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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.

## Melding Old and New

### *Mary's perspective:*

When we talked about blog topics, I originally meant this "old and new" concept to address why we sing what we sing. But as I look with fresh eyes, I see more than just a conversation about blending traditional and contemporary music. Our lives are a compilation of melding old and new. Ministry blends the best of young folks with seasoned members. Ritual is ever old and ever new. Heck, even the synergy that Bob and I share can be credited to a melding of old (wise, Yoda-like) and new (significantly younger and still learning)...

If you're involved in music ministry and get a little analytical, there is a very limited amount of music we can use in a year. Considering just hymnody, there are essentially four "slots" per Mass - Processional, Offertory, Communion, and Recessional. With 52 weeks per year (excluding Holy Days of Opportunity) that's a total of only 208 hymns. And repetition is essential for an assembly to take ownership of a piece of music, so that's not 208 unique hymns, just 208 songs total.

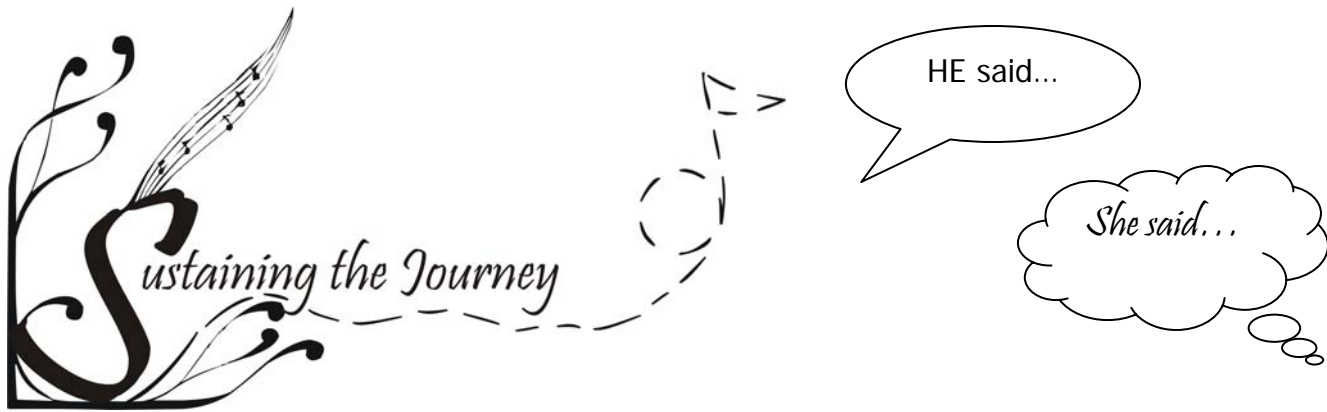
As I plan a season of Masses, I look to what I've used in the past, as well as any new music fitting the specific feasts. It's good to keep things fresh, but I always include some old favorites so that the assembly can comfortably participate. If everything is new, the challenge to learn can be daunting and inhibit prayer. If everything is an "old reliable", the music risks feeling stale and uninspiring. Hence, my mass plans tend to incorporate How Great Thou Art and Lord, I Lift Your Name on High (or songs of that ilk) in the same liturgy. There is room for chant as well as percussion, Taize and SATB, pieces with syncopated flare and Shaker hymn tunes. Just like our assemblies come in all shapes, sizes, colors and personalities, so, too, our music for worship.

Back to my analysis... if your repertoire only has room for 208, what makes the list? When I evaluate new pieces, I hold them up to the light of "if this one gets added to the list, what dumps off the bottom end?"

So what does this have to do with anything?

Well, first, it can be a reminder to be open to both the new and the old in all you do - prayer styles, menu options, clothes, music choices, etc. Second, the same type of analysis can be applied to getting more organized in life. For example, it might be easier to clean out your closet if you agree on a set number of shirts. When you purchase a new one, which one goes away?

Summer can be a time to refresh, recharge, and take stock. If you are a musician attending a conference or workshop or updating your training (excellent thing to do!), remember that if you choose to use all the great new pieces you find, they take the place of others that you won't be using. What is good enough, strong enough, enables prayer enough, musically appropriate and well loved to stay in the repertoire? If you are taking some time this summer to de-clutter life,



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perhaps the same process can be applied. After all, how many kitchen gizmos do you really need in the gadget/junk drawer?

As for this melding of old and new that is *Sustaining the Journey*, we shall spend some time learning and updating our repertoire of both music and workshops! Perhaps publication is in the future - along with some other interesting offerings that take advantage of the best of the old (wisdom gained) and new (variety of media). I'm looking forward to whatever the Spirit has in store!

