



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)

A Nostalgic Note

Bob and Mary's Perspective:

We were simply going to use this blog to wish you a happy new year, and to thank you for continuing to read our writing. However, the conversation that started with that quick message turned into a deep dive down a rabbit hole.

Feeling a bit nostalgic, we have been reflecting on our path with *Sustaining the Journey*. We began writing our He Said-She Said blog in 2016, and have (with one brief break) consistently published a blog on the first and fifteenth of the month, each month, for nine years! That emphasizes to us how quickly time passes, and reminds us how grateful we are for our connection, for having pushed ourselves to keep writing, and especially for those who have supported this ministry for so many years.

Our readers know by now that we are not big proponents of making resolutions. Each day, each moment, offers an opportunity or decision that can change our trajectory and positively impact the lives of others, and we don't need to change the month or year on the calendar to make an intentional step forward.

Looking back at each of our January 1 blogs, it is interesting to see the path of growth.

In the early days, we discussed incorporating new resources into parish music repertoire. We observed how something as simple as lighting communicates volumes and evokes a sense of welcome, neglect, frustration, or warmth. As we grew, our writing took on more of a big-picture perspective. We reflected on how we all have stuff - from mental clutter and strained relationships, to the physical clutter of seemingly self-reproducing to-go containers and music copies. We also recognized that "family" stretches beyond mere genetics, and we encouraged perseverance with gentleness and joy.



Then the world was turned upside-down by a global pandemic. We felt caught in a vortex of negativity, and redoubled our efforts to discover joy each day. We recognized that life presents us with lots of moments, and it takes just a moment to change a life. Again, our writing was imbued with themes of mindfulness and intention, encouraging a recommitment to giving the best of ourselves – nothing more, nothing less, nothing else.

So here we stand at the precipice of yet another new year. We are conscious of how quickly time passes. We are so very grateful for those who have encouraged us in ministry, and in life. We recognize (for the millionth time) that we have enough writing to produce three volumes of books. Given the observation about time, perhaps we need a strategic kick to bring publication of said books to fruition! Mostly, we want to encourage you. Be intentional about seeking balance. Make the effort to tell your story authentically – you won't regret committing it to writing. Continue to treat others with gentleness. Deliberately seek joy. Walk with another and embody hope for those in your circle of influence.

On December 26 this year, all of the radio stations that had been playing Christmas music ceased playing those tunes completely. On December 27, we each went into a store that was absolutely devoid of any Christmas items, and full of Valentine's decorations. Our world is in such a hurry to move to the next thing, that we sacrifice the mindfulness our Christian faith beckons.

Every 25 years, the Catholic Church celebrates a year of Jubilee – a time to refocus, repent, and open ourselves to the grace and mercy our Lord freely offers. To open this Jubilee year, members of our Diocese of Cleveland did something decidedly counter-cultural. Folks from every one of the eight counties of our diocese gathered for prayer and made a pilgrimage through downtown Cleveland, witnessing to faith. Over 175 people braved rain, Browns traffic, and darkness to walk together and proclaim that we are a people of hope. The intentionality of that night made an impression on both of us. Remember that one tiny pebble can cause far-reaching ripples on the water. Holy moments are hidden in the seemingly ordinary: in choosing to extend a compliment, in lingering a bit longer with one in need of a listening ear, in praying for another, in witnessing to faith in a secular world... in the decision to be counter-cultural.



We had no idea nine years ago where this journey would take us, nor can we begin to clearly anticipate the path forward. But we remain open to the Spirit's guidance, grateful beyond words, and hopeful for more adventures. We wish for you the same. May this new year be filled with peace, good health, and abundant joy. Happy new year!