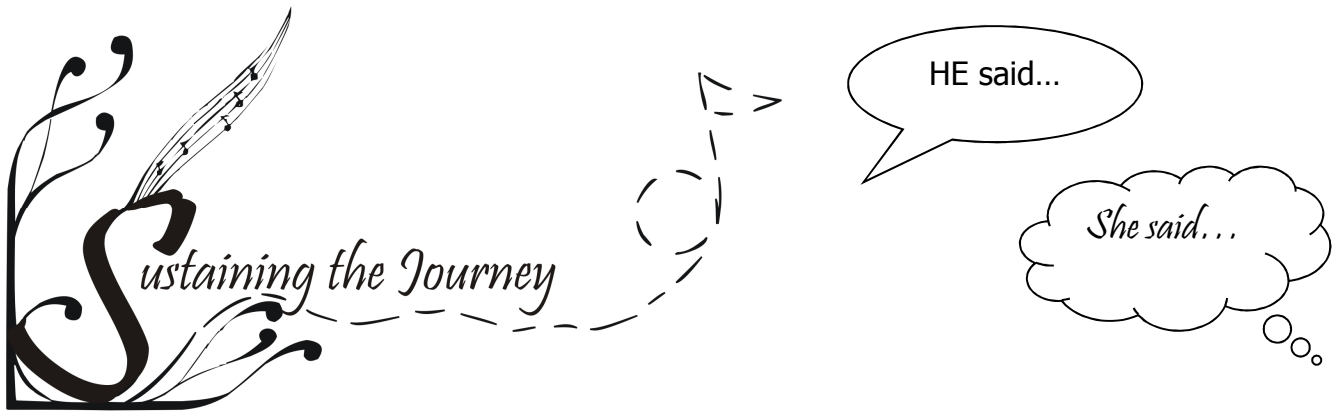
It's not unlike those who are involved in music ministry. We spend hours tending to the details, paying attention to intros and diction, cuing and dynamics. We come to church early, prepare our music to minimize inconvenient page turns, and rehearse over and over until we are confident that we can present our music flawlessly. When it's time for Mass, we put forth all of our energy, to dynamically exercise our ministry. And on occasion, we even get paid for doing that which we love. (Yes, coffee and donuts are sometimes considered payment for a job well done - or consolation for when things didn't go quite as planned!)

As I reflected on the similarities, I began to ponder about the effects of these efforts. Whether it's a high school drama club presentation, or an elite show-choir dance competition, or a Broadway show, all of the time and preparation put forth go towards one presentation - one and done. Perhaps the same show is presented several times, but ultimately all that work goes toward a couple of hours of expression, and then it's over. And that got me to thinking...

Is Mass the same sort of "one and done"? We plan, prepare, practice, and put all of our energy into Sunday, and then is it all over and time to move on? Better yet, we have cycles of ritual. We are on the precipice of yet another Lenten season. Once again, we plan and prepare. Do you even remember what you committed to last Lent? Did it have life-changing impact? Or was that a "one and done" also?

Whether you are a paid minister, a volunteer musician, or a liturgical participant, you take part in these rituals day in and day out, year after year. What difference does it make? Has your participation in liturgy made an impact beyond that hour in church? Has it transformed others' lives? Your own?

My daughter is learning life skills, but ultimately these performances will be long forgotten. Her high school memories will include the camaraderie, the technical skills, and perhaps a few accolades along the way, but I suspect she won't remember the night Fiona sang a little flat on that verse in Shrek. What about our liturgical ministry? Will a specific Mass



plan make a difference? Does it really matter if we sing *Ashes* or *These Forty Days of Lent*? Or is the act of singing and participating the life-changing part?

When we leave the theater, perhaps we go to dinner or even reflect a bit on the presentation. When we leave Mass, we are missioned to "glorify the Lord by our lives". Will this Lent be a "one and done" for you? Or will transformation occur?

