



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.

Walk With One

Mary's Perspective:

There are times when I wonder if God is working on my brain. An idea starts to germinate. It kicks around my head, goes quiet for a while, then reappears multiple times until I can't ignore it. Often, I am not aware of it consciously, and then it becomes present, loud and clear. The concept of this blog is one of those ideas.

I am nearing completion of my first year in a new ministry. Being part of the diocesan staff has been life-giving, bewildering, exhilarating, and exhausting, all at the same time. Whether in a secular job, parish ministry, or diocesan duties, I have learned that there are various categories of work: the big projects that get assigned, the daily "monkey work" that has its own merit, and the seemingly never-ending interactions including meetings, site visits, phone calls, and the like. Good days happen when tasks in these three categories are balanced.

Recently, a "theme" has emerged as those three categories have converged. Whether you call it mentoring, or apprenticeship, or becoming a sponsor, the concept of accompaniment on the journey is very present to me. Consider these examples...

The documents guiding the process of Christian Initiation have recently been updated, prompting one of my big projects. Over a span of six months, I will have conducted twelve workshops, offered a half-dozen presentations, developed webinars, and written articles on the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA). While the language has been updated in this translation, the basic concepts have not. One of the recommended practices within OCIA is for a parish to assign a sponsor, to be paired with an unbaptized inquirer. This person is not necessarily the godparent or Confirmation sponsor, but, rather, one who has been a member of the Catholic faith (and likely of the parish) for long enough to be well-versed and able to answer questions, share their story, and generally accompany one who is early on the path. Think of it as a spiritual mentor.

In a different area of ministry, we are in the midst of a Eucharistic Revival. Over 50,000 people attended the National Eucharistic Congress this summer in Indiana, and, by all accounts, it was a transformative experience. Now those attendees are being challenged to share the flame that was re-energized or re-ignited in their hearts. As a response to that challenge, the diocese has organized a concert event and



invited all of the Eucharistic Congress attendees and diocesan staff to bring someone with them to the concert who has maybe been away from the Church, or has no faith.

In yet another area of ministry – and we have written about this one before – there is a large need for well-formed, qualified liturgical music ministers. The pool of candidates is significantly smaller than it was even twenty years ago, and churches are “settling” for musicians who may be well-meaning and skilled in some areas, but lacking in other areas. Bob is spearheading an Apprenticeship program, offering mentoring to musicians who want to grow in their ministry and develop more sound foundational skills. Several priests have spoken to me about this need, and our response has been a grassroots, one-to-one effort.

You know I’m conscious that our readers aren’t necessarily liturgy nerds, and it is important to me that our blogs are widely applicable. While all three of those examples reflect church work, the reality is that we are all on a journey. Whether it’s the new mom or experienced grandma, the recent college graduate starting out in industry or the CEO looking at retirement options, we all have a mission and a path. Bob and I formed *Sustaining the Journey* to provide care for the care providers. We each – all of us, not just Bob and Mary – have unique skills and experiences, and sharing our story might help someone else in a similar setting. How many “how to” videos have you seen on YouTube, or home improvement or cooking shows on television? In the “olden days” you might consider the master craftsman passing the torch to the apprentice.

The reality is that we don’t live in a bubble. We are created to be in community, and we each have the ability to make our corner of the world a little better by helping bear the load. Whether that means faith sharing over coffee, teaching the trade-school student the best practices of welding, or showing the neighbor the nuances of getting your quilting squares to align, there is definitely someone within your sphere of influence who would benefit from your time.

We are at the precipice of a new year. Forget the resolutions and bucket lists. I propose our challenge this year is to walk with one. Choose one person in your circle, and consciously accompany them on this journey of life. Only you can determine what that accompaniment looks like. Perhaps it’s committing to a weekly walk or phone call. Maybe it’s coffee on Tuesdays, or Saturday morning strolls. If your “one” is a work buddy, make a standing meeting to check in. If yours is the neighbor, be intentional about seeing each other regularly and sharing your stories. Simply taking the time to listen is accompaniment.

We are so busy, and yet so lonely. Social media “connects” folks, yet removes the true physical connection in place of artificial stories. (Remember, those perfect vacation pictures are the curated two that have been touched up, out of the six hundred that weren’t so perfect.) If you are more of a homebody, step up your writing game – as in actual pen and paper stationary. And then follow the letter



with a phone call. As individuals, we can't move mountains ourselves. But we can make an impact on one life. Accompaniment is about growing the kingdom, one person at a time. Bring a friend to church, have a regular crafting night, play pickleball, take a class together... the options are endless. Pick one – one person, one action – and DO it. Want 2025 to be a great year? Walk with one.

