

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.



A Few Simple Words

Mary's Perspective

In today's social media, "challenges" have become popular. Things like dumping ice water on your head, or fitness challenges, or dangerous ones like swallowing a teaspoonful of cinnamon, are all too common. So today I propose a different challenge...

In just a few simple words, make the world a better place.

It doesn't have to be monumental, and often the way we change the world is one person at a time, so use your few simple words to improve the life of as few as one person – perhaps even yourself. Here are some thoughts behind this challenge:

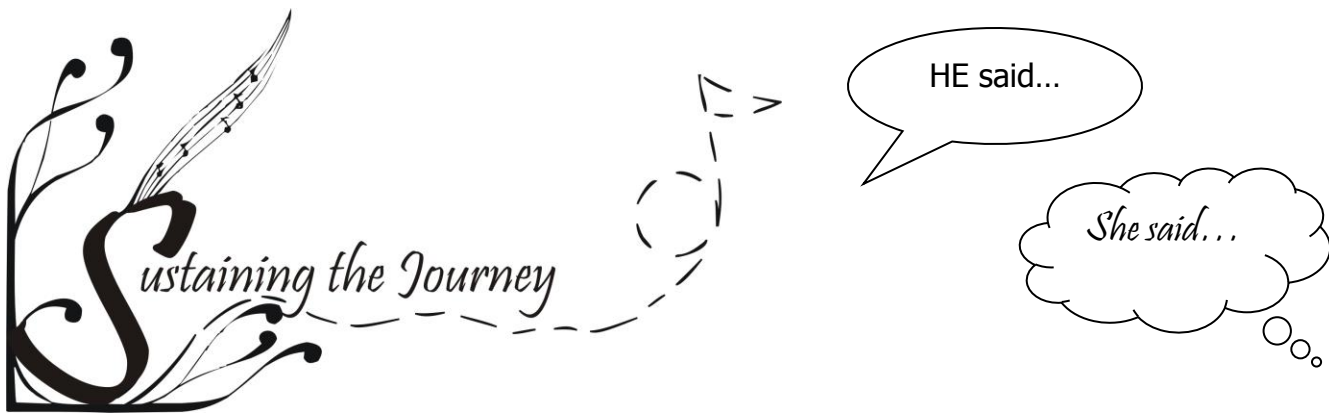
My daughter (affectionately, a crazy 17-year-old) has positive messages painted on her car. On her back bumper, in large black letters, is written **Keep Your Chin Up**. Certainly that's an unconventional way of communicating positivity, but if you are stopped at a light behind her it's hard not to smile.

In Luke's gospel (Luke 10:5), we hear the story of Jesus sending the 72 on ahead of him. They are to greet folks with **Peace to this Household**. Again, somewhat unconventional in today's day, but nonetheless if a visitor came to my home and said that, I would feel like we were starting a good relationship.

I was listening to the radio recently and someone said **I'm Full of Hope – Holding On, Praying Expectantly**. Now we've written blogs about hope (don't get Soeder started), but it certainly caused me to pause and think. It also re-framed my mindset for the start of the day to a more positive one.

My son (crazy isn't limited to females in my house) will often go through the drive-thru and say **I'll Pay for Theirs**, meaning not only his order but the car behind him. This can be risky, if the vehicle behind is a van full of hungry teens, but consider being on the receiving end. Your day certainly is better when you drive to the window to pick up your ice cream and the person at the window says "no charge – that guy paid for it". I talked to a worker one time who said that "pay it forward" concept actually stretched to 5 cars in a row, when the recipient expressed gratitude by paying for the car behind them, and so on. But it all started with those few simple words.

Sometimes, the impetus for positive change may come from words directed at ourselves. **Today I Will Exercise**. Maybe I've been struggling with my weight or brain fog or feeling slumpy. We all know the best way to move a mountain is to start with one rock at a time. I can't guarantee that I'm going to make all the right choices to cause a 30-pound weight loss. Proper eating, exercise, sleep, etc. take a commitment, and intending to do it consistently is even more challenging. But if I start with the first step, I'm one step closer.



Perhaps my best example of this came in a casual conversation with a friend. I've been praying about taking on a project – but this is one of those universal concepts. It could be you're discerning a job change, or opening a franchise, or painting your house, or whatever might take you out of your comfort zone. Anyway, I mentioned this to a friend, whose immediate reaction was **How Can I Help?**

Think about it... those particular four words speak volumes. They say I support you. They say I'm willing to be vulnerable – because your answer may be costly to me. Perhaps that franchise requires investors, or the paint project needs laborers. Those four little words communicate that even if I think you're crazy, I see the value in what you are contemplating. I affirm you in the decision you make, whatever it is.

