

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.

Revisiting the Past – Looking to the Future

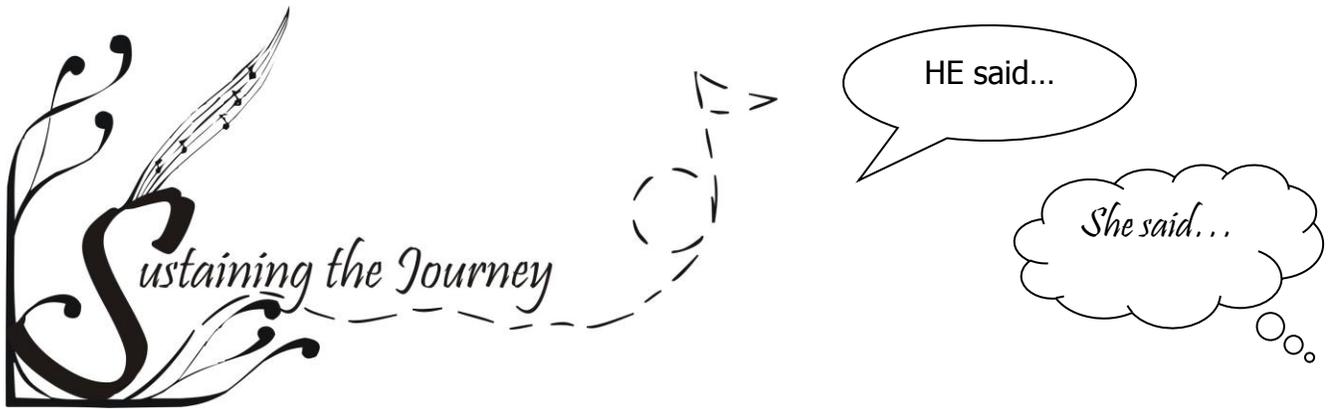
Bob's Perspective:

"Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock. (Mt. 7:24-25)

With Lent and the Triduum still fresh in my mind, I usually take time during the Easter Season to evaluate the recent events and outline the areas that I might amend for next year. This usually begins by reviewing notes that I've taken as well as re-reading the rubrics and rites of the Roman Missal. However, this year I've taken a different tact.

Sometimes it's good to shake up some of life's procedures and the status quo - but the truth is that for the most part I really liked what we did in Lent and the Triduum – and hesitate to change just for the sake of change. So, I sat back in my chair, closed my eyes and reminisced about the years gone by. In my mind's eye I saw many faces, some still with us and others that are no longer around. My imagination helped me to recall the varied fragrances of flowers and incense. I called to mind the many and varied ways in which we created the ambiance of our worship space. I heard the echoes of the beautiful sounds of our musicians and singers, and recalled the enthusiasm of the assemblies of four different parishes - coming to realize that over the course of nearly 40 years we've (meaning all that were involved) covered a lot of ground musically, liturgically and spiritually. While there were certainly areas over the years that needed improvement, there were many times that we "knocked it out of the park."

This retrospection of my trip down memory lane led me to action. I took out some of my old files (over 30 years worth) and while perusing them was amazed at how our liturgy and music have evolved over time – most of it for the better. I couldn't help but compare my own microcosm to the larger evolution of the Church that took place in the years following the Second Vatican Council. I really thank God that I'm old enough (and was connected enough) to remember much of the before and after. While the changes that came forth were healthy, life-giving and much needed, there were definitely some areas in which we all but "threw the baby out with the bath water." Now, I'm not saying that we should go totally retro. Attempting to recreate the days of yore wouldn't serve any real purpose. While I vividly remember the now Extraordinary Form of the Roman



Rite (Tridentine Mass) and have attended a number renditions of it at several places – I was filled with nostalgia and warm fuzzies – but no longer moved in the way that I had been in years past.

Times have changed, society has changed, Christianity is under constant attack and individual views on faith are in constant flux. Society and the Church are both in varied states of turmoil and imbalance. Going retro is definitely not the answer, but looking back at the basics may serve well to shore up our structures. Even structures built on rock need routine maintenance and improvement to continue being viable.

