

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.

Continuing Our Journey

Mary and Bob's Perspective:

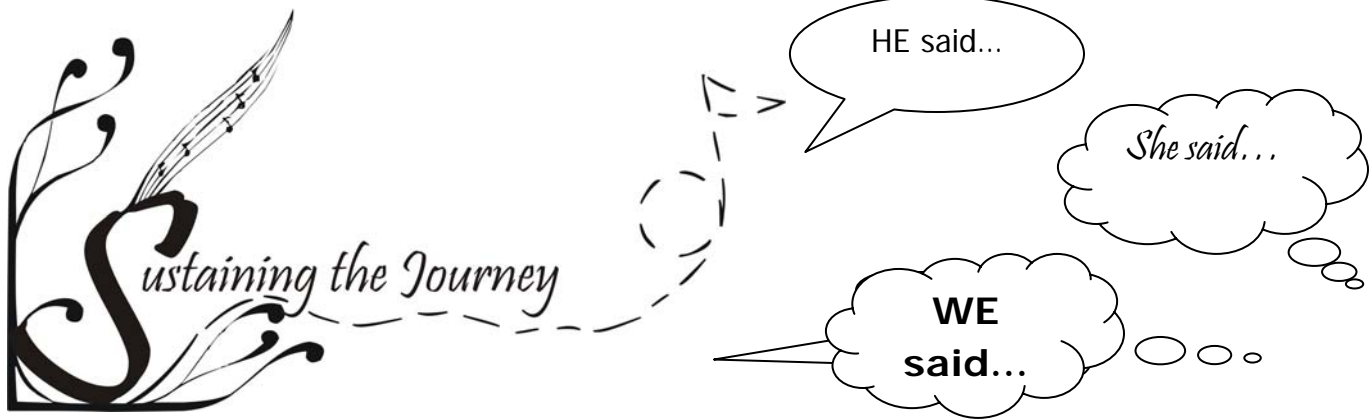
As part of our ongoing formation and education, we take at least a week each year to get away from the ordinary routine and seek inspiration. This year we had the opportunity to participate in two excellent conferences – both geared for church music leaders, yet very different in structure. Each contrasted significantly in style and concepts, yet once again they drew us both to similar conclusions!

The first leg of our epic journey took us to the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, IN. Our destination was the ND Vision LMM (Liturgical Music Ministry) Conference. It was the first either of us had spent any amount of time on the beautiful Notre Dame campus, and that in itself was awesome! Being firm believers in “if you feed them, they will come”, we are planning to come back next year – the food was phenomenal! (It also explained the concept of “the freshman 15”, though we would likely gain more than that if we stayed longer than a week.) Notre Dame is considered a walking campus, and we really walked – about 6 miles each day. The combination of good food, fresh air, and plentiful exercise was nourishing to body and soul.

Prior to attending the conference, neither of us really knew what to expect, though we felt like we got much more than anticipated. This week was about education, yes, but it was also about retreat. The focus was on Mercy – in this Year of Mercy, topics addressed included corporal and spiritual works of mercy, finding mercy in the Mass, finding mercy in Scripture, Liturgy of the Hours, and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and appreciating the mercy and grace that come with beauty, in big moments and small.

The week that we were there, two other groups met with similar content, and additionally, there was a group of priests also spending the week in formation. Besides the Music Ministry tract, there was a Campus Ministry & Youth Ministry gathering, and some 300 high school students mentored by 63 ND college mentors. The energy and synergy of the week was inspiring! We shared some sessions, prayer experiences, and meals together, and had other more intimate gatherings just with fellow music ministers. The balance was good.

Part of what made this week fruitful was not only the quality of the presenters, but the interaction of the participants, who collectively had literally hundreds of years of ministry experience! We were challenged to look more closely at the psalms, to reflect on theological constructs, and to share best practices with the group. Future blogs will certainly



