

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.

How Do I Get There?

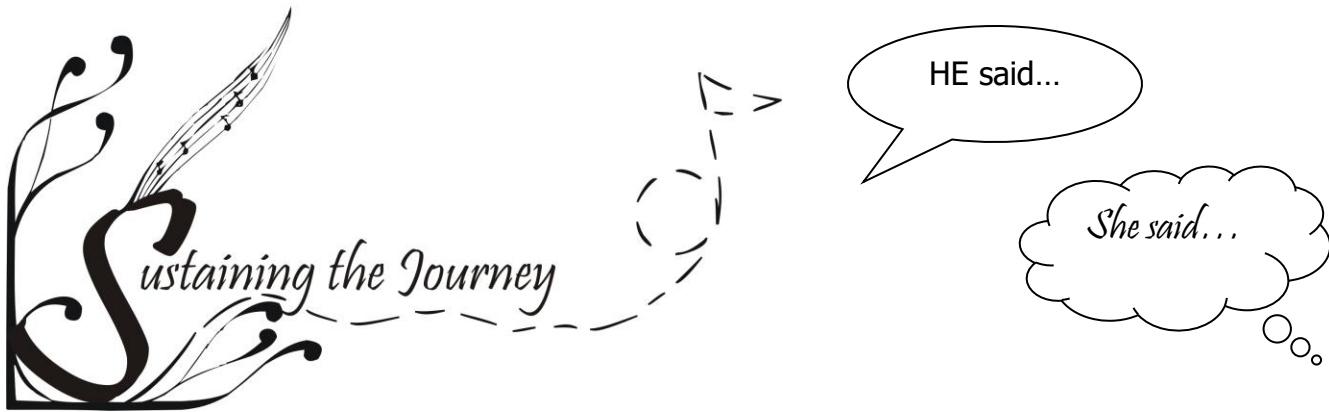
Mary's Perspective:

Our last blog ([9/1/21 – What Do I Want?](#)) tried to get our hands around silencing the cacophony of noise around us, to truly discern what we want. I'm a list-maker, so for me, the approach involves a pen and paper. For others, the approach may be to figure out what I *don't* want, and then what's left is, by default, what I *do* want. I have friends who pick the next paint color of a room by eliminating the undesirable possibilities – "I don't like gray, or pink, or blue, or green, so I guess that leaves yellow." I realize this sounds simplistic, but perhaps the best way to eat the elephant is one bite at a time.

Anyway, once we've got some sense of what we want, the next logical question is, "How do I get there?" What are the steps to take that will transform *want* into reality? If, for example, one of my "I wants" is that I want to lose 30 pounds, then realistically what changes do I need to make to accomplish that loss? Certainly, choosing better foods, portion control, and getting regular exercise will help. If one of my "I wants" is that I want to retire with enough money to support a specific lifestyle, then perhaps part of the path includes a change in spending habits, securing a trusted financial advisor, and maybe taking on a part-time job for additional income.

Things like losing a certain number of pounds or saving a specific amount of money have pretty identifiable paths. However, when it comes to more esoteric "I wants" – such as "I want to improve my faith life," or "I want to leave a cool legacy" – we may need help clarifying our thoughts. I think the first step is to define what that "want" really looks like. For example, if my faith life was stronger, perhaps I would feel more at peace, or I would pray more often, or I would read spiritually enlightening material. Or, what does a cool legacy mean to me? Ask yourself lots of questions to fine-tune this strategy, and be open to the Spirit speaking through your inner voice.

To look at it another way, think of our wants as our goals. You've read before (heck, we've even written about it before!) that goals need to be SMART – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. So, if we're going to accomplish what we want, we need to be specific about the who/what/when/where/why of the goal. To be measurable, we need to think in terms of tangible metrics. Back to the example of money facilitating a specific lifestyle, the metrics would be how many actual dollars are required, not simply "enough." Of course, the goals should be achievable (even if it's a stretch), or life would be a real bummer. Relevance means the goal makes sense with the big picture. For example, if I want to be more philanthropic, then the generous nature must be considered when figuring out how much money is needed to facilitate the specific lifestyle. Finally, anyone can set goals, but if it lacks realistic timing, most likely you won't achieve them. They become another item on the never-ending to-do list.



So this is all fine and dandy, but what does it have to do with *Sustaining the Journey*? Well, the reality is that we all need to take some time to figure out what we want, and how to get there. We also need to make sure that God's will is included in our lofty plans. As we continue to emerge from the pandemic – or possibly face another iteration of it, as the virus morphs and threatens to impact life on a grand scale again – we are at the precipice of a new stage of life. Some call it “the new normal.” Others recognize that life has changed, and we don't want to blindly go back to how we did things just because “that's the way we've always done it.”

Some are reaching a new step in their journey, such as retirement, or days as empty-nesters, or beginning a new job. It's time to reinvent ourselves deliberately – to build on what we've done well, to ditch what hasn't been life-giving, and to put into place the pieces that will make our “I wants” a reality.

How will you get there?

