

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.

The Way of The Cross

Mary's Perspective:

Are you ready? Here it is, upon us again... the holiest week of the year. As liturgical ministers, we devote our energy and time and practice and life-blood to this week. We celebrate (what seems like) a whirlwind that takes us through the history of our faith, culminating in the saving grace for us all – the Resurrection. A friend recently commented to me that he doesn't understand how liturgical ministers – specifically those musicians and coordinators and directors who tend to all the details – can fully appreciate or unpack the reality of Christ's death and resurrection. As he mused, we are so concerned with making sure the lights go on at the right time, and the charcoals are lit for the incense in time to get hot (but not too early so they peter out), and the handbells know the count of the intro so they come in together, and the cantor has the right setting of the Holy, Holy... and, wait, did I actually eat lunch today? Amidst that, how do we fully appreciate these mysteries we celebrate?

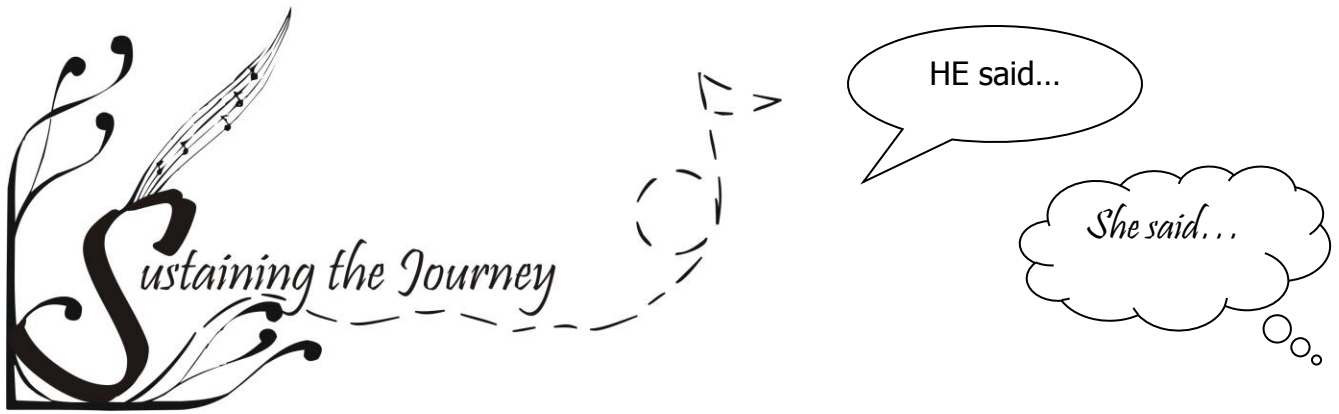
I joked with him (well, partly seriously) that a priest friend and I used to refer to the first three days of the Octave of Easter as "tomb days"... as in, I crawl in the tomb and don't come out! And yes, there is truth to this reality. It IS a lot of work! But I believe we would benefit from re-framing our perspective.

Perhaps you have prayed the Stations of the Cross recently. You know the story. It's told in many ways, with different reflections and/or music and/or dramatization, but the ritual is the same. There's fourteen stations. Jesus falls three times. Here's the part I think we sometimes overlook: Jesus got up three times.

Yes, he stumbled. Yes, that cross was heavy and he fell. But he got up again. And then, after the crucifixion? He rose.

Our lives are full of challenges. We stumble; we fall. We long for better, and often try to fill that longing with temporal things – food, shopping, alcohol. It's when we get back up and recognize that our longing can only be truly filled by the Almighty...that's when we experience the beauty of new life. That's when we glimpse the resurrection.

So, at this precipice of Holy Week, how do we get back up again? Right now, plan for it. Right now, make time – block it in your schedule – for self-care. Take time on Holy Thursday before everything starts, to just sit and



pray. Meditate in a quiet place alone. Ask God to use you as an instrument. Find time on Good Friday, perhaps for a walk. If at all possible, sleep in on Holy Saturday. Plan now to spend quality time with family on Sunday, but also during the beginning of the week. Take time away from the routine, be it outside employment or school. Figure out what you will eat this week – seriously, meal plan – and lay in the supplies. Self-care is not a luxury, it's a necessity!

We spend lots of time and energy caring for others, and that's wonderful and appropriate. However, we won't have the fortitude to get up again after a stumble, if we don't nurture that right now.

Peace be with you!

Bob's Perspective:

Jesus fell three times, but Jesus got up three times. I think that this is one of the most important lessons of The Way of the Cross. One might debate as to whether Jesus actually fell three times seeing as how there is no specific mention of this in the Gospels. However, at the end of the Gospel of John (Jn 21:25) we read: "There are also many other things that Jesus did, but if these were to be described individually, I do not think the whole world would contain the books that would be written." It then stands to reason that if Jesus was beaten and treated harshly as described in the Gospels, he would most likely have fallen at some point – and maybe even multiple times before he made it to Golgotha. But in any case the lesson still stands because in order to get to Golgotha he had to get back up.

Stop and think about this for a moment: Jesus **chose** to get back up – even knowing all that he would have to endure beyond that point. Why didn't he just lay down and die? It certainly would have circumvented the sheer agony and embarrassment of being nailed to a cross, hanging naked for all to see, being humiliated by the Pharisees, dying slowly and painfully from exposure and suffocation. Why did he get back up?

I would never dare to equate Jesus with Sylvester Stallone, but in the movie Rocky Balboa is a very apropos quotation: "...it ain't about how hard you hit. It's about how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward. How much you can take and keep moving forward. That's how winning is done!"

If we are to truly believe in a compassionate and merciful God, then this premise is essential. God intimately understands temptation, suffering and death. He experienced all of these things first hand in the person of Jesus. He knows that no matter how hard we try, there will be times that in all likelihood, we're going to fall. But what keeps us from defeat is that we get back up and we move forward.

[A Song for Reflection](#)