



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.

Hero

from Dictionary.com:

hero [heer-oh]

a person noted for courageous acts or nobility of character:

He became a local hero when he saved the drowning child.

a person who, in the opinion of others, has special achievements, abilities, or personal qualities and is regarded as a role model or ideal:

My older sister is my hero. Entrepreneurs are our modern heroes.

Mary's perspective:

In the world of Church, we experience many heroes. As a believer, I am so grateful for the heroes who exercise their ministry day in and day out. There are folks who feed the hungry through our vibrant St. Vincent de Paul. Art and environment ministers who appear like an army when nobody else is around and transform a place of worship from one feast to the next. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion who reach out to the lonely, the shut-in, and the hurting and provide comfort, care, and connection to a greater community. Musicians who get up while it's still dark out so they can sing scales and warm up their instrument, ensuring that music is vibrant and not squeaky.

Among liturgical musicians, cantors can be heroes. They have special abilities to lead us in worship, and exhibit courageous characteristics. And if you ever question the courage of a cantor, just talk to the person who has had to lead an assembly acapella because the accompanist woke up with the flu, or who had to lead the gymnasium full of worshippers at the "overflow" Christmas Mass!

However, there can be a downside to being a hero. Consider the cantor or choir member (or priest) who believes worship cannot go on without them. Even with a cold or bronchitis or a severely arthritic hip, they drag themselves to Mass and do what they do. Insert a cough or sneeze before the psalm is intoned. A wince of pain when going up the steps to the tabernacle. So is that doing what nobody else could do, or a distraction to the Mass?



We propose that when one becomes a hero (the type that drags oneself to their "job" while trying to overcome physical ailment), they perceive themselves as more important than the liturgy itself. Now, we don't believe egos are such that one would articulate such thoughts...but the underlying supposition is that nobody can do the job as well - even when one is only at half-strength. So here's your reality check: many believers make up the Body of Christ, each with a unique set of skills and charisms. Sometimes one needs to trust that, in times of need, others will step up. Sometimes, it's better to resist temptation to be the distracting hero.

The weather is finally getting warmer, and we look to make summer plans. For many, choirs take a break over the summer - whether that break occurs at the end of this month, or after Pentecost. Now is a great time to hone our skills. Bolster what makes you a hero (liturgically or in other aspects of life!). Perhaps it's attending a conference, or workshop, or making an appointment with a mentor - plan now to review your ministry and make it better. Figure out now how you will tackle that project you've been putting off, whether it's personal like weight loss, or making your home more of a Zen oasis. Reality checks are good, especially at the start of summer when the days are longer and the possibilities seem endless.

Anybody else hear Bonnie Tyler in their head right now?

Bob's perspective:

At the moment I'm strongly resisting the temptation to print the lyrics of "Wind Beneath My Wings." But from a certain point of view (as liturgical ministers, of which the Assembly is included), that's exactly what we're called to do. The song talks about how this hero did wonderful great things, yet it was because of these actions that the other person shined. That should be exactly our goal. The liturgy shines best when the actions of all those involved (heroes) remain nearly invisible - and sometimes that's not an easily accomplished task. Many times, we shine too brightly without even realizing its happening.

Here are a few examples (Mary touched on a couple of them):

1. When Ministers or Assembly members come to Church dressed too casual, or too overdone.
2. When Instrumentalists make too many mistakes or are too flamboyant in their presentations.
3. When Lectors, Cantors and Priests are obviously ill but insist on pushing through
- hacking and wheezing all the way.
4. Lack of preparation:
 - a. Priests and Lectors who don't prepare (rehearse) their texts before Mass.
 - b. Priests who don't prepare their homilies.
 - c. Cantors, Choristers and Instrumentalists who 'wing it' rather than practice and prepare.
5. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion with poor hygiene (bad breath/body odor).
6. Assembly members who fool around with their cell phones (including taking selfies - believe it or not, I have seen that more than once) - or talk to each other (loudly) especially in moments which call for silence.

This isn't meant to sound like a 'gripe list,' but I'm willing to bet that you're nodding your head in commiseration by now. The truth is that if you notice these things, others probably do as well - and therein lies the problem. If one is focused on outside things, one is not focused on prayer.