

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.

A Different Version of the World

Bob's Perspective:

*"Well, I've been afraid of changing 'cause I've built my life around you.
But time makes you bolder, even children get older, and I'm getting older too."*

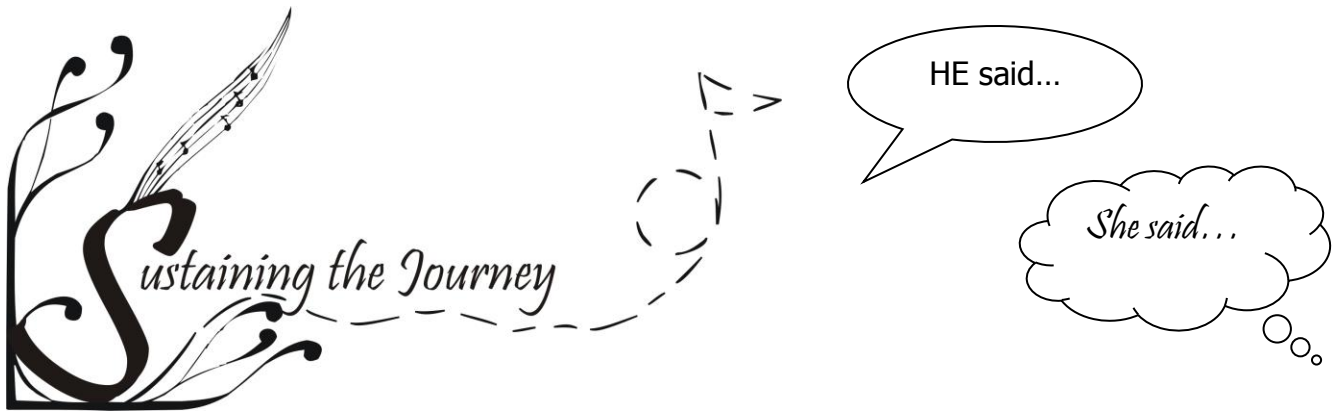
- From the song, Landslide by Stevie Nicks (1975)

A driving force in my life has been passion – the passion of knowing what I want out of life and the passion of working hard to accomplish my goals. It's true that my passions have changed or evolved over the years. However, it's always been a passion for something or someone that has driven me to become very successful in my life – and in most of my ventures. When I was just a kid, I wanted to become a professional musician. I worked at it, sought out and studied under teachers that could help me grow and advance. I sought out mentors that would guide me through the channels that I needed to navigate, and I did it.

After a time, my passions changed direction. I spent a number of years in the steel industry. For much of that time, I worked alongside my Dad – and loved every minute of it. I branched out and became an extraordinarily successful salesman for another company. Then, through a complex series of events, my passion for music reignited. I abruptly quit my steel job, and within a matter of weeks I put together a band – and that became a full-time job. Eventually, the band gave way to working in the Church, which then became my passion, in which I've been involved for almost 40 years.

Truth be told, I haven't loved every single job that I've had, or every gig that I've played, or every activity that I've undertaken, or every girlfriend that I've dated. But anyone who knows me well can attest that I was passionate about all of them. Success in life, whether it's in a career, an activity, or a relationship, can't truly happen without passion.

The passion that I'm speaking of is the driving force within one's self to be the best. I'm not talking about being the best in the world – I'm talking about being one's personal best. And what's the measure of success? In one word, Happiness.



Passion is an emotion, but more importantly, passion is an attitude. A lyric comes to mind from an old Crosby, Stills and Nash song: “If you can’t be with the one you love, then love the one you’re with.” It’s all about attitude. At one point while I was in high school, I had what many would perceive to be the world’s most boring job: I worked at the Cleveland Public Library shelving books. I would take a cart full of books, put them in order according to the Dewey Decimal System (now if that doesn’t date me, nothing will) and then shelve them in proper order. To most people, watching paint dry would be more exciting. However, to a passionate person, this job was filled with challenges – and I actually enjoyed my job for the time I was there.

