

---

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.

## Lay Your Troubles at the Cross - Triduum

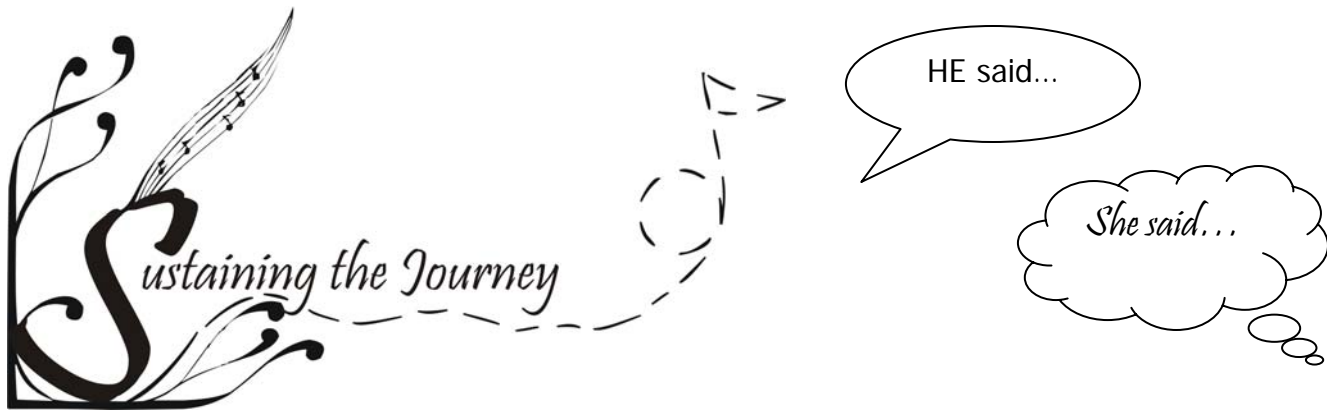
*Mary's perspective:*

“We’re All In This Together”...

I used to think that veneration (adoration) of the cross was just another of those times when we each reflected on our personal story and the sadness of Jesus’ crucifixion. I would think about the times when I was unkind or ask God to help me be a better person... I would think about how awful it must have been for Jesus and his apostles... That time of veneration was a very personal, private time. As music minister, I felt like it was my responsibility to “create” an atmosphere of somber (personal) reflection. Then I had one of those “lightning bolt” moments:

- I had a friend whose daughter attempted to OD earlier that year. He was terrified of her utter despair, afraid he wouldn't know how to parent in a way that would be helpful, and angry that, despite his best efforts, she still made lousy decisions. It was complicated and painful.
- One of those nice “little old ladies” that sang in my funeral choir had recently become a widow. After more than 50 years with her beloved, she found herself alone and lonely.
- We make lots of friends at church, and one of them was a mom similar to my age, with the same number of children. She had been diagnosed with breast cancer, and it had spread to her spine. Her daughter was preparing for First Communion this spring.
- In the middle stages of pregnancy, a friend confided that international tensions and terrorism made her question the future safety of her unborn child. Certainly, she felt compromised by raging hormones, but as a mother myself, I fear a military draft and seeing my children sent off to defend our country.

All of them came to the cross on Good Friday. I was playing music I could have played in my sleep, (and my location front and center made for good visibility) so I was able to watch – pray –



---

absorb what was really happening. I watched them lay it all on the cross - the anguish, despair, fear, anticipation, anger, lost love, hope - all of it. I understood a glimmer of how complicated our lives can be, and how much trust and faith it can take to just place it all at the foot of the cross. For just a moment, I recognized true surrender. It turns out, as “personal” as veneration/adoration is...there is some part of it that binds us all. We are united in our suffering – in Christ’s suffering – and we are strengthened by our communal experience of the journey.

