

Mary and Bob often find themselves sharing common ground when it comes to philosophy and ministry. When approaching ministerial concerns from different angles, *He said - She said* is a venue to share differing perspectives. *WE said* reflects some mutual food for thought.

(And then again, sometimes we're exactly on the same page – just sayin' – *Bob*)

Pasta Sauce

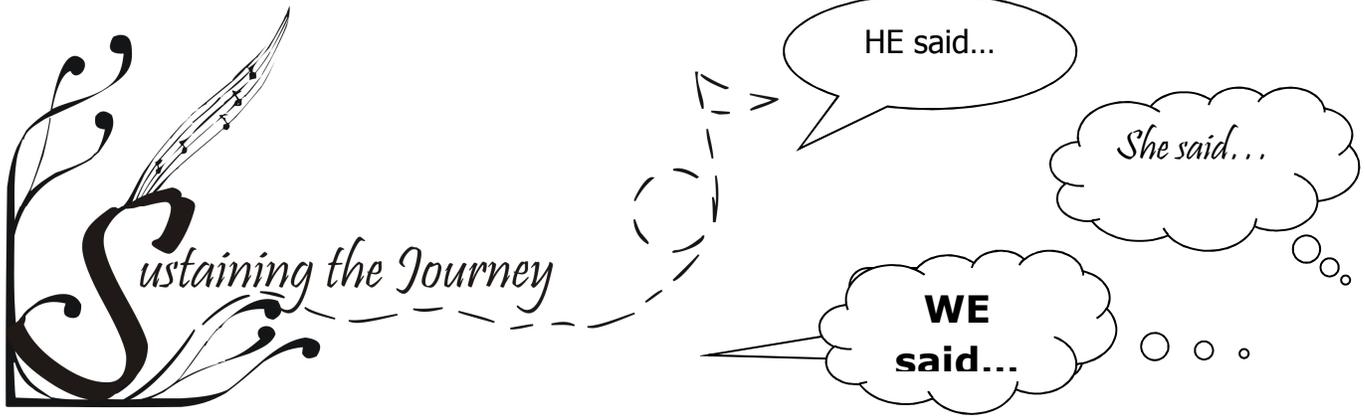
We were reflecting on Easter morning about the great mysteries of life, about liturgical ministry, and about... well... food. Certainly, we both love to eat. However, our reflection was more of an analogy. Here's the train of thought:

The days of Holy Thursday through Easter Sunday are, for any church minister, the most filled and fulfilling and spiritually nourishing - but also the most exhausting. Attention to detail is a necessity. Coordination of many efforts must happen, one hopes seamlessly, as we celebrate the highest and holiest feasts of the year. We reflected on the differences between those who serve as music directors and those who wear the hat of liturgy director. Both are essential to good liturgy.

For the music director, there are instruments to rehearse, cantors to coordinate (and replace as unanticipated cases of bronchitis or sprained ankles pop up), music to organize, accompaniment books to prepare, choirs and bells and a myriad of details requiring attention - not to mention needing time for one's personal preparation, practice, and self-care. The body does not like to sing beautifully when trying to function on three hours of sleep, a bag of chips and a Diet Coke! Obviously, there are different musical traditions in different churches, but between the two churches, our personal experience included singing/playing over 200 different pieces of music between Thursday and Sunday. (Yes, we counted.)

For the liturgy director, the focus is on synchronizing the efforts of many different folks, some of whom serve infrequently and need a little more attention than the "regulars". From setting up foot washing stations for the Mandatum, to finding folks to carry the Cross on Good Friday, to documenting when incense needs to be prepared, to figuring out lighting at the Great Vigil, our best efforts are most successful when things just happen without drawing any attention. Mary's example: I experienced a little thrill on Holy Thursday when realizing the kneeler appeared where it was supposed to be right when it was needed - but I never saw the person who put it in place. Yes, I am a nerd.

Clearly, in order for all to celebrate good liturgy, both the liturgical and the musical details need to be tended. All the organizing of resources only goes so far if the music is awful. And even the most beautiful music won't transform worship if the rest of the pieces aren't in place. It's like the relationship between pasta and sauce. Certainly, you can have one without the other - but they are so much better together! Transforming, even. Plain pasta is just...well...plain. Mass without music?



The best sauce in the world may camouflage bad pasta - but down under you still know the pasta is unappetizing. And so it is with good liturgy. The music is a beautiful accoutrement to worship. Prayer would be flat without it. And all the parts that make up good liturgy - readers who truly proclaim, good preaching, ritual done well - transform the music into something holy. Together, they nourish the soul.

For those of you who had a hand in the liturgies of the sacred Triduum - whether your focus was more the "pasta" or the "sauce" - thank you. We could not partake fully if it were not for your ministry. We encourage you to reflect on those liturgies. What went well? What could use some attention for next year? Consider those moments when the Spirit was palpable. How did all the pieces fit to "set the stage" for transformation? Even though between the two of us, we've been doing this for nearly 75 years, we still find we learn something each year, or experience something in a new way. How can the growth you experienced take root and transform your life, and those around you?

Sustaining the Journey is all about caring for the care providers - those who make the pasta and sauce - who iron the albs and set up the window displays and start the Easter fire and rehearse the musicians and on and on. So we offer you a gentle reminder right now: don't forget to minister to yourself, too! Eat, exercise, meditate, make music, and spend time mindful of the holy feasts we just celebrated. Take some notes for next time. File the music in a way that will make it easier to pull together next year. Sit peacefully and smell the hyacinths. If there's a way we can help, let us know.

And next time you sit down to a bowl of pasta and sauce, thank God for the opportunity to have a hand in transforming lives!