

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.

Liturgy Planning...Life Planning

Mary's perspective:

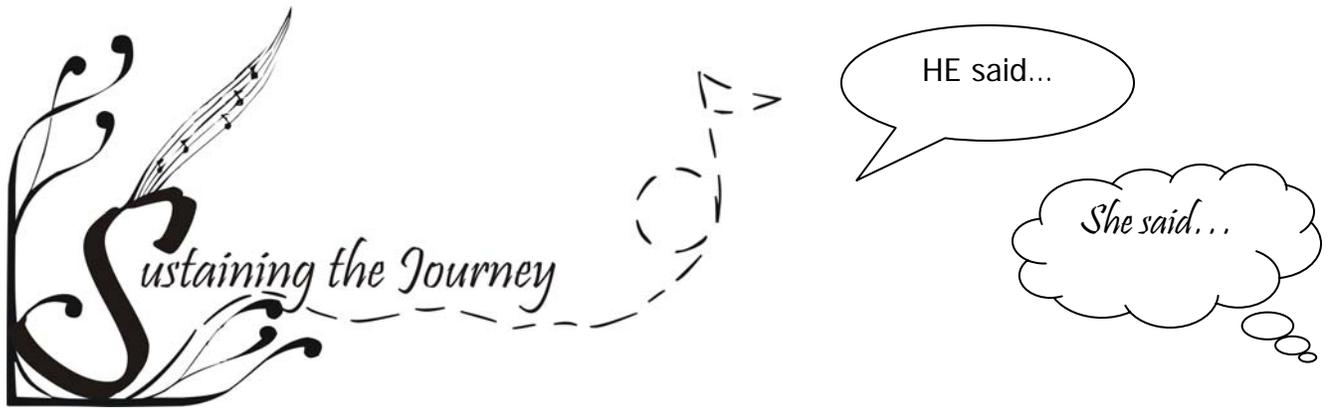
Bob and I have given several workshops on our approach to liturgy planning. In general, we start with the big picture and work our way down to the smallest details. It's like the image of a jar with rocks. First you fit in the biggest rocks, and when it's "full", then you still can put in the marble-sized rocks, and then when the jar seems full, there is plenty of room for the sand. In liturgy terms, I see the big rocks as the seasons. You know when the annual things happen, whether it's Christmas, Triduum or the parish feast or festival. So we plot those in. What new pieces of repertoire will you introduce, or formation opportunities, or fresh resources? How does your assembly's service music (from the Gloria through the Eucharistic Acclamations) plot out over the year?

Then come the marbles - looking at each season individually. For example, I use a consistent Mass setting for Advent and Christmas, and for Lent and Easter. Will I use a common Entrance Chant this Lent? Perhaps one Communion hymn for all of Advent? The marbles are the characteristics unique to each season or planning block.

Finally, the sand. For each individual celebration, what nuances or details need to be planned?

I'm thinking about this right now, in the middle of summer, because it's the best time to at least consider the "rocks". It is easier to think about the big picture for the next year of ministry when I'm not completely exhausted from evening meetings and practices and events. We have posed the challenge to consider what you will do differently this year (*see 7/1/16 - What Will You Do Differently?*). Now's the time to put the plan into action. At least look at the big picture - taking occasional breaks for a dip in the pool and a cold iced tea, of course - and pray about your path for the next year. Write it down. Put the big pieces into place.

Approaching the process in a scaled way makes a large task much more manageable, and really enables the freedom to be creative. For example, if I know what the church environment is going



to look like, and I know what service music we will be using, and I know I'm going to be introducing a new piece of music three times in the next four weeks, the big decisions are already done and it frees me to focus on the subtle details - such as, the assembly really embraced the refrain of the new song, so this weekend I'll just lightly accompany on guitar so that they can really hear themselves and take ownership of the piece. Or perhaps we have a baptism this weekend, and I can take a little time this week to include the baptismal family's picture in our electronic bulletin board.

For the record, this scaled approach works well beyond liturgy planning. Cleaning out my closet is a daunting task, but if I break it into manageable slices, I am much more likely to get it done. If I start with getting rid of anything that no longer fits, that I haven't worn in 3 years, or that was trendy in a different era, I've taken care of the "rocks". Perhaps the "marbles" are the items I absolutely love and know I want to keep - once they have taken their new space in the closet, I can evaluate what's left (a.k.a. the "sand").

Whether the task at hand is organizing a bookshelf or implementing the vision for your business' growth, or planning worship for an entire parish, remember the rocks, marbles, and sand!

Bob's Perspective:

This topic brings to mind Aesop's fable about the Grasshopper and the Ant. As the story goes, the Grasshopper lazed through the summer and ridiculed the Ant for working so hard to store up his food. However, when winter came, the Grasshopper starved while the Ant was comfortable with his supply. So many times in life, we wait to the last minute and then frantically attempt to reinvent the wheel. How many times have we rushed around to buy school supplies for the kids, plan a Thanksgiving meal or prepare a liturgical season?

The truth is that none of these events come as a surprise. They happen every year and require many of the same elements. In preparing a liturgical season, we already know which scriptural readings are prescribed in the Lectionary and which orations are called for in the Roman Missal. There's no rule that forbids us to read the Advent seasonal scriptures and orations in July. Penning some ideas for Psalm settings and hymnody may then give us a chance to rest in them and pray with them so as to form a comfortable mindset. I have found over the years that the earlier I begin to work on a particular season, the more relaxed I become in the execution of rehearsals and liturgical events – and this allows for prayerful and sincere worship, which is what we're all about.