Bob's Perspective:

Bah! Humbug!

Just kidding, but now that I have your attention, I'd like to offer another perspective. I wholeheartedly agree that in-person contact is the best way of connecting – and if were up to me, (other than "I'm on my way" or "I'll see you then" type remarks) it would be the only way. In recent times, I have found that in-person connection doesn't seem to be the preferred way among many people.

On numerous occasions, I have offered "let's get together" type invitations, only to be countered with options of Instagram, Twitter (now it's called something else), Facetime or Zoom meetings. While these types of meetings are convenient and expedient for some things, they are sorely lacking where interpersonal relationships are concerned. Their residual effects on society are becoming obvious by the general decline of social-skills and the upswing of self-centeredness and, dare I say, narcissism.

Walking with one isn't just a nice idea – it's an imperative element in terms of healthy societal relationships.

I'd like to offer another point of view regarding walking with one. Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas purported that if you wish to become a great souled person, the best way to attain it is to seek out great souled people and imitate them. So, what am I saying? Sometimes it's a good idea to seek out a person who is on a higher level than you in some area and walk with her/him.

For example, if you want to become a better musician, seek out musicians that are on a higher level, and jam with them. In martial arts, if you want to become better at sparring, seek out those who are more talented and spar with them. If you want to become better at just about anything, seek out those who are on a higher level, walk with them, learn from them, and imitate them. You'll be surprised at how much you'll grow.



Many, many moons ago I received a full ride to college. I was only interested in taking music classes (music theory, applied music, etc.) I didn't care about graduating, I just wanted to be the best musician I could be. However, as a stipulation for receiving the full ride, I had to attend full-time and take required courses that would eventually lead me to graduate. This meant that I had to take math, English, physical education and philosophy. I was fine with most of that, but the truth is that from early high school onward, I HATED philosophy – but I grudgingly signed up for a “blow-off” course just to get the credit.

The course that took place in an auditorium – I was one of about 60 or so students. The professor came onto the stage and introduced himself. He was a wonderfully enthusiastic teacher, with a very unique skill. Anytime he deemed something important, he would write it on the blackboard (yes, with chalk and in cursive) and backwards in a mirror image. I was astounded to say the least. But that was only part of it. He was so enthusiastic about his subject, and so animated in the way he presented it, that I couldn't wait to come back to the next class. In a very short time, I actually became enthused with philosophy, and still am to this very day, thanks to him! From a certain point of view, he changed my life!

Anyway, I finally moved on from school....now fast-forward about 30 years. I was working at a parish as Director of Music and Liturgy. Another parish in our area was about to close, and many of their parishioners were going to come to our Church. One evening, I invited those who were joining our parish to a little social and presentation. The goal was to make them feel welcomed, included, and needed as new family members. I knew some of those who were joining us from other social circles, but some I didn't know at all. At one point, I was talking to a gentleman who seemed familiar. I seemed familiar to him as well, but we couldn't place each other – we talked about neighborhoods, various parishes and the like, but just couldn't figure it out. He was, however, known to others in our parish – and friends with our school principal.

After this, a little more time passed. One day I was walking through the school building, and I saw him addressing one of our eighth-grade classes. I stood by the door to listen for a moment, when all of a sudden, he turned toward the blackboard and began to write backwards (yes, with chalk and in cursive) in mirror image! I blurted out, “Now I know you!” He turned and laughed, “Now I know you too!” (It seemed almost biblical. The Emmaus disciples knew Jesus in the breaking of the bread, and I knew this professor by the writing on the board.)



He was retired but also taught 55+ (senior) courses at a local community college. I attended a number of them. We chatted after Sunday Mass and on other occasions about a variety of topics: philosophy, spirituality, social-political, and the like. I learned something new, or at least something ponderable every time we chatted. We sought each other out and intentionally walked together (in a manner of speaking). I always felt enriched by knowing him. In time, I became acquainted some of his family members, especially one of his sons, who was also a musician. At social gatherings, I always made it a point to tell them what a terrific father they had (to which they agreed). I can't say as to what impact (if any) I made in his life, but he sure made an incredible impact in mine – all because I took the time and made the effort to walk with one.

A final thought from Mary and Bob:

In a nutshell:

1. Find someone that you can mentor.
2. find someone that you can learn from, who will serve as mentor to you.
3. Walk with one.

Know of our continued prayers with, and for, you. Merry Christmas!