

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.

Living in a Sound Bite Society

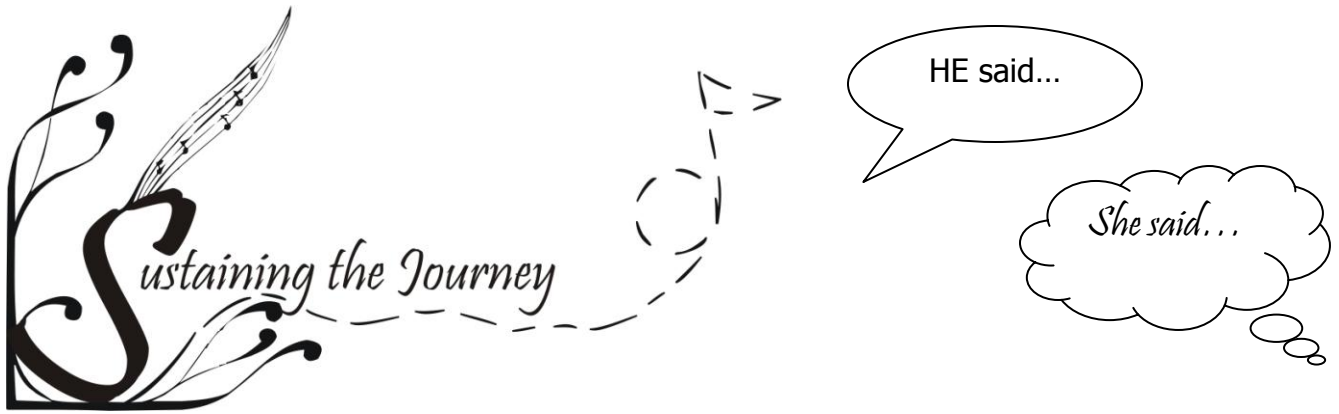
Mary's Perspective:

At the risk of sounding like an old fuddy-duddy, Bob and I have been reflecting on how technology has dramatically changed the way upcoming generations learn. I live in a house surrounded by teenagers. They are at various stages of life (college, high school, middle school), yet the one thing they share is a common pastime: eyes glued to their electronic device. Go to a coffee shop and look around. How many folks are engaged in conversation, and how many are looking at a digital display?

Sharing a couch with some of my offspring provides ample opportunity to see what captures their attention. It is astounding to me how quickly they scroll from screen to screen. I feel like my brain cannot digest what they peruse at a mind-numbing pace, for hours on end. It doesn't seem to matter what platform they are on - whether it's surfing the internet or Facebook or snap/tweet/splat/fill in "social media-sounding name" here (I'm the first to admit I am an antique - I don't *do* social media). I've read studies that say the average millennial (I cringe using that term) stays on a screen for something like 6 to 10 seconds before moving to the next. They literally absorb world events in sound bites.

In some ways, this rapid pace exposes their minds to many more and varied topics than previous generations. At the risk of making generalities, my children and their friends know a little about a LOT. They are more connected to politics and world events and popular media icons and sports teams than I ever could be. They recognize trends in fashion, what group of high school classes will maximize their potential to finish college in less than four years, and what the stock market is doing right now. They know what foods have hidden sugars, what cars are most efficient for regular freeway travel, and who is currently in the Broadway cast of *Come Fly Away*. I'm still trying to figure out why the damn tire pressure light comes on when the temperature drops too quickly.

My children learn by watching video clips on their gizmos. Whether it's how to play the piano version of the latest song, or the best yoga poses, or how to complete a whole body "sworikit" in 14



minutes, there's a video of that. From cooking tips to crafting, to the best techniques for swishing regular three-pointers in NBA Live for X-Box (admittedly, I'm guessing here...I know the Madden line of games is football...), the first place they look is on their digital device. Those devices have literally opened the world to my children.

But there is a downside. While they understand a variety of topics at a surface level, that rapid scrolling to the next page often means there is not a lot of depth to that understanding. In the recent election, we talked about the local issues. They understood what the "for" and "against" positions were, but didn't have much foundation in why this issue is important, or how it will affect our community.

With that in mind, I consider matters of religion and faith. When I was growing up, we went to church every Sunday without question - it's what we do. Going through school, I studied Sacred Scripture and read the works of many theologians and philosophers. I learned from homilies at Mass, and conversations with trusted mentors. Some of that took root - other parts challenged me to define what I truly believe.

However, Sacred Scripture and theology and philosophy do not translate well to sound bites. A statement like "I am who I am" doesn't make much sense out of context, without the foundation. Concepts of celibacy and charity and transubstantiation require a depth of study that takes considerably more than a 6-10 second exposure. When we reflect on why the pews at Mass are more empty than full, it would be foolish not to consider how this "sound bite generation" perceives what we do. Relationship takes an investment of time, energy, and risk.

Relationship requires depth. Sound bites do not convey depth.

