



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)

We are grateful for the St. Mary Magdalene Choir, who particularly inspired this edition.

Warning to Reader:

We have written this blog sitting together. Admittedly, these are the ponderings of a pair of nerds - but the super nerdy suggestions all come from Bob.

Lenten Warmup

Bob and Mary's Perspective:

In less than a week we are offering a Pre-Lent Mission, which got us to thinking... Most parishes don't get a pre-Lent warmup, or dedicated time to discern how this Lent can be transformational. Many of us grew up with the concept of giving something up for Lent, only to gorge on the "forbidden item" the first possible moment. Who hasn't eaten chocolate bunnies for breakfast on Easter? Perhaps our Lenten practice included doing something out of the ordinary, but often, in the long run, that was more of a "one and done" that didn't result in substantial change of mindset or spiritual growth.

This blog is being posted exactly one week before Ash Wednesday. This week provides an ideal opportunity to mindfully discern Lenten practices that might actually transform our lives instead of being a short-term change of diet. So we challenge you (and ourselves) to take some time this week to ponder... What part will I focus on during the six weeks of Lent, to effect positive growth in my life and in the lives of those I touch? What do I want to look at? What do I want to change? What do I want to do better?

Then, pick one thing. Work on that. If you pick a bunch of things, chances are you won't accomplish anything. If you pick one and stick with it, chances are you're going to come into at least some amount of success.



We floated this idea at a choir practice, that most certainly became Divinely inspired. By the end of the conversation, at least five members offered concrete suggestions of positive steps to help us grow spiritually.

To this end, we offer a Pre-Lenten Examination of Conscience:

You are what you consume. You can eat at McDonald's every day for a month (there's actually a Harvard study about this) and maintain your current weight. But how much better would you feel if, instead of Big Macs and fries, you incorporated blueberries and broccoli? Okay, maybe this example doesn't sing to Bob, but the reality is that quality is even more important than quantity. (Bob's example is choosing a steak dinner instead of the Big Mac.)

So, what do you consume? YouTube videos, television reruns, talking heads, Facebook posts and TikToks? News from the Vatican website or EWTN, with a more Christian perspective? The app *Hallow* has options for reading the Bible in a year and the Catechism in a year, with explanations to make it more understandable. There is an abundance of positive blogs and seasonal reflections available in a variety of media.

We are a society of instant results. Got a question? Ask Siri. Want to learn something? Google it. Curious about the weather or traffic conditions? There's an app for that. Do you fill every spare moment, from morning until night? How might life be different if you spent 10 minutes per day in actual silence, prayer, or meditation?

We Catholics already abstain from meat on Fridays during Lent. Does giving up something that will make your life better make more sense? How about fasting from swearing, or from gossip, or from road rage?

You might enjoy reading a magazine or a trashy novel. What if, instead of a paperback, you read a gospel? This Lent (Cycle A), we primarily hear from Matthew and John. Beyond what you hear in church, do you really know their stories?

Many of us hold onto three sizes of wardrobe in hopes we'll someday lose (or gain) those few pounds. What if you collected a bag of gently used items you don't need and donated them to a charitable cause? Some of us stock up our pantry sufficient to withstand a zombie apocalypse.



Do you really need 14 cans of soup? There are people who are actually hungry right now. What if you helped to restock your local food pantry?

We all have someone in our lives who are holding on to past hurts and angers, and we can see how destructive and painful that can be. Perhaps we, ourselves, struggle with the same. How much better would you feel after going to Confession, repairing a broken relationship, or cleansing your soul?

Back to our choir practice... the liveliness of the conversation and participation suggests that we are all in this boat together. So how are you going to use this week?