

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.

Playing by the Rules

Mary's Perspective:

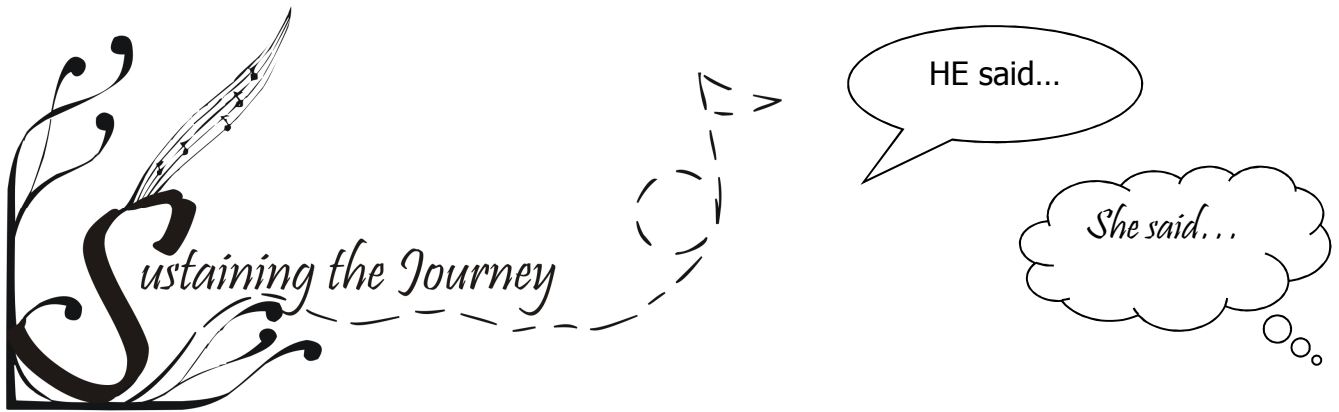
The Catholic Church is an entity structured by hierarchy. I believe we all know this, but don't often put much thought to it. However, the hierarchical structure has come into conversation three times in the past week, which has given me reason to ponder.

The Church sets forth a prioritized listing of celebrations. It's in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM)*, right there in black and white: Table of Liturgical Days According to Their Order of Precedence. First is the Paschal Triduum. Second is the Nativity of the Lord, the Epiphany, the Ascension, and Pentecost. The Sundays of Advent, Lent, and Easter... Ash Wednesday... certain Solemnities... Feasts... Sundays... etc. Why do I list these? Because when March 17 fell on a Sunday, many people asked why I didn't sing any Irish songs, and why I didn't announce it was St. Patrick's Day. (For the record, we were celebrating the Second Sunday of Lent, which trumps St. Paddy's Day.) When our pastor's birthday was on the first weekend of Lent, we also chose not to sing Happy Birthday (an unpopular decision, I might add) because we were at Mass to celebrate the First Sunday of Lent.

In a different conversation... I was chatting with a family whose daughter is preparing for marriage. Our culture today has placed a lot of emphasis on the accoutrements surrounding a wedding – the dress, the venue, the flowers, the invitations, the parties, and such. The bride's mother had been making arrangements, and the florist insisted she purchase flowers "for the Holy Family". Mom asked me where and when that ceremony (presenting said flowers) occurs. I explained that the Rite of Marriage does not include any ceremony for bringing flowers to the Holy Family – it never has. Some couples choose to visit Mary's altar or shrine on their wedding day, but it is not part of the wedding rubric (instructions), nor has it EVER been in my lifetime. I typically say that if Marian spirituality is part of their prayer life – they pray the rosary and novenas and such – then it is fine for them to make a visit to Mary at the end of the wedding liturgy, but it's not part of the liturgy. But if the only reason to "go to Mary" is because Grandma wants a pretty picture, then really they shouldn't.

The bride's mother was stunned. "Not go to Mary? Well what about the flowers the florist told me I have to buy?" I quietly suggested the florist was in the business of selling flowers, not of knowing Church Rites.

Third conversation... the Bishop of the Diocese of Cleveland has reiterated a policy that reinforces the universal Church's policy of postures for the Communion Rite. We were discussing this policy amongst a group of fellow music directors, and the reaction was quite varied. For a number of directors, their gut reaction was "that's fine, but we won't change what we're doing at St. xxx Church..." It was just obvious that the "rules" applied to others, but not to them. Perhaps on



days when the Bishop is at their parish, they will remind the assembly prior to the celebration that “this is what we’re supposed to do – so we will just this time while he’s here...”