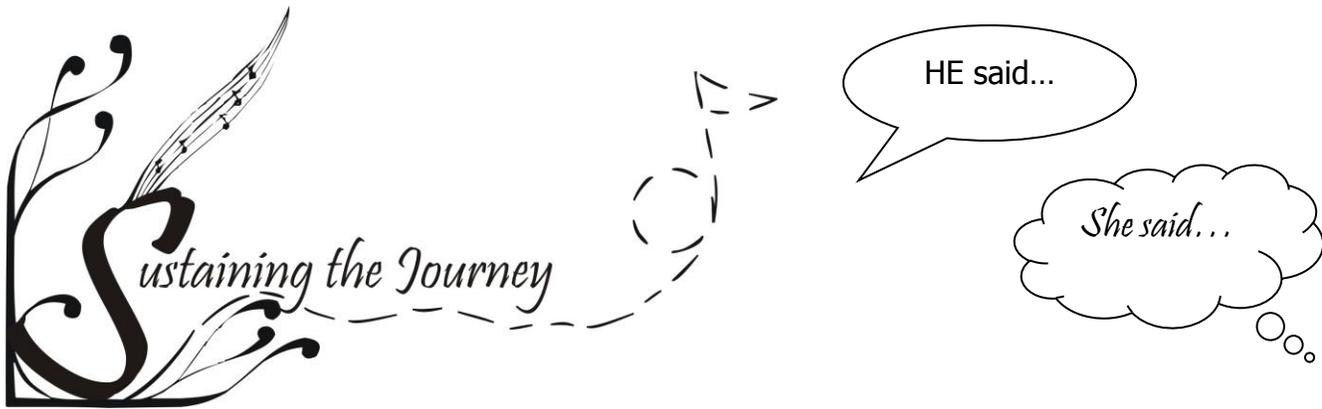
I'm not exactly sure what it's going to bring, but I think I'm going to take time this summer to search out and examine some of the treasures of yesteryear. It might be worth the time to investigate ways of extracting their recipes and creating from them new delicacies to bolster and enhance our musical, liturgical and spiritual experience. More to come.....

Mary's perspective

While I agree with Bob about not making change just for the sake of changing, I always get a little bit skittish when it comes to looking at the past and attempting to relive the glory days. The reality is we tend to remember with rose-colored glasses, and we overlook the bumps in the road. There is a reason our music, our prayer, our liturgy, and our lives have evolved.

Like Bob, I keep copious records of previous liturgy plans, along with notes on what worked, what was a big thud, and what might be considered for next time. When I plan each season, I look back at the past three years, as well as this same cycle 6 years ago and even 9 years ago. I also peruse new music, consult multiple resources to find the best setting of the psalms for any given Mass, and spend considerable time in prayer. Occasionally that prayer draws me to the "tried and true", while other times it challenges me to look through a new lens. Our assemblies have evolved – and our prayer reflects that.

I was chatting with a colleague recently about how far in advance we plan, and discovered we have very similar approaches. I like the analogy of the vase where you start with the big rocks, then fill in the stones, then the pebbles. (I described this process in detail in our [8/15/16 blog: Liturgy Planning...Life Planning.](#)) However, both my colleague and I agree that it's not fruitful to plan every song for every liturgy for an entire year in one sitting, because life happens. For example, the acts of terror of 9/11 or the school shootings in Columbine or Sandy Hook drastically changed the tenor of our prayer. While we respected the liturgical seasons, our prayer (spoken and sung) reflected our grief, fear, dependence on God, and a desire to find comfort. Original plans to introduce new hymns or even the choice of common hymns were replaced with music that expressed the raw emotion of a hurting people and the reassurances of our faith.



As a music director, I must remember that my personal preferences are not necessarily reflective of the assembly's needs. For example, I have sung *On Eagles' Wings* many times. Way too many times. A nauseating number of times. Like "Oh please God, don't let that funeral family pick it AGAIN" number of times. But the reality is that *On Eagles' Wings* brings comfort to the grieving, and reassurance of a faithful and merciful God. I wouldn't take that away from anyone just because I personally may feel like gagging. Okay that was pretty harsh, but you get the picture. God, get me out of the way so that your words may be heard, so that your gentleness may be felt, and so that I may not be a distraction to healing. Even if it means singing *On Eagles' Wings*. Again.

So, beyond a few liturgy nerds, what does this all mean?

I think the lesson can be extended past music ministry. We all make choices in life. Take the freeway or the scenic route? Fruit and yogurt for breakfast or gooey donut? Get to church early for Mass so that you can spend some quiet time with the Almighty, or hit the snooze and skate in before the Gloria? Jeans and tee, or dockers and polo? Certainly some of the decisions are not life-changing, but whether we are conscious of it or not, we consider the past and how we've grown.

I know if I get up a little early, I can take the scenic route, which facilitates the quiet time with the Almighty. I get to work a little more peaceful and centered. If I keep hitting the snooze and the donuts, I grow in less desirable ways. Perhaps this summer would be a good time for, as Bob puts it, some routine maintenance and improvement.

I do have one more bit of inspiration, this one borrowed shamelessly from Bishop Perez:

**"NEVER underestimate the power of the Spirit of God
working in you, through you, and despite you!"**

Whether our work involves ministry or industry, the choices we make have an impact on others. Our attitude, how we carry ourselves, and how we treat others reflect what's happening on the inside. Often, your job has the potential to transform others' lives – even when you don't necessarily see the fruits of your labor.

How will you help the Spirit of God do great things?