



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.

The Bridge

Mary's perspective:

We recently attended a retreat where one of the speakers, Fr. Peter Morris, likened music ministers to John the Baptist. Not necessarily the part about eating bugs and honey, but that music serves as the connector for folks to better know Jesus Christ. Think about that... our music can help bridge the here-and-now with the Divine. That's pretty powerful stuff. As a liturgical musician, what an amazing opportunity that presents! But, even more importantly, what an awesome responsibility.

So do we keep that in mind as we go about playing or singing at Mass? Is my focus on the intro, the next song, the guy in the next row singing flat, pondering when the homily be done so we can get to coffee and donuts... or do we recognize our sacred responsibility to get "us" out of the way so that the Spirit can be present in our music?

Fr. Peter reminded us that we are called to bring our first fruits:

Nothing more.

Nothing less.

Nothing else.

We've written a lot about the nuts and bolts of music ministry. We are good at the logistics of planning, at bringing to life what is written in the liturgical documents. We are capable of organizing ensembles and training cantors, and tending to the details. Do we busy ourselves so much that we forget to let God in?

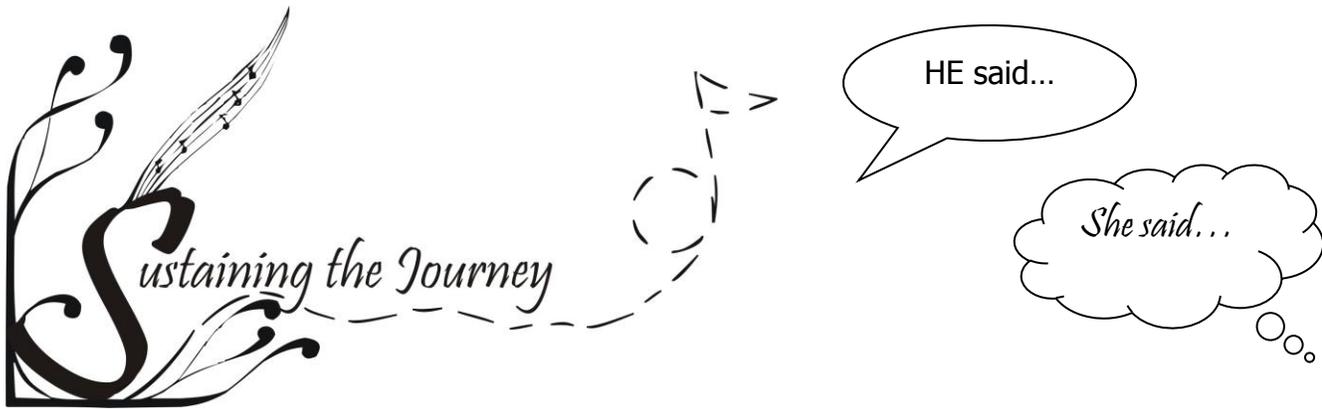
Another of the speakers at this retreat, Gary Echt, summarized the first three steps of any 12-step recovery program in six words:

I can't.

He can.

Let him.

By our very nature, we (Bob and Mary – but also most music ministers) can be control freaks. We like to be in charge. We are on top of the details. Again, the whole concept of surrender is a tough one. But without surrender of our human ways, we can't embody Godly ways.



Here it is, Lent again. That time when we are supposed to commit ourselves to fasting, almsgiving, and prayer. Should we maybe also commit to surrender, recognizing that God is in control, and allowing that to unfold in our ministry and in our lives?

Oh, and three more fun facts gleaned from this retreat:

- 1) Tape does not stick to butcher paper. Might be good to know this before you plan to use said butcher paper as part of a banner attached to a pole.
- 2) The verses of Dan Schutte's *Behold the Wood* match the theme song of Gilligan's Island.
- 3) Plastic terra cotta planters are very flammable.

Bob's perspective:

Letting God "in" can be a tough one on certain days and at certain times. Liturgy and music should be held to their highest standards proportionate to the available talent and abilities of our parishioners. Time and time again, Mary and I have both talked about the difference between absolute best and personal best, a fine example of which can be found in the story of the widow's offering in Mark 12:41-44 or Luke 21:1-4.

However, sometimes best (either absolute or personal) takes a grand amount of concentration and effort to attain. There are times when we have to let the thought and action of what we do *be the prayer* as a way of letting God in. Here is where we need to keep in mind the action of God in our lives and in the Liturgy. No matter how perfectly we plan, no matter how perfectly we prepare, no matter how perfectly we execute – God will do with it as he wishes in order to show us the way. That's where we find ourselves open to let God in.

Last evening at Mass, one of our parish music ensembles (under my direction) prepared to lead our Assembly in a particular Sending Forth song which we have done many, many times over the years. As a side note, before Mass I always talk through the music intros and any other pertinent details regarding music for the celebration. As usual, we were all on the same page – until we hit the intro to the aforementioned song. For a brief few seconds, you would have thought that we had never seen that piece of music in our lives – we were all over the place. Fortunately, we pulled it together in a measure or two and the rest of the song went well. Needless to say, many in our Assembly chuckled at the most unusual incident – and we all had a good laugh after Mass as well.

Then we (our ensemble) took a moment for a bit reflection and mystagogy (that is unpacking the event). Why did that intro go so wrong? What happened? Where was the breakdown? No one had a precise explanation. We soon came to realize that while we led our Assembly well and the participation throughout the Liturgy was great – we may not have been as aware of our Lord as we should have, so we chalked up our collective cranial flatulation to be a little admonishment from above in order to keep us humble and focused on what's really important: Praise, Worship and Thanksgiving to God. Amen! Hallelujah!



An additional thought from Mary...make that two:

- 1) Perhaps the blazing fire of the aforementioned plastic terra cotta planter was a reminder that, no matter how much excellence we show in planning and execution, ultimately God is in control...
- 2) And isn't Bob's "collective cranial flatulation" a great way to describe a group brain fart?