I find that incredibly disrespectful. First of all, the spirit of the rule (in this case) is to bring unity. To ignore what the Bishop promulgates encourages diversity, and discredits the fact that liturgical services pertain to the whole Body of the Church. It’s not your private function, or your personal statement. We are a holy people united and organized in this hierarchical structure – under the authority of the bishops. Bob and I have said it before – we serve at the pleasure of our pastor, who serves at the pleasure of the Bishop, etc. If the pastor tells us to play “Take Me Out To The Ballgame” as the entrance chant, it is our duty to ask how many verses he wants.

So of course, I hope he doesn’t ask me to do that, but the reality is that I work and minister under his authority, and he is under the authority of the Bishop, who is under the authority of ... ultimately, the Pope, who has been discerned as a successor to Peter, disciple of Jesus. It’s not a democracy, and Mass is not “mine” in which to make my private prayers or personal statements.

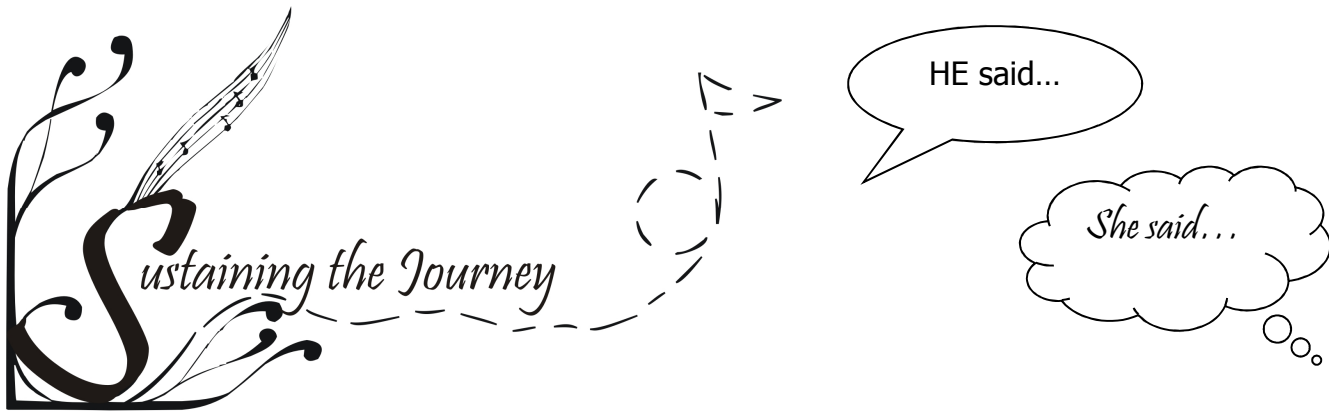
In addition, when I play by the rules (so to speak) and other churches choose not to, it makes it difficult for assembly members who visit different churches. Do we stand or sit? Raise our hands during the Our Father? Kneel during Communion? That diversity then becomes a distraction to full, active, conscious participation in liturgy – our communal prayer.

I often am approached by folks who attended a celebration at another church, and say, “they played this cool Broadway show tune at my nephew’s wedding” or “I really liked that Gaither Brothers song they did at the commendation time of the funeral” – and would like me to do the same at our parish. The reality is that music for any liturgical celebration – wedding, funeral, weekend, or other – needs to be appropriate to liturgy (i.e., Catholic, USCCB-approved texts, fitting to the particular part of Mass). So we only use appropriate responsorial psalms for the psalm response, not interpretations. (Sidebar... Marty Haugen’s Shepherd Me, O God is a lovely interpretation of Psalm 23, and appropriate for a Communion Hymn. However, its pleading “shepherd me beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life” is not the same as the statement of faith, “the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”)

Yet when I do my best to respect the structure of our Church, I am viewed as a stickler, or inflexible. It’s a true balancing act to respect the Rites of the Church while being pastoral to people, especially in time of conflict, diversity, or grief.

So what’s the point? Perhaps it’s just a reminder for us to recall who we are, and whose we are. We are a chosen people, baptized priest, prophet, and king. Called and anointed to serve each other. Part of a bigger picture. Is it always easy to conform to the expectations of the bigger picture? Maybe not. Should we try? Yes.

How are those Lenten resolutions coming along? Maybe, as holy week looms closer, now would be a good time to reflect on the parts of our lives that are not in conformity with our Catholic structure. Perhaps it’s time to (again) surrender to a higher authority.



Bob's Perspective:

I think that the terms "Liturgist," and "Parish Liturgist" tend to be bandied about in many cases without proper consideration as to their meaning. Being a liturgist is much more than scheduling and training liturgical ministers or creating "Mass Plans." I dare to say that many who function in this regard have nary ready the liturgy documents, or (beyond a few catch phrase quotes) have any idea as to what they contain. Following the rules is pretty tough to accomplish when one doesn't know what the rules are (or that they even exist). In the same way that civil laws are made to protect us through creating an order of society, liturgical law (canon law) is there to protect our rituals and spiritual life from corruption and error.