*Bob's perspective:*

An essential element for moving forward in any idiom is knowing where you've been. When I was much younger, I worked as an office manager for a steel processing company in Cleveland. One afternoon I received a phone call from a truck driver. The conversation went:

**Driver:** Hi, I'm bringing you guys a delivery. I'm sort of lost. I'm in Akron right now. Am I close?

**Bob:** If you're coming from Florida, yes. If you're coming from Columbus, you really missed it!

Suffice it to say, he wasn't too thrilled with my answer.

One of my quirks is that I keep very detailed records of the Liturgies I've prepared over the years, going back into the early 90's. When I begin to prepare a liturgical season, I look first at the Entrance and Communion Antiphons in the Roman Missal, noting their interaction (or lack thereof) each other and with the presidential texts – these are the “Old,” the ancient texts of the Church. What are they trying to say? What do they mean? I then review the readings and jot down my impressions as to how all of this speaks to us – taking particular time to make note of musical texts that come to mind (old expressions of music as well as new).

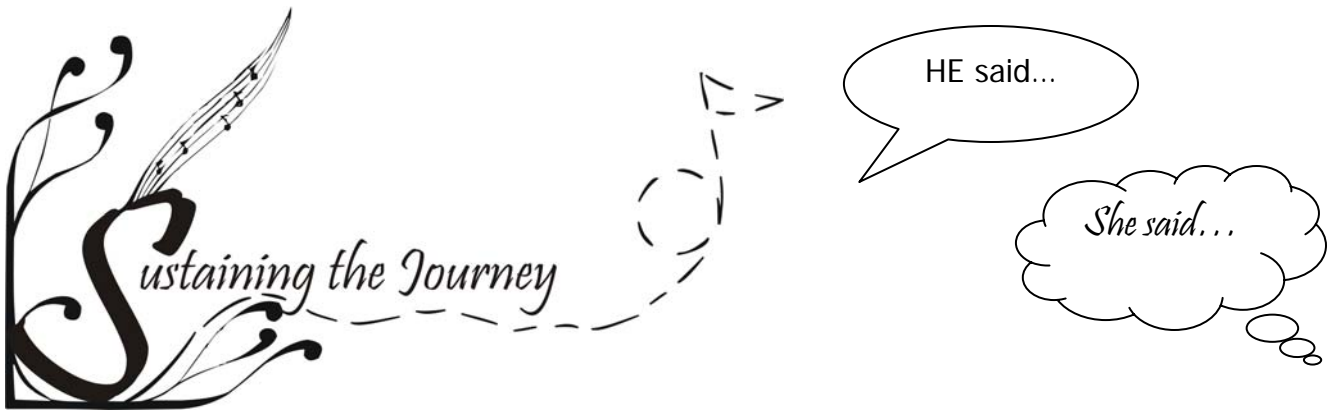
After I let that stew around for a day or two, I look back through the years to see what we've done in the past. Sometimes things really hit the mark, and other times didn't seem to work as well. Or sometimes (because of a variety of reasons) the focus just changed. I question: where have we been? Where are we now? Where are we going? It's interesting to see our progression over time, not only how we've changed, but also how we've remained the same – what we've let go and that to which we still cling. I don't necessarily balance each Liturgy (1 traditional hymn, 1 contemporary song, etc.). Rather, I look at the overall season (or segment) and ask how this speaks to various generations (or age groups) and what music is needed to enhance the overall worship experience of all concerned.

As a rule of thumb, I try to stay away from the words traditional and contemporary when planning music because the meanings tend to shift from generation to generation:

In the year 2018:

...people who are in their 80's were in their 20's in 1958. Chant was traditional and hymnody could be viewed as contemporary.

...people who are in their 70's were in their 20's in 1968. Chant was “back there,” Hymnody was traditional and 4 chord folk hymns were contemporary.



...people who are in their 60's were in their 20's in 1978. Hymnody was still traditional, folk hymns were passé and Glory and Praise type music was then contemporary.

...people who are in their 50's were in their 20's in 1988. Hymnody was beginning to take a back seat, folk hymns were gone, and Glory and Praise type music was starting to grow, and more stylized songs became contemporary.

...people who are in their 40's were in their 20's in 1998. The case was pretty much the same as the previous group.

...people who are in their 30's were in their 20's in 2008. The dawn of Praise and Worship music began to take the contemporary (and somewhat controversial) spot.

...people who are in their 20's were teenagers in 2008 – what we've done is all they know.

Have we taught them well?