Right now, we’re in the midst of events that are unprecedented – not in world history, but in our lifetimes. (Don’t forget the old adage: “If you don’t learn from history, you’re doomed to repeat it.”) We hear phrases everyday like “the new normal.” Like it or not, all of us (in some way) will soon need to let go of things that we’ve perceived as anchors in our lives. Some of us have already let go of one thing or another. Some have lost jobs, some have lost finances, some have had to abandon careers, and some have suffered the loss of friends and loved ones. On the other hand, some have found new opportunities for career, financial, and personal growth.

In these times, we need to have faith – we need to be passionate in our devotion and in our prayer lives. If not already there, we need to become passionate about who we are and whose we are. We need to be passionate about what we can do to make things better in our lives and in the lives of those around us. This may call us to let go of some of the things that we’ve built our lives around (or at least look at those things in new ways) in order to grow. Remember our Lord’s parable:

“Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit.” (John 12:24)

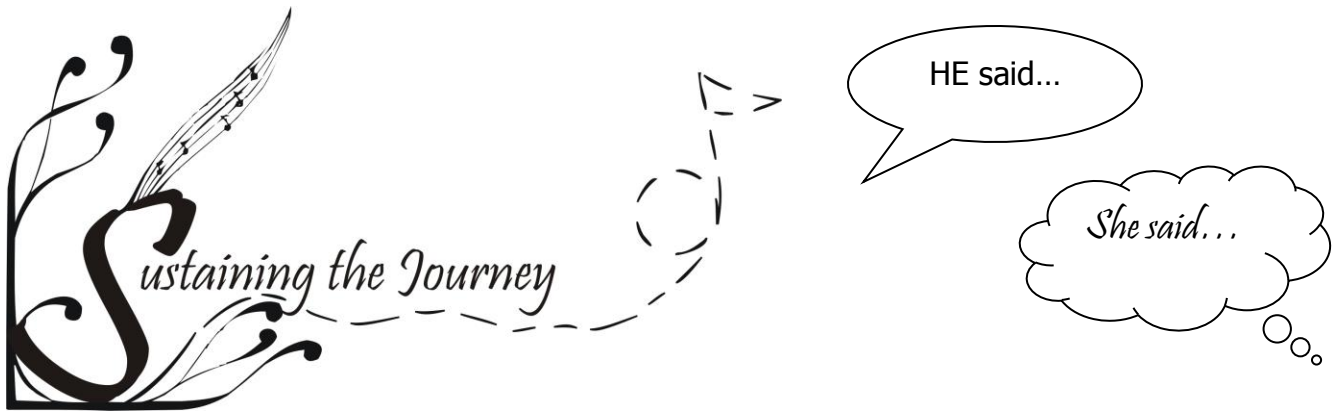
I would never presume to put words into our Lord’s mouth, but for me it’s not a far stretch to hear his next words as being:

“Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4:21)

Mary’s Perspective:

I find my mind lately swirling with thoughts that are seemingly unconnected – yet there is a common thread. Let’s see if this blog untangles it!

At lunch a few days ago, as we were discussing being passionate about life, Bob mused that today’s youth (I’ll let you define what that age range may be) find it challenging to discover their passions. He has observed parishioners, nieces and nephews, and friends’ offspring who are financially managing, but not content in their



