

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.

Water

Mary's perspective:

Water... simple yet mystical.

Water... it washes, nourishes, refreshes, destroys, erodes and rebuilds.

Water... it is symbolic and yet very real, ordinary, and necessary.

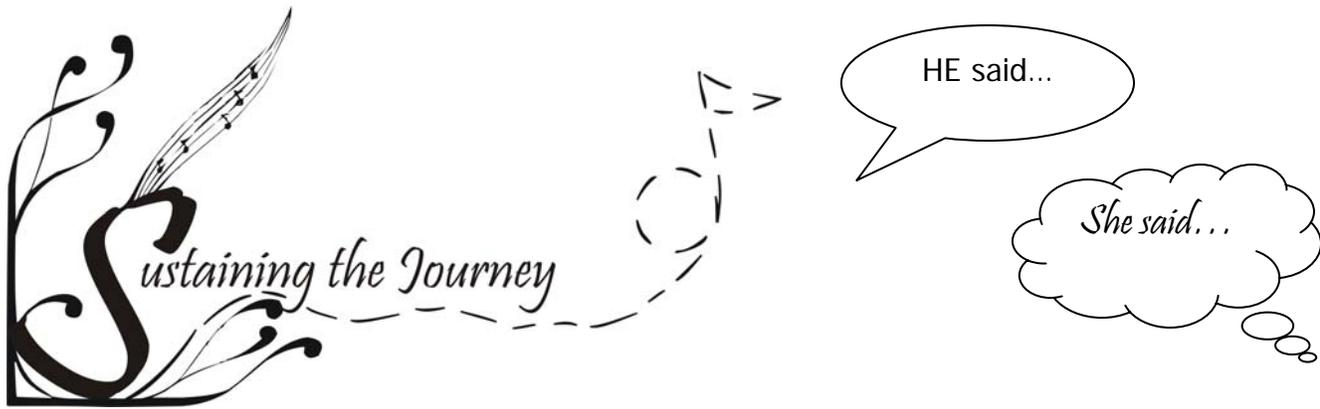
Our Scriptures are filled with water references. Bob and I did a Lenten series one time, and I looked back at my notes on the story of the Woman at the Well. I have pages and pages of notes on water. Literally 22 typed pages of notes on the depth of meaning of the story of Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well. (I suspect Bob may have jotted a couple points on a post-it note.) We ended up developing a day-long retreat around the idea of coming to the water, complete with a placemat that had some 17 scripture quotes referencing water.

From the woman at the well, to the waters of rebirth that we will celebrate at the Great Vigil, water is intrinsic to our Lenten journey, and yet often symbolically missing from our Lent celebrations. We hold back during this "dessert time" so that we may more fully appreciate being immersed in the life-giving waters as we recall our baptism.

As a liturgical minister, I sometimes find it a challenge to stay focused in Lent, because I am already anticipating Triduum. Elbow-deep in the "work" of preparation, I sometimes put my own preparation on the back burner. So today I made a conscious effort to let go (for a moment) of the to-do list, and spend time in reflection.

I'm very familiar with this weekend's gospel of the Samaritan woman's encounter with Jesus at the well. So I decided to look instead at this week's scriptures. We typically publish a blog on the first and 15th of each month, so I read the gospel for March 15. I was struck by the first paragraph.

To paraphrase, Jesus and the Twelve were heading up to Jerusalem, and he had a little conversation with them along the way. He told them of what was to come - that the Son of Man would be



handed over, condemned to death, mocked, scourged, crucified, and raised on the third day. Now, if I'm one of the Twelve, first I would think perhaps that last drink of water was tainted... then I would promptly turn around and head the other direction. Who would willingly, knowingly, walk that road?

We've written many reflections about how I'd like a crystal ball to see exactly what's coming, and Bob is more content with just knowing he's on the right path. As Christians, we do get some picture of what is to come. Sometimes the challenge is choosing to walk the path anyway!

