

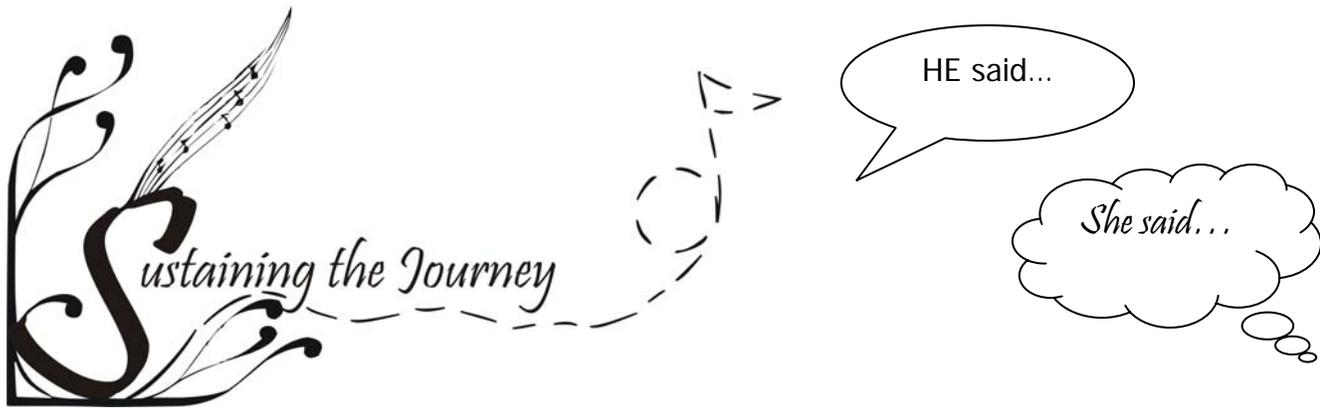
Although sharing much common ground when it comes to philosophy and ministry, often Mary and Bob find themselves approaching ministerial concerns from different angles... *He said - She said* is a venue to share differing perspectives and provide food for thought.

So What Will You Do Differently?

Mary's perspective:

If you've been following our blog, you know we strongly believe in life-long growth. We are constantly evaluating where we've been, where we are headed, and how to best learn from our experiences. (Something about the unexamined life is not worth living - but really, for me, it's more a matter of not repeating the dumb things I've done in life!) So in the attempt to restore balance in life, and to be the best pastoral leader that I can, now is the time when I think about what I might do differently to grow our ministries and our ministers - to transform more butts in the pew into ministers who embrace their baptismal call. If you are a ministry leader, you're probably thinking about the same stuff. This time, rather than answers, I offer questions:

- How will you try to improve member attendance at meetings, practices, and masses? Commitment forms? "Statement of Intent" form from your ministers?
- Bob completely overhauled his situation by getting rid of the traditional model and implementing ensembles. Is this the year you revamp practice/attendance structure and expectations?
- Ministers need formation opportunities. Will you host a Liturgical Minister retreat? Begin/end practice and/or Mass with prayer?
- If you feed them, they will come. Is this the year you focus on something social? Multiple some things? (Think Christmas sing-along, going out for drinks after practice, pizza party...)
- Parishes can all use fresh opportunities for development. Will you host a concert? Workshop? Mission?
- Is it time to update your approach to liturgical music? Will you incorporate more chant? Dig into the Grail Psalter? Utilize a musical setting (or write your own) of the Entrance Antiphon?



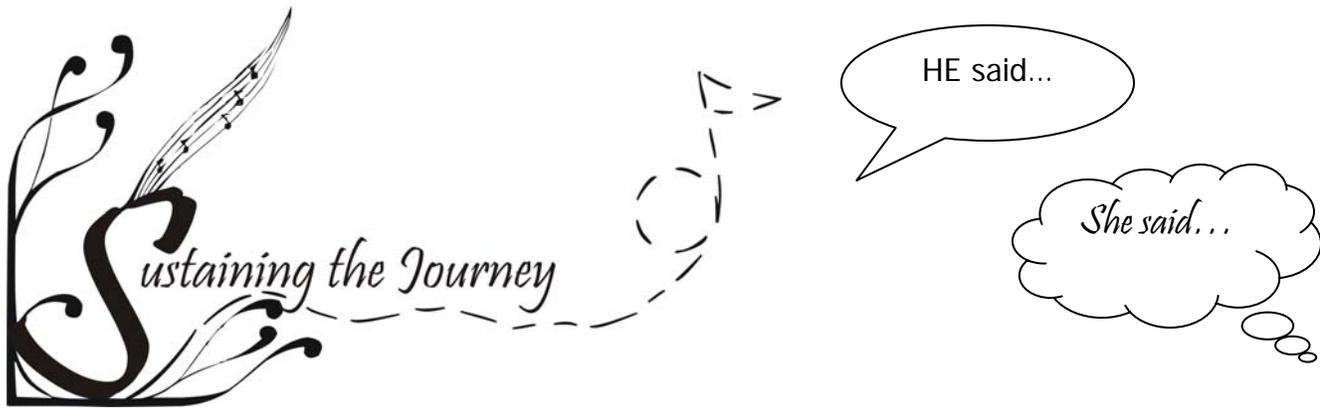
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- One year, I concentrated on cantors - I developed and offered multiple workshops to bolster their ministry. Another year, I focused on our Children's Liturgy of the Word ministry. I prayed with them, addressed concerns, explored best practices, and it made for a better experience for the ministers and children, alike. Will you focus this year on developing a specific ministry?
 - Are your music resources still supporting the assembly's prayer? Is it time for a new hymnal? Have you picked the four or five new pieces you will incorporate this year? How's the funeral repertoire serving your needs? Could your bereavement ministry use some resources?
 - Is it time to market your parish and/or your ministry electronically? How's your website? Facebook page? Have you explored podcasting?
 - Summer is a great time for planning. Do you have your 2016-2017 calendar at least roughed out? What mass settings will you use seasonally? We all have big events or fundraisers - what details of those can you chip away at now?
 - We already know when the Easter Vigil is. What setting of the Exultet will you use? Is this the year you finally write that foot-washing song or perhaps dismissal song for the RCIA?

