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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.

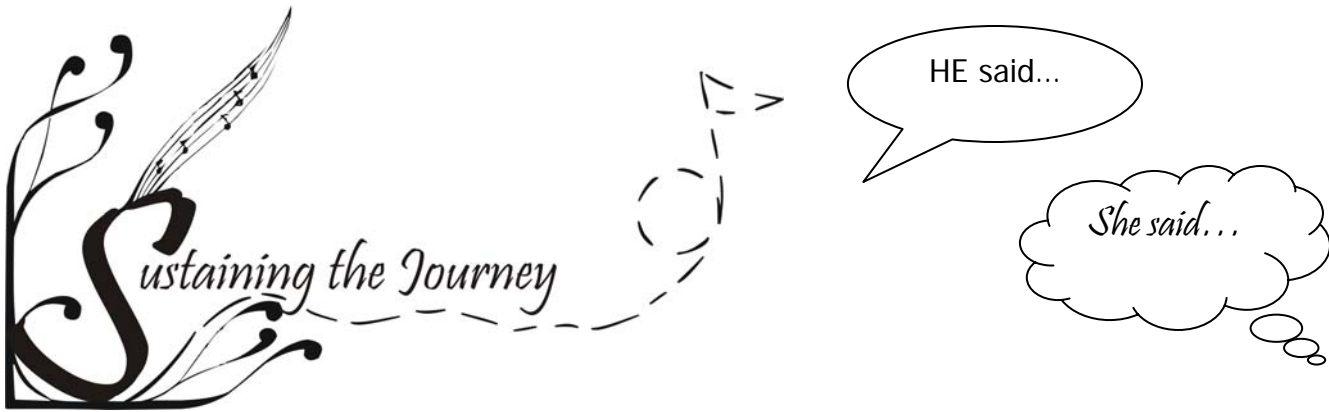
## A Stroke of Good Fortune

### *Bob's Perspective:*

A few weeks ago, I experienced a very sudden illness. It literally hit me out of nowhere. One Sunday morning, I left work early and visited a local Emergency Room. At first it was thought to be nothing serious. I was given a prescription and sent home. Within a matter of hours my health worsened. A couple days later, I went to the doctor for a follow-up examination. By this point, I was unable to drive or get around by myself, so Mary Hrich gave me a lift to the doctor and hung in there to hear his findings, but within a matter of a few minutes I was directly rushed to the Emergency Room. By now, I was debilitated to a point of being hospitalized for about a week, and then I found myself in physical rehab at a skilled nursing facility, which lasted close to another week. I'm now at home recovering and doing well. If all goes as planned, I should be back to work within the next couple of weeks.

The point of my telling this little saga is to illustrate how quickly life can change. One moment you can be perfectly fine – and the next minute, BAM!!!! I learned a few lessons in this short time. Now I'm not in any way equating myself with our Lord, but his story came to mind a number of times in my experiences.

1. **The value of true friendship.** I am blessed to have so many good friends and family members who have supported me with their help, concern and kind words. I am grateful for my boss (Fr. Haren) and colleagues at St. Monica Church who have picked up the slack while I've been away. I'm very much a control freak, and I've had to let go and trust. Their actions in a way remind me of our Blessed Mother, Mary Magdalene and John staying close to our Lord in his suffering. It also brings to mind Simon of Cyrene, who helped our Lord carry his cross.
2. **The value of surrender.** I am a very private individual. In the hospital and in rehab, there is no room for privacy. You get picked at and prodded, poked at and jabbed, and generally invaded morning, noon and night. In all this, I could do no more than surrender myself into being cared for by others – and trusting in their judgement and abilities. It's very embarrassing to be laid open for all the world to see (at least, that's how it felt). I



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thought a little about the embarrassment our Lord must have felt as he was mocked, beaten and prepared for crucifixion in front of everybody – strangers, friends and family members.