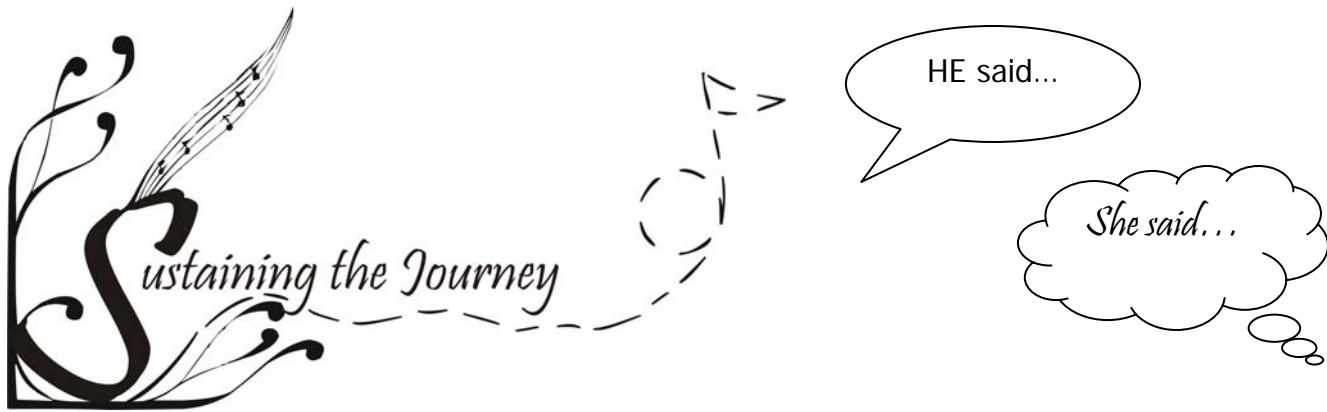
Oh, and the rest of the story? The daughter that tried to OD went through treatment and is now clean and gainfully employed. Her dad still worries but it seems they are past the worst. The sweet widow still sings. She has good days and bad, but has found comfort among her church buddies, who often go to lunch together after funerals. The mom with cancer? Celebrated her daughter's First Communion, walking with a cane. She died a few months later. And the pregnant friend? She delivered a healthy baby who is growing up in a scary world, surrounded by love.

We've just begun another Lenten season. Triduum is not far away, and we will once again face the Cross. Perhaps my prayer this year is to be able to surrender. To join my prayer with those around me in communal trust, and let go of all that holds me back from true faith.

We really are all in this together.

*Bob's Perspective:*

Over the past couple of years, I have experienced the loss of two of my closest loved ones: my mother (Tess) and my wife (Maureen). My mother died of dementia in a nursing home and my wife died of cancer at a hospice center – just a little over a year apart. As I looked at the very dedicated people who worked tirelessly to care for them, I was reminded of two significant lessons from the Stations of the Cross: the actions of Simon of Cyrene and Veronica. I thought about how Simon helped our Lord carry his cross – the amount of strength it must have taken and the personal suffering he endured as well. I thought about how Veronica put her own safety at risk in order to soothe our Lord on his journey by gently wiping the blood and grime off his face – offering him a



---

brief respite. And yet, Simon and Veronica only did it once as far as we know. The dedicated people of the nursing home and hospice center do it time and time again every day.

As I took part in these two episodes as a caretaker and provider, I still felt very helpless at times because other than being there and providing what comfort I was able to give, these people knew just what to do and how to do it, in order to provide for these women and they walked their final journey. In turn, they comforted me as well in knowing that the best was being done for the people I most cared about. In a way (meager in comparison, I'm sure), I sort of understand what our Blessed Mother must have felt like -watching her Son and having little power to do anything more than to just be there – and at the same time, experience the consolation of seeing the care being given to him by seemingly total strangers.

My point in sharing all of this is that as ministers and as people of God, we are called to act as Simon and Veronica in simple ways. Sometimes knowingly, but many times unbeknownst to our consciousness we lift up spirits and ease burdens (at least momentarily) – in ways to which God calls us to at a particular moment. It may be in the way we greet someone on Sunday morning at Church (a smile, a mindful moment, a caring touch). It may be in the care we give as we distribute Holy Communion with deep faith and conviction. It may be in the genuine emotion that we express in the well-prepared proclamation of the word. It may be just the right words as God speaks to us in the homily. It may be in the soulful expression of our music. And how do we get to this juncture? By surrendering ourselves as did Jesus. When we surrender our own needs and fears (lay them down at the foot of the Cross), focus on mindfully loving and caring for each other (just like the nursing staff and hospice workers – just like Simon and Veronica) – that's when the work of our Lord comes to fruition in our lives.