

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.

I Don't Get Anything Out of the Mass

Bob's Perspective:

A number of years ago, I had a niece who was preparing to get married. When we received the invitation, my wife broke the news to me that we were going to a wedding and reception. Not being one to easily give up a summer weekend evening, I was not very happy to say the least.

I asked my wife, "Where's the reception going to be?"

"They can't afford a party center, so it's going to be at someone's house," she answered.

Less than pleased with her response, I asked, "Who's going to cater the food?"

"They can't afford a caterer, so it's going to be pot-luck. We're bringing a salad and dessert."

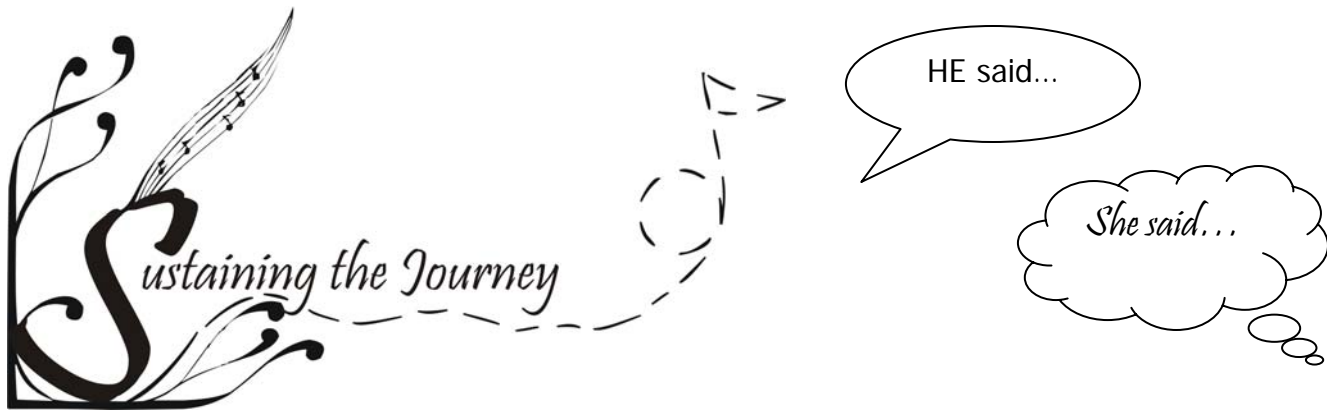
This was going downhill quickly. "Ok," I continued, "will there be a band or a D.J.?"

"Actually," she responded, "we're all going to bring our favorite cd's. Oh, and by the way, you'll need to bring a cd player and a small P.A. system for them to use."

This was more than I could bear. Not only was I giving up a summer weekend night for a crummy reception, but now I had to actually participate! Needless to say, I put up quite a fuss, complaining and crabbing. "Can't we just send them a gift and go to a ball game or something?"

At that point, my tirade came to an abrupt end as my wife gave me one of those looks that only a great wife can give, and said, "Knock it off!!" I stopped dead in my tracks. Standing about nose to nose with me, she said, "This has nothing to do with whether you're going to have a good time or not. It's not about what you're going to get out of it. Our niece is a great girl and she's marrying a good guy. This isn't about you, it's about them."

I stood back and looked at her. She went on. "Going to this reception is about you giving honor and support to these two kids. Whether you're entertained or not is immaterial. What's important is that you show them honor and respect by attending, and in good spirit."



Well, before my wife passed away I wore the pants in our family, but she usually told me which ones to wear. So we went. As it turns out, it was the best wedding reception I've ever attended. I actually had a great time! I've thought a lot about that evening since then. I didn't go to see what I could get from it. Rather, I went just to pay honor and respect. What I didn't expect was the overwhelming gratitude in my niece's eyes when we showed up. I'll never forget that look - it melted my heart.

Some time later, I had a conversation with a friend of mine. We were taking about the Church and he said that he didn't go very often because he just didn't get anything out of it. The wedding reception incident came to mind.

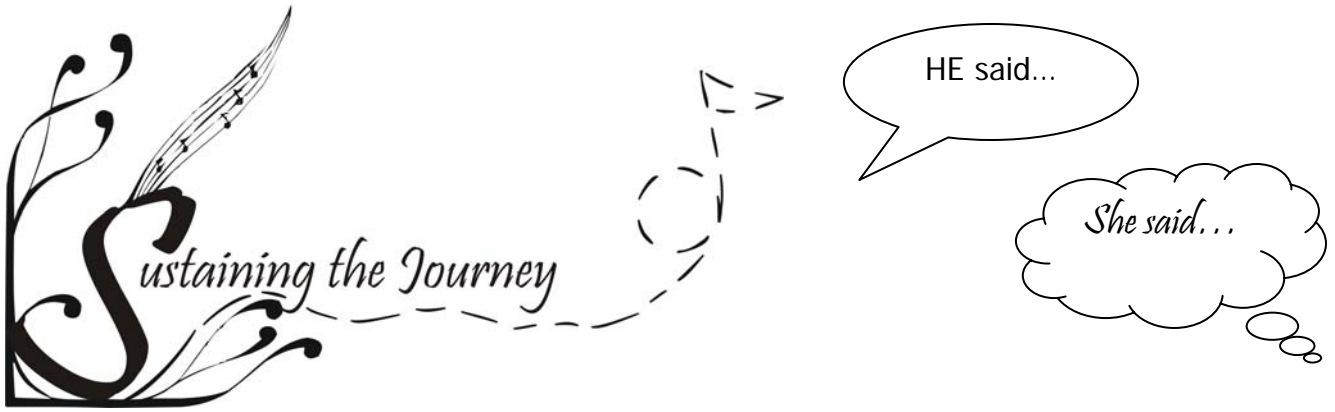
The word "Eucharist" actually comes from a Greek word which means "Thanksgiving." The reason we go to Mass isn't to see what we can get out of it. We are all blessed by God - more than we deserve. We may not have all that we want, but we have all that we need: food, shelter, and our very breath. The weekend Mass offers us the opportunity to get down on our knees and thank God our Father for all of the blessings in our lives. In return, he gives us even more. He gives us the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus in Holy Communion. It's not something he owes us.

Going to Mass is about dedicating some time (when we could be doing something else) in order to be there, not to see what we can get, but rather, to show the depth of our gratitude for all that we have and all that God continues to provide in word, in sacrament and in our lives. When we empty ourselves in praise and thanksgiving, we in turn open ourselves to be filled in ways we may never expect.

Mary's perspective:

Bob wrote so eloquently, my initial thought was to write "What he said!" and leave it at that...

I will add an observation. Our society is very fixed on ourselves. From social media to reality TV, we have grown into a generation that thinks the world revolves around us, and others should care when I make mashed potatoes or am hanging out with a friend. In this world of selfies and Snapchat, it is counter-intuitive to think beyond ourselves. But that is exactly what our faith expects. We are called to see beyond, to look to our Creator, to care for others, and to recognize with gratitude the many blessings with which we have been graced (to echo Bob's words, indeed



our very breath). Mass provides an opportunity. It's a whole mindset. Rather than expecting to be entertained, consider what you bring to the liturgy...

As a music minister present at multiple masses per weekend, sometimes it can be a challenge to be present to full, active, conscious participation. God deserves the effort.