Being on the receiving end of “How Can I Help?” made my decision a little easier, because I knew if I pursued this project and it didn't work out, I have people in my life who will pick me up and encourage me to press forward. It's like offering a parachute, a safety net, or a shoulder.

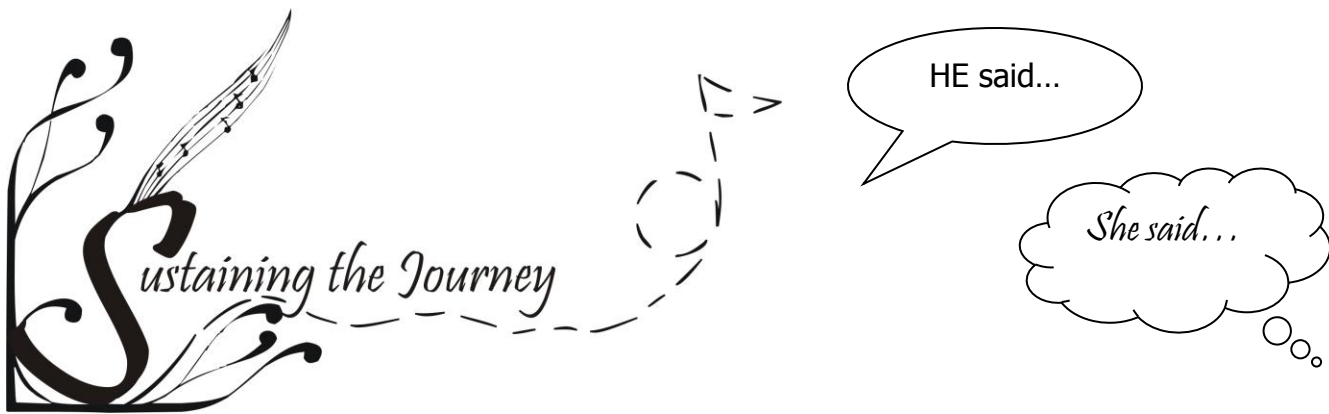
So now it's your turn... what few simple words will you use to change life for the better?

Bob's Perspective



No, I'm just kidding.

As people of faith, we are called to look inward, to challenge ourselves and to resolve ourselves to being better. We do this through words and actions. While our actions may be distinct, I'm not always sure that we are paying close attention to our words.



At Mass, we begin with the sign of the Cross: “In the name of the Father, + and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” These words are more than just a frame for beginning and ending a prayer. They are a pledge of sorts, which offer ourselves in service to God and to each other. By making (or saying) the sign of the Cross we are immersing ourselves in a *sacramental celebration*. The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us:

A sacramental celebration is a meeting of God's children with their Father, in Christ and the Holy Spirit; this meeting takes the form of a dialogue, through actions and words. Admittedly, the symbolic actions are already a language, but the Word of God and the response of faith have to accompany and give life to them, so that the seed of the Kingdom can bear its fruit in good soil. The liturgical actions signify what the Word of God expresses: both his free initiative and his people's response of faith. (CCC 1153)

Words play a very significant role in life and in the Liturgy (which is a ritual extension of our lives). Words limit and define situations, such as a written law: “Thou shalt not steal.” Words tell stories and relate events as in the readings from Scripture. One can say that words can be actions - when God speaks, things happen. “Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light.” (Genesis 1:3) Words can be a living being: The Word of God is Jesus Christ (“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and dwelled among us.” (John 1:1-2, 14a)

In his book Preaching: the Art and the Craft, Walter J. Burghardt made the following observation about the profound impact of the word:

“Words can be weapons and words can be healing. Words can unite in friendship or sever in enmity. Words can unlock who I am or mask me from others. Two words, ‘Seig Heil,’ bloodied the face of Europe; three words, ‘Here I stand,’ divided Christendom. Words have made slaves and freed slaves, have declared war and imposed peace. Words sentence you to death (‘You shall be hanged by the neck’) and words restore life (‘Your sins are forgiven you’). Words declare a marriage dead, and words covenant a life together in love. Words charm and repel, amuse and anger, reveal and conceal, chill and warm. Words clarify and words obscure. A word from Washington rained down atomic hell on Hiroshima; words from an altar change bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ....A word is; a word is sacred; a word is powerful, a word is...I.”

The Liturgy of the Word is the structure we use to capture the richness of the story of salvation and discover what God is trying to tell us. The imposition of hands along with the words, “Receive the Holy Spirit,” confirms our commitment to live a Catholic Christian life. And by saying “Amen” to “the Body of Christ,” we affirm who we are and whose we are.

My answer to Mary’s question:

Listen and Be Better.

A final thought from Mary...

Bob sure used a lot of words prolifically to get to the “simple” part!