

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.

To Be or Not To Be

Bob's Perspective:

Given all that has taken place throughout the world (and especially in our country) over the last several months, I think it's time that we pause to put things into perspective. The title of this blog comes from the play Hamlet by William Shakespeare. In scene 3 act 1, Hamlet is contemplating suicide – and the soliloquy basically is a list of the pros and cons for his consideration. Throughout the play, Hamlet is pretty wimpy. All of his misery is for the most part everyone else's fault but his. Obviously, Hamlet chooses to live – otherwise the play would have been considerably shorter. Ultimately, Hamlet's fear of the unknown (what death would bring) makes it much more palatable for him to live in misery.

Why do I start off here with such a dark example? In some ways, I think this is what many are going through (to a certain extent) in the here and now. We don't know if this virus will ever go away. We talk about a "new normal," but is it permanent or transitory? We see all of the civil unrest and are very quick to point the finger at particular politicians, races, creeds and the like. We get caught up in all the media and political hype to the point that we totally disregard the good things we possess. We allow others to influence the way we think, the way we feel and the way we act. We have allowed ourselves and our society to tumble into secular self-centeredness. It's much easier to point the finger than to take personal responsibility – and that's where we've gone.

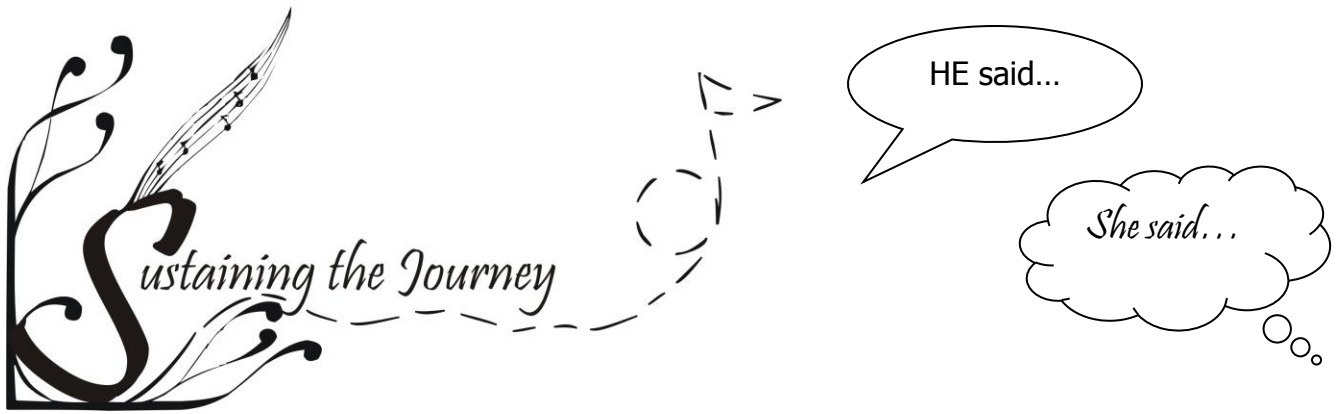
Last weekend (Pentecost) many of our Churches reopened for public worship. We all wore masks. We didn't sit in our usual places. We observed social distancing. We didn't shake hands or embrace. We didn't dip our fingers into Holy Water. We didn't sing. We didn't bring up the Offertory Gifts. We were deprived of so much! We just can't worship like this! We just can't take it anymore! Oh poor us!

But what did we do? Our worship was broken down into the simplest of terms. For months, we have been deprived of the basics. It's always nice to go to a fancy-schmancy restaurant and have a gourmet meal. Last weekend, we may not have had our hors d'oeuvres or salad or baked Alaska or after-dinner liqueur. But to those who are starving, a morsel of food and a drink of water is a veritable feast – and we were starving. As starving people we gathered. We prayed together. We received the simplest, but most nutritious meal of all meals – Eucharist – the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of our Lord, the "source and summit" of our lives – and in that Sacrament of unity we have the opportunity to be revitalized as individuals and as a community – if we take the personal responsibility to see it through.

To be or not to be? That is the question.

Mary's Perspective:

I don't know about you, but I am weary. I am tired of wearing a mask everywhere. I'm frustrated with figuring out which aisle I can walk down at the grocery store or at Wal-Mart. Most of all, I am weary of people complaining.



The fact is, we don't have all the answers. For the most part, the people that I know who are in positions of leadership – be it pastors, or business owners, or school administrators, or music directors – are doing the best they can with the resources and information they have. Many difficult decisions have been made. Not all are popular. As a matter of fact, the rationale for many decisions has been questioned over and over. But, to echo Bob, it's much easier to point the finger than to take personal responsibility.

The one thing we DO have control over is our attitude. If I wallow in all I've lost, in feeling deprived, and in being angry at wearing a mask while walking down the one-way aisle at Target, then I will be an angry, sad, miserable person. And, for the record, so will you – if you decide to spend any time around me. Negativity is contagious.

I may be weary, but if I allow that to flood over to you, then shame on me. If all I can do is complain at work, then I have no right to be at work, especially when there are many people seeking jobs who would gladly put up with inconveniences for the opportunity to receive a paycheck. If I'm going to grouse about how liturgy isn't the same, perhaps I should consider how it felt to celebrate Triduum at home during lockdown.

My experience at that first public celebration of weekend liturgy was highly charged. The folks that came to church were so grateful to finally receive Eucharist that they happily put up with "inconveniences" – and even expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to pray together multiple times. (The announcements before Mass were interrupted three times by applause!)

May we always desire Eucharist so passionately, so intensely, so singularly focused on the source and summit of our lives.