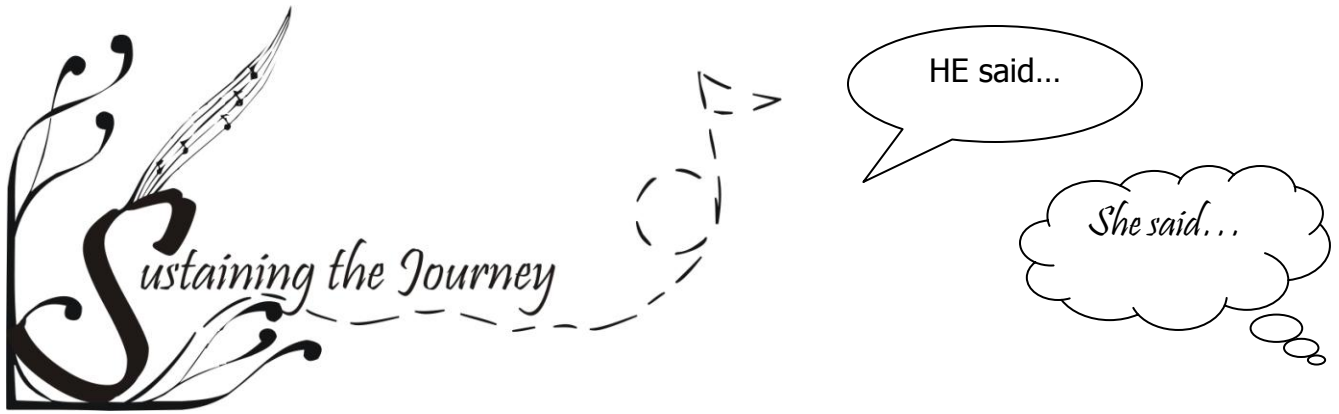
So where do we go from here?

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Don't you just love those cliffhanger endings?

Bob's Perspective:

Let me start off by saying that I own a flip-phone – and I just upgraded to that recently. The phone is as such that it limits my ability to use it for texting and I'm content! As a matter of



fact, not a day goes by that I don't consider turning the texting option off. Frankly, I'm not real thrilled with email for the most part either.

(I'm beginning to sound like Andy Rooney....now that really dates me!)

It's not that I'm against technology of this type. I actually think it's a great thing. However, as a society, we're moving to a point in time where people are losing grasp of many skills all for the sake of expediency and convenience.

One such skill that is rapidly declining is that which encompasses the arts of grammar, proper punctuation, proper word usage, and spelling. Within the number of communications that I receive each day, I am astounded by amount of translating and puzzle solving I need to do in order to understand a message:

How r u? I m ok.

Seriously?

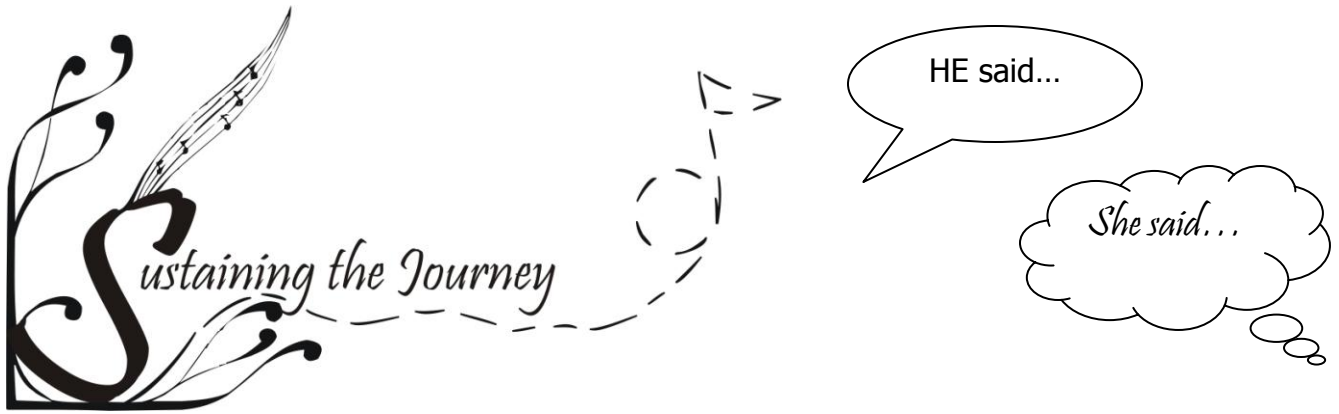
On a daily basis I find myself sorting through communications that are seemingly unaware that there are distinct differences between "your and you're," or "where, wear and ware," or "they're, there and their."

I'm actually surprised that someone hasn't sent a message with [Abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz thanks to Big Bird](#) or [Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious with best regards to Mary Poppins!](#)

Actually, those would probably be way too inefficient for the modern texter.

To that end, I've made up my own conversation. See if you can translate it.

Customer: F U N E M N X?	(Have you any ham and eggs?)
Waiter: S V F M N X.	(Yes, we have ham and eggs.)
Customer: O K I L F M N X!	(OK, I'll have ham and eggs.)



If you think this was dumb...YOU'RE RIGHT – MY POINT EXACTLY! However, this is direction in which we're heading.

If someone or something is important, it's worth investing time to communicate well. I'm not opposed to short text messages like, "I'm on my way," or "I'm running late." But when someone inquires, "How are you?" in a text message, it's apparent to me that they really don't care. I usually respond with, "If you really want to know, call me." They never usually do. I rest my case.

Ok, so if you can't beat 'em, join 'em....

TTFN to all my BFF's !



Two Final Notes From Mary:

For those trying to decipher Bob's graphic...that last picture is an AWL!

And yes...he really does have a flip phone!