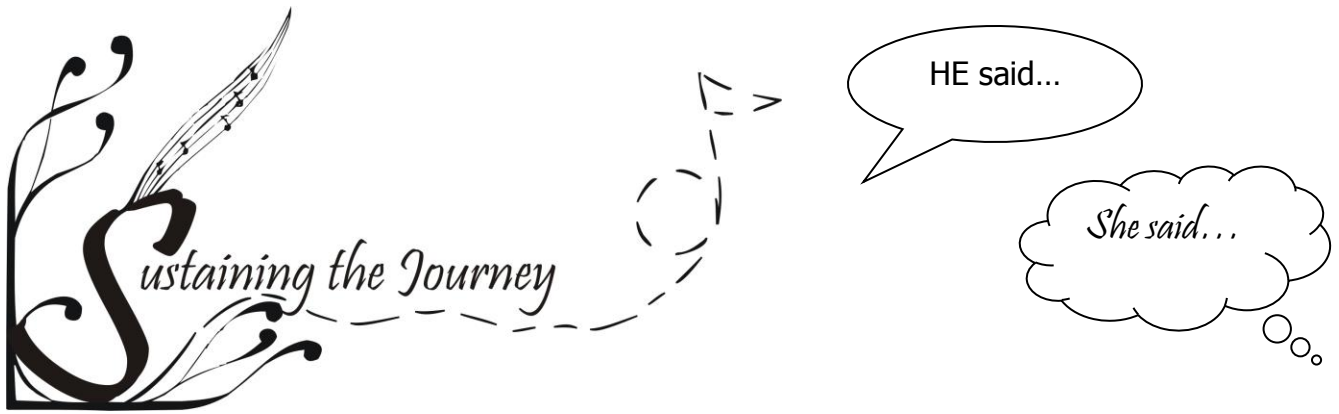
careers. In this era of technology and sound bites, the “Z generation” is more comfortable with a fast-paced, feel good, “entertain me” way of thinking. Traditional jobs don’t always fit the bill. In addition, while money was a key factor for why some of the “older” folks worked, it is less of a motivator for this younger generation because, in some ways, they have conquered that need. Speaking from personal experience, my children and their friends are well educated on methods of investment, the stock market, and how to best leverage compound interest – much more educated than I ever was. While they work hard and have earned and saved well, I am confident that finances will be less of a worry for them than for the previous generation. But what are they passionate about?

Next line of swirling thought... I was listening to a podcast while walking recently, and the discussion turned toward letting go of anger. The observation was made that, until one can accept whatever has happened and let go of anger, forward movement is very difficult. I would suggest that the first step toward moving past this pandemic is coming to grips with the fact that we are now facing a different version of the world. Our old lives are no more, and we will not be returning to how things were. Just as with the grief process, there needs to be some acceptance of that fact before new growth can really take root. We need to come to grips with the fact that we can’t change the past. We can’t make this time of isolation and social distance and fear of illness just go away, or pretend it never happened. Lives have been permanently changed. And I believe we won’t fully move forward without consciously “turning the page” – understanding that we can’t go back to life as it was, and daring to dream about what this new version of our lives looks like.

I sometimes joke that I don’t know what I want to be when I grow up. (Most times, that’s not a joke!) Back to Bob’s concept of finding one’s passion... perhaps the reason many of today’s youth feel unsettled or restless is that they don’t know what they are passionate about. My daughter recently reminded me that, if you love what you do, every day is a vacation. So how do you discover what you love?

Finally, one more strand... I was listening to an inspirational speaker who told the story of conquering fear. Basically, she decided that, for her 40th birthday, she wanted to participate in a triathlon, except she didn’t know how to swim. So she hired a coach and worked diligently on her fear of the water. She did participate in that triathlon, but had a panic attack during the swimming part. However, she kept swimming (I hear Dory in my head from *Finding Nemo*), and later reflected, “I didn’t die.” After that first triathlon, she went on to participate in nine more. And in all ten races, she had a panic attack during the swimming leg. And she didn’t die. She observed that facing her fear – and realizing she wouldn’t die if she just kept swimming – helped in other aspects of her life. She went on to present at a conference of 600 women, even though she was afraid of speaking to crowds. She published a book, even though she was afraid of rejection. The moral of her story was that facing fear in one part of life helped strengthen her resolve in other parts of life.

So, seeing how these strands are woven together, perhaps I won’t figure out what I want to be when I grow up until I acknowledge that I can’t go back to how things were, and I can’t let fear dictate how I move forward. Whether we’re talking about liturgical ministry, or a secular job, or a transition to retired life, I suspect this



concept is pretty universally applicable. If the pandemic left you unemployed, moving forward may mean letting go of a particular job or industry and reaching out of your comfort zone. If this time of social isolation has left you craving societal interaction but afraid of the virus, perhaps you need to put a name to that fear, do what you can to protect yourself, but find ways to interact socially. Perhaps you need to grieve the loss – of a loved one, or a ministry, or a job, or life as we knew it – but then dare to dream. What does this new version of life look like for you, where every day is a vacation and you are peaceful, happy, and whole? What's the first step toward making that a reality?