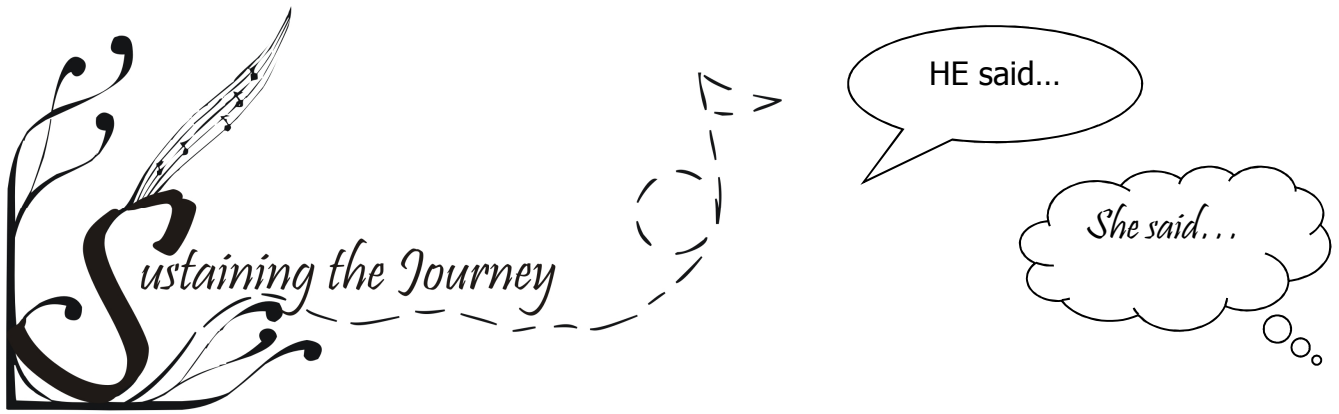
Bob's Perspective:

Some time ago, I attended a weekend Mass at a church that I don't regularly visit. The music was accurately performed, the homily was thematically well prepared and the celebration was by the book – and that was all. The musicians played the notes, the Cantor sang the psalm, the Lector read the readings and the Priest said the prayers. There was little (if any) perceivable energy or spirit in any of it. It was just there – and that was all. There was no emotion, no sense of urgency, nothing that would motivate one to be drawn into the action of celebration. It was just there – and that was all. 'One and Done.' Let's check that one off the list and move on to next week. 'One and Done!'

The 'One and Done' syndrome most readily occurs when the lack of spiritual preparation takes place in planning, rehearsing or executing a liturgical celebration. I'm not talking about rattling off a quick Our Father or Hail Mary before rehearsal. This is about attempting to connect with some sense of emotion in order to bring about personal conversion in some way, shape or form. If we want our Assemblies to be affected in a positive and lasting way, we (as Liturgical Ministers) cannot be timid about putting the emotion of our spiritual health out there. I'm not talking about performance or showboating – just honest feeling and emotion.

Our celebrations also become 'One and Done' when they have no continuity within the big picture – that is, when each celebration is individually and independently planned and treated. During Advent, is there continuity from week to week? What leads us to anticipate the celebration of the Christmas season? Do we celebrate Christmas as a season (all the way through the Solemnity of the Baptism of our Lord), or is Christmas day the big show with little left beyond it? How does the season of Christmas flow back into the short span of Ordinary Time, which then flows into the season of Lent, and so on? If we are to avoid 'One and Done' worship, we need to provide continuity from week to week, from one season to the next. This isn't accomplished just by way of music alone. Scriptures need to be proclaimed with a sense of faith and understanding. Homilies need to make sense seasonally as well as in individual context – and need to be delivered from the heart. Art and environment in the Church needs to move from season to season, enhancing the flow, rather than constantly shocking us into the next movement of life.

Liturgy and the liturgical year is an imitation of our lives. We don't start off as a newborn each day. We build upon our experiences and wisdom of age. We grow in maturity and understanding – from imperfection toward perfection. We don't start over in the morning, but we continue from where we left off last night. Our lives are not 'One and Done.' They are a continuum from conception to death and beyond through all eternity. Life is an imitation of ritual, and ritual is an imitation of life!



In Mary's example about her daughter's high school production she illustrates that when the show is over, that's it...done and finished. Not so with our liturgical celebrations – they continue on in our mission beyond the doors of the church, are then built upon in the next celebration, and the cycle continues. We shouldn't look at each celebration as new unto itself. Rather we should see each celebration as a continuation of our lives and our mission in this world by virtue of our baptismal calling.

So tell us Bob, how do you *really* feel?