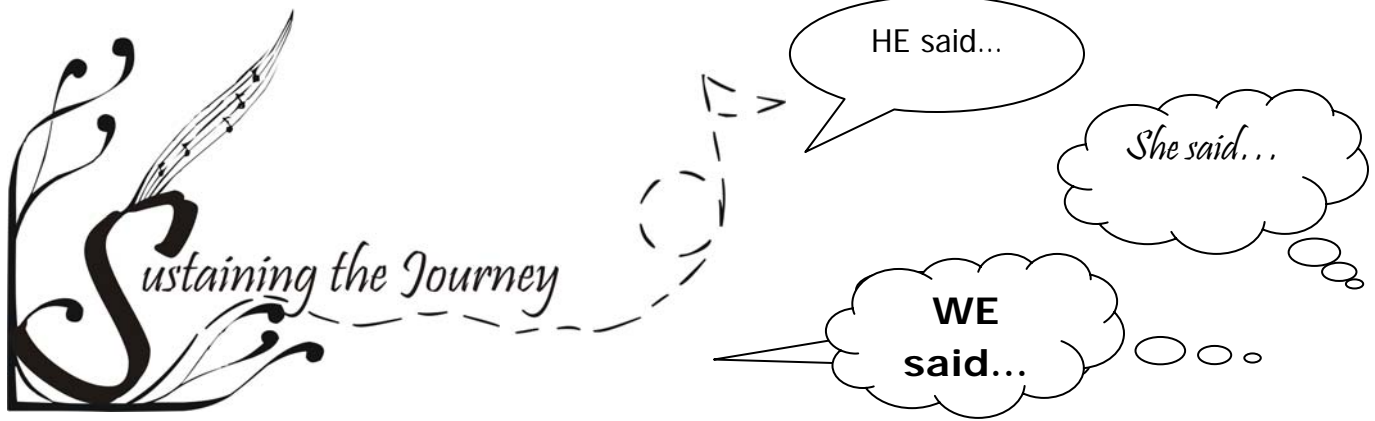
address some of what we learned, but the experience was quite intense and we are still engaged in mystagogy ourselves.

After a week of contemplative time, study, prayer, and walking, we drove a few hundred miles southeast to the Choral Music Celebration in Canton, OH. The CMC is presented by LifeWay Ministries – an interdenominational ministry famous for their bookstores and musical resources. The CMC was held at First Church of the Nazarene, which is a beautiful complex. The church grounds include gathering spaces, eating spaces, rooms for young people, musicians, and a beautiful worship space with abundant technology. Although the content was the presentation of choral and sacred music by a variety of publishers, this was done in a very prayerful and spiritually nourishing way. The CMC included morning worship, and evening concert, and faith stories shared with hospitality and humor. Differences in demoninational theologies made for a wide variety of beautiful music – some more useful to us in Catholic worship than others – but it offered hope and understanding of some of what fellow Christians experience and seek.

What both conferences agreed on is the dire need to encourage and include youth and young adults of our assemblies to participate and take ownership within the church. Faith is faith, and we are more effective living our Christian calling when we work together and support each other on the journey.

As we further unpack what we learned, more will spill out in our blogs and workshops, but here is a “flash” look at our initial thoughts:

- 1) Faith in young people is alive and well – it just needs the right atmosphere to encourage its growth. It was so inspiring to be part of a gathering of 350+ teens and young adults who are hungry for the nourishment of the church (and this was only one of four youth conferences happening this summer at ND). We saw enthusiasm, kindness, participation in the sacraments, and an energy that lifts all of us. Especially in these dark times of politics and terror, it was very refreshing to pray the Angelus with the high schoolers every day.
- 2) The hospitality and friendliness of those in the Ohio Bible Belt is a lesson many other communities would do well to emulate. From those providing water to the thirsty (checking in after 5 hours in a car), to the folks who turned around in the lunch line to introduce themselves and find common ground, we felt like we were part of a bigger family.
- 3) From four part polyphony in the chapel at Notre Dame to the old standards and gospel/rock praise-band selections at the CMC, music to praise and worship can – and should – use many styles to engage all of our senses.
- 4) From the beautifully crafted worship aids and emphasis on art at Notre Dame, to CMC’s use of technology, including video photography that goes with the music, and projection of lyrics, we found that reaching beyond the ordinary can significantly enhance participation and overall worship experience. A little bit of hard work and attention to detail really does go a long way.



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- 5) We heard stories of large groups gathering in Notre Dame's Grotto to pray the rosary, and of a Christmas worship service for 40,000 attendees in a single church – very different groups but one common purpose. We need to be open to variety in style of worship, and to recognize the gifts of each other, and to be attuned to the Spirit in the ordinary and in the extraordinary.

Note... we would highly recommend both of these conferences. Notre Dame Vision – the Institute for Church Life - is hosting Liturgy Symposia to Nourish the Catholic Imagination and Renew the Church. The LMM conference is scheduled next year July 17-21. Next year's CMC is scheduled for July 21-22. We are not affiliated in any way, other than having attended this year, but were thoroughly impressed with the content, organization, and high quality presentations. The presenters were generous with their time, talent, and resources, and we are grateful to have been fed by their efforts.