How's that for food for thought?

Bob's Perspective:

Mary has some terrific ideas for implementing changes and revamping the status quo in our parishes. I would like to offer a slightly different point of view: True change comes from within. I recently had this discussion with a number of liturgical ministers. Many times, we get so wrapped up in the mechanics of liturgy that we overlook basic essentials. For example, when receiving Eucharist how often do we take a moment to realize the depth and scope of the Sacrament?

For a number of liturgical ministers, immediately upon receiving communion we have to go into ministerial action: moving to our stations and distributing, ushering others to the table, playing music or leading the song. This leaves very little time (if any) to enter into the moment of sacramental reception. If you're like me, in many instances you probably have the next thing already on your mind as you lift your hands to receive the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of our Lord.

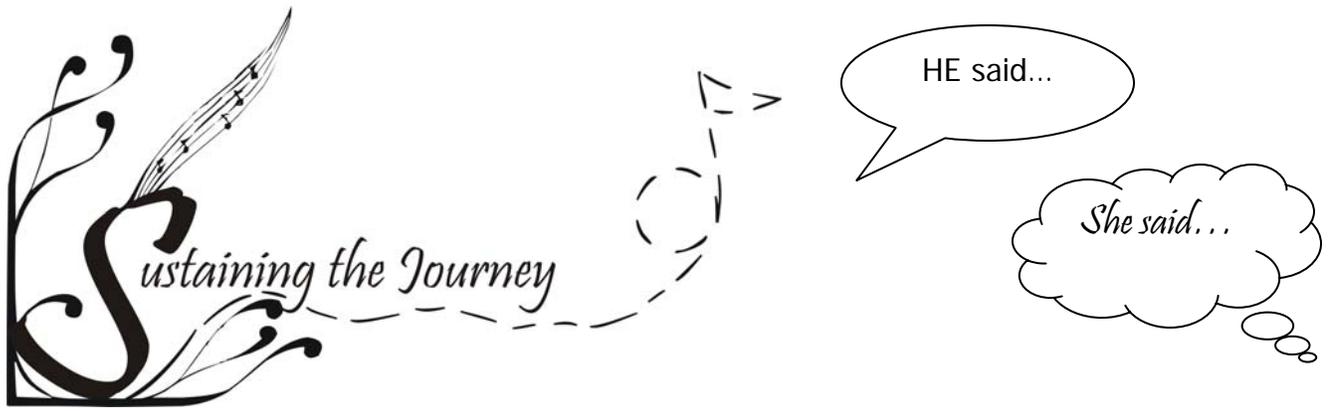


If liturgy is being done properly, there should be an ample amount of silence during the cleansing of the vessels as well as a few moments after that as the priest sits down when finished. This should include silence of the instruments as well so that the musicians can take a few moments for personal prayer. The reception of Eucharist is a communal action – to this there’s no debate: we all stand together, we all sing together, we all process to the table together – as it should be. That being said, there is also a personal nature to this sacrament that shouldn’t be short changed.

The key to all if this is mindfulness. What are some of the ways that we can remain truly mindful of the Blessed Sacrament as we undertake the mechanics of our liturgical roles at Mass? I would suggest that this mindfulness can be accomplished in varied and simple practices:

- + When walking into the Church, taking holy water and making a deliberate sign of the cross (rather than a half-hearted baseball signal), consciously pray, “I have been baptized in the name of the Father...” Saying this or a similar prayer any time we make the sign of the cross keeps us mindful of who we are and whose we are.
- + At the beginning of the Gospel proclamation as we sign ourselves – again with deliberation and thought - and after the communal response, we can consciously pray, “May the Word of God be in my mind, on my lips and in my heart.”
- + During the offertory, if there happens to be a quiet moment – or as the introduction to the offertory chant is being played, an appropriate prayer might be, “Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts...” As a side note, saying grace before meals and deliberately making the sign of the cross is a great way to help connect our Sunday ritual to our daily lives.
- + During the Eucharistic Prayer after the words of institution as the elements are being elevated, make a conscious effort look at the actions being performed and heartfully pray, “My Lord, and my God, ” or “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us.”

Now to be clear, the words of these prayers (and the length of these prayers) aren’t all that important. The importance is that we keep our minds and hearts in the ritual that is taking place,



and not letting the mechanics of our actions or outside distractions (making a grocery list, thinking about our vacation or the argument we just had over the kids' grades) take over the prayer. These small and simple acts of mindfulness will actually help (in the long run) to make our ritual actions bolder, our proclamations more vibrant and our music more prayerful. And all of this, in turn, will lift our liturgies to new heights.