

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*)

Mediators

Mary's Perspective:

When Bob and I first talked about this blog, it was rather insightful... he got all enthusiastic and said, "YES! Finally, something I can sink my teeth into!! Steaks - pork chops - hamburger - hot dogs - pot roast..." It took me a while to realize he thought I said MEAT EATERS, not MEDIATORS!!!

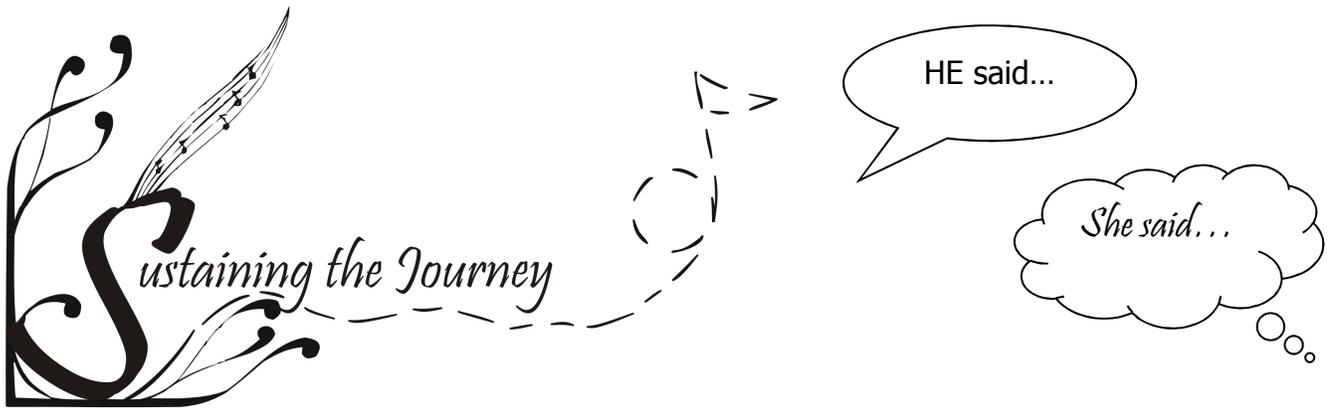
Joking aside, we just got back from a week of inspiration and reflection (and exhaustion) as we participated in the annual national convention of the National Association of Pastoral Musicians. We were blessed to hear truly awesome plenum addresses that were thought-provoking. In one of them, Bishop Frank Caggiano reflected on the role of music in liturgy - and in life.

I don't know about you, but sometimes I miss the trees amidst the forest. I play music every day. I listen to it; I sing it; I create it. And yet sometimes I take that for granted, and forget the transformative power of music. Within liturgy, music can unlock the Word and heal hearts. Music expresses what words cannot. In the bishop's words, "pastoral musicians are the custodians of the path to beauty - and beauty is the path to touch the human heart." We are the conduit between two points: music is the mediator between the here-and-now and the Divine. How awesome is that? How humbling?

Our ministry has a transcendent dimension: it's never about us. It's always about the Lord. In the music we celebrate, we help people see they are destined for something more. The Word of God seeks to speak to the human heart. The beauty of music unlocks its full power. However, we cannot give whom we do not know - we must have a relationship with Christ.

Okay so what does that all mean to us, right here and now? For one thing, never underestimate the power of music. If you are involved in music ministry, respect that with which you have been gifted. If it is your role to select music for liturgy (or prayer in general), choose music that is evocative and transcendent and scripturally inspired. If you support the assembly's song as a chorister or cantor, never fall into the trap of performance. Ego chases away beauty.

Ever have one of those moments when a song just touches your heart? It could be on the radio during your morning commute, when you feel like you're hearing the exact words that speak to you. It could be when the



song at Mass ends, and the Spirit is palpable in the sacred silence after the last chord, when you could hear a pin drop. Don't discount those moments! Recognize the beauty and how the music lifts humanity to touch the Divine. Celebrate your role as music minister with deep and profound humility. (My prayer is typically, "Okay, God, get ME out of the way!")

Bishop Caggiano reflected that if the assembly enters worship with no questions on their minds, and they leave with questions in their hearts, then they have glimpsed the Beautiful One. Will your music mediate that transformation?

Bob's Perspective:

Pot-roast? Did someone say "Pot-roast?" Sorry, just kidding! (Well...maybe!)

Many years ago, a dear friend gave me a gift. It was one of those boxed pictures covered with a piece of glass imprinted with a saying. The picture was that of a hand holding a pen to a piece of manuscript paper. The depiction inferred that this person was composing a song. The saying that was superimposed said: "I will make the Lord my Music – I will make His love the key which tunes my heart to Him and gives my life its harmony." Think about that a moment. If you let yourself delve into that statement, you will see that it describes a very intimate relationship that is intensified through the vehicle of music.

Have you ever heard a song on the radio during which your mind was immediately transported back to a significant event or person in your life? Maybe it was a song that reminded you of your high school prom or your first love. Maybe it was a piece of music that reminded you of a tranquil moment on vacation. Maybe it was a song that brought you back to your wedding or the birth of your first child. Maybe it was a song that, for a brief moment, re-connected you with a loved one who no longer lives on this earthly plain. I can hardly believe that anyone has not experienced this at least one time or another in their life.

As Pastoral Musicians, it's very easy at times to take what we do for granted. Playing music at multiple Masses each weekend, being inundated with rehearsals and meetings, and having to constantly work under a deadline can certainly cloud the true meaning of our goal and purpose.

This goal far surpasses the ordinary or mundane tasks into which we digress on a regular basis.

The primary ministers of music in Catholic worship are the members of our Assembly. The mediation aspect of our ministry is not merely to play the music that accompanies their song. Being a mediator is to help them lift their voices in worship in order to become the song. Now think of a time when you verbally expressed your love for someone and they in turn embraced you. In terms of Catholic worship, maybe an apt illustration would suggest that the songs we become are the expression of our devotion and love, and Eucharist with which we are fed is our Lord's tender and loving embrace.