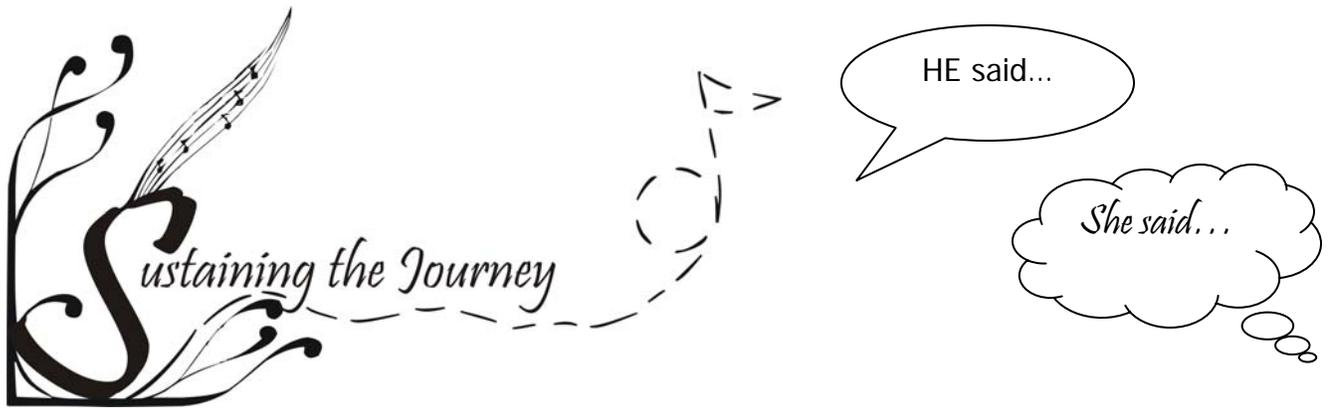
Back to water... when we started this blog, the concept was to share best practices or philosophy about our ministry, sometimes from differing perspectives. Here's the thing...there are times when it's easy to teach, to offer insights, and to serve by example. Right now, we are in a bit of a desert time. Life ebbs and flows, and sometimes it's a challenge just to get through the days, let alone be inspired and inspiring. But we know the waters will restore us. Whether it's taking a plunge in a refreshing pool over the summer, or downing a bottle after a brisk walk, or singing our Alleluias with each baptism at the Great Vigil, the water will again nourish and wash away the darkness (oops mixed images - but you get the idea) and renew us.

So today I pose this thought: as ministers, we are often encouraging others to reflect - whether it's a daily Lenten practice, or a retreat, or communal penance. We spend lots of time preparing the liturgies of holy week. So just today, how will you take time for your own care? How will water restore you?

Bob's Perspective:

Is it any wonder why human beings are so attracted to water? Depending on various sources, the human body is made up of about 78% water at birth. By the first year that number drops to approximately 65%. The average content of water in the adult male body is 60% and 55% in adult women. From soon after we're conceived to just before birth, we are surrounded by water.

On summer days, people gather along the shores of Lake Erie. They enjoy the beauty of reflected rays of light on the waves. They are in awe at Erie's might, fury and strength in the face of a storm. They imbibe in the serenity of the soft breeze, the fragrance and the sounds of an evening at the shore. They enjoy the delight of their catch as they turn to the lake for food. How intimately connected and attracted are human beings to water.



A sip of cool water brings refreshment and rejuvenation on a hot day. A warm bath on a winter's evening soothes and relaxes a weary body.

In the Gospel story of the Woman at the Well, our Lord asks for a drink. I have always found it curious that we never hear whether she actually gave him a drink. Jesus then refers to himself as living water, although she doesn't seem to connect it right away.

What this story points out is that as important as H₂O is to our bodies, even more so is Jesus to our being. While we have to constantly replenish our physical bodies with water, our Lord is always intimately and intricately with us. The only replenishment necessary is to remember this and live our lives accordingly. For me, this is the great message of Lent: to remember that the only time we're dry and desolate is when we lose focus on our relationship with Jesus. He's always here. His love is unconditional. He walks with us and encourages us to come to the water. All we have to do is drink.