



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.

## Managing Change

*Mary's perspective:*

A couple of years ago, Bob and I did a workshop series on Change Management. At the time, our diocese was trying to regroup from the changes of clustering and closing parishes. My parish was dealing with rapid changes in pastoral leadership, and my personal life was affected by the diagnosis of a chronic illness in one of my children. As we worked with members of other churches (Catholic and other denominations), we confirmed the fact that the only constant in all of our lives is change!

The idea of dealing with change has evoked much response from well-known people and less familiar faces; in books and articles, webinars and workshops. Obviously a simple blog posting cannot adequately address a matter of such depth (and of course Bob and I would gladly provide a workshop again on this topic) but I offer the following thoughts:

Change management can only be effective when those affected recognize (and agree with) the need for change. Read that one again - it's important. Managing change can only be effective when those involved recognize and agree with the need for change.

The most devastating things about change are the fear of the unknown and the interruption of normalcy. One way to soften the discomfort that comes with change is to recognize "normalcy". Identify times of normalcy, find them, and cultivate them. Manage changes that take you out of balance, and make changes that put you in balance.

Whether change stems from diocesan decisions, or within personal lives, or even the political events of our country, consider the rituals that have remained. (Rituals include everything from your morning coffee to the ritual of liturgy - expand your thinking on this one!) Turn to relationships of trust. Surrender some control (or what you think you control). Work on finding balance in life: Cultivate your relationship with God, live in fulfillment with your spouse, work to live within your financial means, take care of yourself



physically (eat, exercise, sleep, etc.), do things to keep growing (whether it's taking a class or exploring a hobby). Integrate your body, mind, and spirit in positive ways, and take comfort in the rituals of life.

No sweat, right?

I'm not using this format to "sell" - our blog is simply intended to provoke thought and conversation... but I do think managing change effectively can make us healthier, more balanced, holier people. And if Bob and I can offer some strategies (beyond a brief blog posting) to help you grow in positive ways, then I encourage you contact us - let's find a way to gather the people and grow together!

*Bob's perspective:*

Over the years, I have collected and developed a number of axioms by which I guide my life – the way I think and the way in which I make decisions. Two of these are:

1. The only constant in this world is change.
2. With the exception of the love of God, nothing is forever.

At first glance, these may seem to be cynical. However, from a certain point of view, this outlook can really take on an optimistic character. The chart below gives a thumbnail sketch into how society has changed in the last 60 or so years. So many times we talk about the “good old days,” and to some extent things were pretty good. But as with many things, we tend to conveniently forget that everything was not all apple-grease and peach-butter. There have been tremendous strides in the medical and science fields for example. Many of these changes came into being because people sacrificed spending time with their families and friends in order to research and invent. As Mary so wonderfully pointed out, change comes when the need for change is recognized and appreciated.

	Age of Concensus 1950's	Age of Differences 1970's	Age of Diversity 1990's	Age of Individualism 2010's
Cultural Identity	The Group: We are all together and the same	The Individual: We are each unique	Subgroups: We all belong to separate interest groups	It's about me!
Individual Identity	Individual identifies with and conforms to the group	Individual is clear about self and does not conform to the group	Identity is diffuse; individuals find identity in competing cultural subgroups	Ditching the subgroups: we stand alone



<b>Congregational Identity</b>	Consensus: All congregations are alike and everyone knows what to expect	Difference: Each congregation is unique and is expected to be different	Diversity: Each congregation is unique and is expected to be able to hold people of great differences in shared community	Less sense of the importance and influence of the community; I do what I want to do
<b>Congregational Decision Making</b>	Assumed consensus – we are all the same and already agree	Commonality – we have to work to find the basic unity that holds us together in our differences	Diversity – we negotiate for the resources and attentions needed by our subgroup	What’s best for me?
<b>Members</b>	Expected to conform to the norms of the group	Expect the congregation to meet the individual’s needs	Expect and appreciate great diversity in the whole but want their own small group based on sameness	Expect and appreciate diversity but I want to be with those who are like me
<b>Leadership Skills Needed</b>	Basic management skills of effectiveness and problem solving	The addition of organizational development skills; conflict management; change management	The addition of narrative skills: leadership by story with resonance (the sob story wins it)	Diverse group of specialists; each has unique skills

Sometimes change comes at a price. What are we willing to alter in our lives, what are we willing to give up? Are sacrifices always necessary? In my mind, the central questions are:

1. Is altering, changing or giving something up necessarily a sacrifice if the intended outcome makes life (for people in general – and not just my own) better?
2. Does making the lives of others better somehow improve my life as well?
3. Does the good of the many necessarily outweigh (or preclude) the good of the individual?

*A final note from Mary:*

Apple-grease and peach-butter?