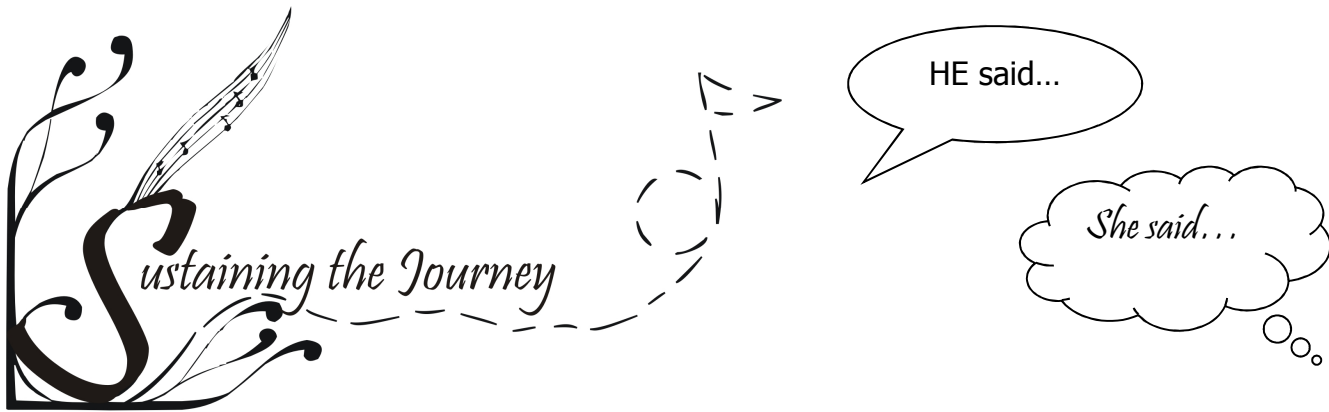
Anyone who functions in this capacity (both professional and volunteer) should at the very least know that these documents exist, and have a terse understanding of what they contain:

1. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium)
2. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (Third Typical Edition) 2011
3. Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship (Issued by USCCB, Nov. 14, 2007)

Rather than expound any further, I think that it might be beneficial for us to ponder some of the following points based on Mary's comments.

From the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium):

- 22.1. Regulation of the sacred liturgy depends solely on the authority of the Church, that is, on the Apostolic See [the Pope] and, as laws may determine, on the bishop.
- 22.2. In virtue of power conceded by the law, the regulation of the liturgy within certain defined limits belongs also to various kinds of competent territorial bodies of bishops legitimately established.
- 22.3. Therefore no other person, even if he be a priest, may add, remove, or change anything in the liturgy on his own authority.
26. Liturgical services are not private functions, but are celebrations of the Church, which is the "sacrament of unity," namely, the holy people united and ordered under their bishops.



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39. Within the limits set by the typical editions of the liturgical books, it shall be for the competent territorial ecclesiastical authority mentioned in Art. 22, 2, to specify adaptations, especially in the case of the administration of the sacraments, the sacramentals, processions, liturgical language, sacred music, and the arts, but according to the fundamental norms laid down in this Constitution.

From the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM):

61. ...In the Dioceses of the United States of America, instead of the Psalm assigned in the Lectionary, there may be sung either the Responsorial Gradual from the Graduale Romanum, or the Responsorial Psalm or the Alleluia Psalm from the Graduale Simplex, as described in these books, or an antiphon and Psalm from another collection of Psalms and antiphons, including Psalms arranged in metrical form, providing that they have been approved by the Conference of Bishops or the Diocesan Bishop. Songs or hymns may not be used in place of the Responsorial Psalm.
387. The Diocesan Bishop, who is to be regarded as the High Priest of his flock, from whom the life in Christ of his faithful in some sense derives and upon whom it depends, must promote, regulate, and be vigilant over the liturgical life in his diocese...
393. Bearing in mind the important place that singing has in a celebration as a necessary or integral part of the Liturgy, all musical settings for the texts of the Ordinary of Mass, for the people's responses and acclamations, and for the special rites that occur in the course of the liturgical year must be submitted to the Secretariat of Divine Worship of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops for review and approval prior to publication...

From Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship:

158. Because the Psalm is properly a form of sung prayer, "every means available in each individual culture is to be employed" in fostering the singing of the Psalm at Mass, including the extraordinary options provided by the Lectionary for Mass. In addition to the proper or seasonal Psalm in the Lectionary, the Responsorial Psalm may also be taken from the Graduale Romanum or the Graduale Simplex, or it may be an antiphon and psalm from another collection of the psalms and antiphons, including psalms arranged in paraphrase or in metrical form, providing that they have been approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops or the diocesan bishop.

Just sayin'.