Bob's Perspective:

How do I get there?

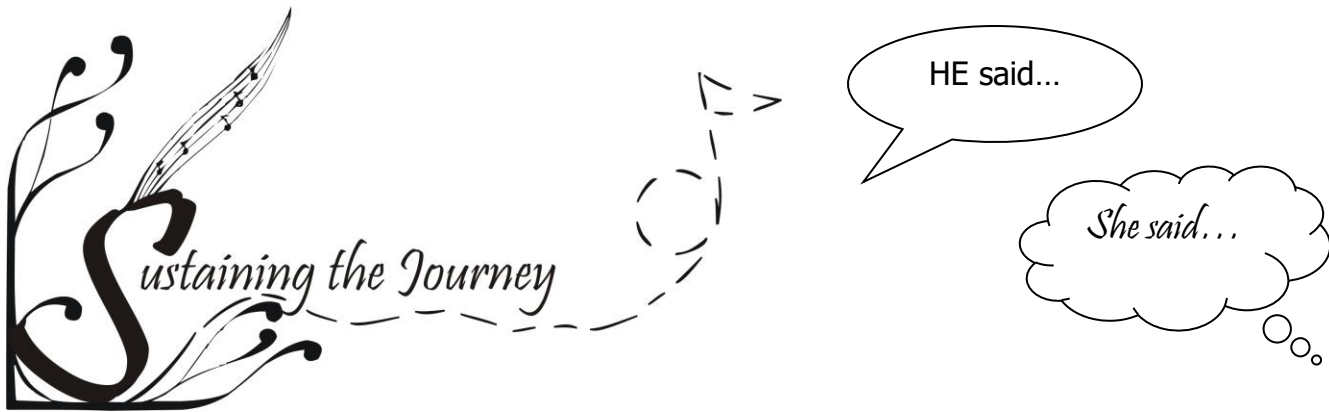
I have always been a “big picture” guy. For the most part, detailed plans only formulate in my mind when push comes to shove. Otherwise, the “big picture” is the only motivation I need. “Here's where I am, and there's where I want to be, so have at it.”

Case in point: Some years ago, I was planning a trip to Phoenix, Arizona (from Cleveland, Ohio) with some friends. For some reason “we” all decided that “I” would be the one to plan the travel route. The evening before we were to leave, we all gathered together in order to touch base about various aspects of the trip. When it came around to me, I was asked about our travel route. Again, being a “big picture” guy, it was a very simple task, so I replied, “We'll travel south till we get about half way through Mississippi, then we'll turn right and head to Arizona. Truthfully, that's about all I would need. They saw things a bit differently. Needless to say, my plan got hijacked and redesigned.

The reason why Mary and I work so well together is that when it comes to details, we're polar opposites. Mary likes things to be very detailed and structured. I, on the other hand prefer to keep things loose and flexible. The combination makes us very successful together in what we do. There's nothing wrong with either method, as long as it works well.

I've written many times about the journey being more important than the destination. I still hold that to be true. However at this point, it needs to be said that in order to be successful, the “big picture” can't be haphazardly drawn. There still needs to be destination(s) in mind, otherwise the journey becomes nothing more than aimless wandering – not at all productive. That's why the question from our last blog, “What do I want?” is so important. Specific goals in life (or in any project) are essential for growth. Without goals, we flounder.

As I journey my way toward retirement, friends and family have asked me about my future plans. I respond by saying that I don't have any real plans in mind, but I have goals. My three central goals are (1) to downsize my living arrangements, (2) to keep myself in good physical condition, and (3) to stay active and vital – not only for my own good, but in ways that can be valuable to others as well.



Downsizing living arrangements will come in the form of getting rid of a lot of stuff in the house that I don't need (or will never use) – and very possibly moving to a smaller, more manageable place to live. Will it be an apartment, or a condominium, or a trailer? Maybe. The journey will figure that out, but something will happen.

Staying in good physical condition will mean that I'll design an easily accessible daily regimen (oops! Did a detailed plan sneak in there?). This could be in the form of daily walks, or riding my stationary recumbent bike. I may join a "Silver Sneakers" program at our community center. I may even return to teaching Tai Chi somewhere. In any case, the goal is there and the journey will tell the tale.

What about remaining active and vital? I'm very sure that Mary and I will continue to move forward in nurturing *Sustaining the Journey*. We have a number of projects in the works, of which I'm very enthused and motivated to expedite. I also want to remain active in music. This may come in the form of substituting for funerals and weekend Masses at nearby parishes (Mary's already booked me for a few things), or it may be that I'll get my old band back together, or I may go play some coffeehouse gigs on my own. Then there are other things. I'd like to drive a tour bus in Downtown Cleveland. I like driving, so maybe I'll get a part time delivery job. And as a matter of fact, I wouldn't mind bussing tables in the morning at my favorite neighborhood diner (once or twice a week) in trade for a couple of good breakfasts. (Their food is great...so that goal's a slam-dunk!)

When all's said and done, "Here's where I am, there's where I want to be, and getting there will be half the fun!"