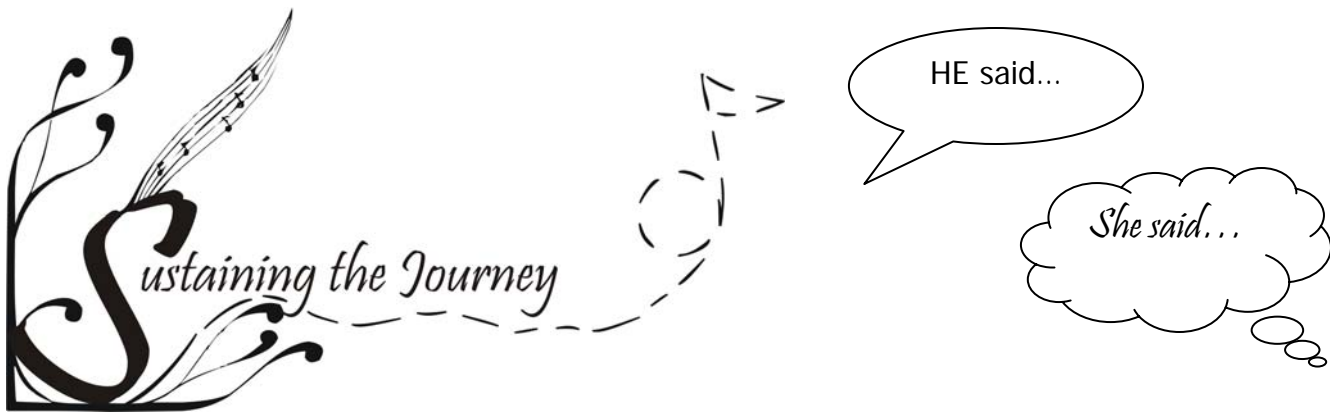
- 3. The value of pastoral care.** I was particularly humbled when the pastor of my home parish (Fr. Breck) came to visit me in the hospital and offered me the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick. Our Lord rubbed mud over the eyes of the blind man and restored his vision - his touch healed, his words raised from the dead.

Likewise, receiving Eucharist from an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion in a hospital setting is much different than receiving at Mass. At Mass, we come to the table, but in the hospital the meal comes to us. There were many times that the crowds went to our Lord, but after the resurrection, he met his disciples on the beach and fed them.

- 4. The value of good people.** I had the good fortune to interact with many of the people who cared for me in the hospital and at rehab. Most of the staff members (both professional and support staff) were considerably younger than me. I was very impressed with their genuine concern for my well-being. This went far beyond checking my vital signs, giving me meds and drawing blood. Their questions, “how are you feeling?” or “can I get you anything?” had intent and vitality in their voices. In this day and age where we hear so much about protesting, self-centeredness and self-indulgence, it’s nice to know that there are those who still have values and convictions that go well beyond themselves. This reminds me of Matthew 25:40b, “Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.”

I was also impressed as I watched the physical therapists working with a variety of people (mostly elderly) with all sorts of maladies. The therapists were very respectful, but at the same time challenging. They made their patients work hard, but encouraged them along the way. They were strong but gentle, firm but compassionate. Not only did I make huge strides in a very short period of time, but others around me did as well in their own ways. “For human beings this is impossible, but for God all things are possible.” (*Matthew 19:26b*)

- 5. The value of patience.** OK, so the jury’s still out on this one. I’m sure that as this little episode of my life continues (and hopefully concludes), I’ll have more to say.



*Mary's Perspective:*

Ripples. I know, I'm on hiatus from writing for a while, but I wanted to chime in on this one. Ripples. That's what has kept coming to mind these past few weeks, watching (and participating just a bit in) Bob's journey. A couple of years ago, I gave a retreat reflection on ripples. I recall standing at a pond on a perfectly placid autumn day. The water reflected the colors of the beautiful trees so clearly, one could make out each detail of the trees as if gazing at a mirror. Then a duck swam by, and the water rippled. Wave after wave, changing the shape and look of the trees, bouncing against the dock, lapping at the water's edge, reaching out across the entire pond.

At the retreat, I likened those ripples to the effects of our ministry. We don't always know how far it reaches, or who we touch, or what becomes transformed because of our care. I came around to the same image when I thought about Bob's journey. For years (lots and lots of years - older than Yoda he is), Bob has maintained a professional and pastoral life that goes well beyond a simple job description. Mentor, musician, wise old owl full of corny jokes, always the leader in charge, Bob has spent his life teaching by example. Yes, a bit control-freakish, but aren't most artists?

And then BAM!!! Suddenly, it was all about surrender. Trusting those you have mentored to step up and get it done - whatever aspect of life "it" is. At those moments, you start to see the ripple effect. Bob's stroke affected his family and friends (and their families and friends!), his parish and co-workers, and even the medical teams caring for him. He challenged the therapists to develop a recovery plan that incorporated his martial arts training. Musicians near and far have helped cover the temporary gaps he has left. Family and friends have changed their routines to include a visit, or perhaps a stop for groceries. Even professional acquaintances have brought instruments, or sprung him for a drive and a meal.

Suddenly, we have had more conversations about mortality and vulnerability and legacy. Life-changing incidents have a ripple effect - literally hundreds of people have been touched by Bob's stroke. It invites conversation. It calls to mind the friendships we treasure. It reminds us that we are not in control, and that the Almighty has a plan.

We don't live in a bubble. As ministers, we don't serve in just our corner of the block. Our actions, our care, our beliefs, and our commitment to reaching higher all have impact much farther than we can see. What kind of impact will your ripples leave?