

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.

Seize the Moment

Mary's perspective:

I am the queen of planners. I typically have two calendars going simultaneously - this year and next year - often with color-coded entries. (Nerd Alert!) I am most peaceful when I can look at the week ahead and know what to expect, what I will wear, and where I will be for dinner each night. Bob and I often have the same conversation, that goes like this...

MARY: Tell me exactly what is coming, how to prepare for it, and what I'm supposed to be doing right now.

BOB: I don't need to know why, just put me on the right path.

MARY: Wouldn't a crystal ball be awesome? Then we can see ahead and WHY things are happening the way they are right now! And what's coming next!

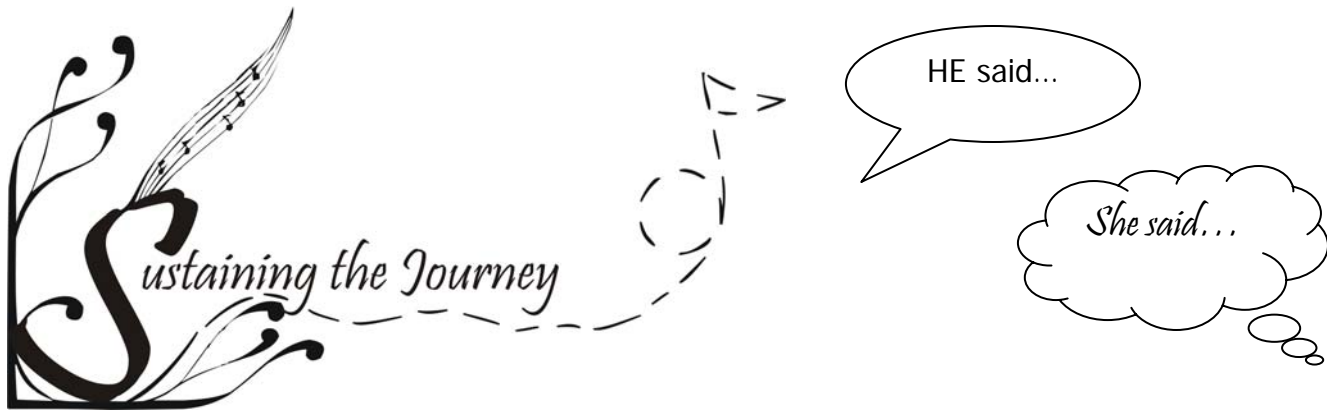
BOB: Quit worrying about what is coming. Follow the path. Learn the lesson. Enjoy the journey.

MARY: I love the journey! Just tell me where we are going!!

Perhaps one of the lessons I have needed to learn is that we can't always predict how things will go. Worry doesn't change the course of events, and often all we can control is how we react. So when life hands you lemons, seize the moment...make lemonade (or whatever analogy you want to use)...find the good in the situation and build on it.

Here are some examples:

We have decided to pursue new hymnals for our parish. This can present a daunting amount of work for the Music Director. From researching contents and selecting the right resource, to preparing fundraising materials and writing thank you notes to all the donors, to adjusting existing resources to reflect new hymn numbers, the project can seem more "work" than "fun". How do



you stay enthusiastic for the end result? Offer an evening "Music Sampler" - pick a few great new pieces and some fan favorites from the new hymnal and host an evening of singing and cookies!

The 15th anniversary of September 11 is coming up. We could spend time reflecting on sadness and terror, or we can join together to pray for peace. Certainly we acknowledge the darkness, but we are a people of Light. Sometimes it helps to be together and remember that. Hence, *Gathered as One for Peace...* a multi-media presentation of music and reflection, uniting our hearts as we pray for peace.

Many of us have experienced tremendous loss in the past few years. Illness, death, job loss - it's hard to think of someone who hasn't been touched by tragedy. We can feel alone and isolated, or we can recall the One who draws us together and binds us in faith. Whether you host a bereavement dinner for all who grieve, or an evening of Christmas carols in remembrance of that pastor who just loved Christmas, what you do is less important than the act of doing it.

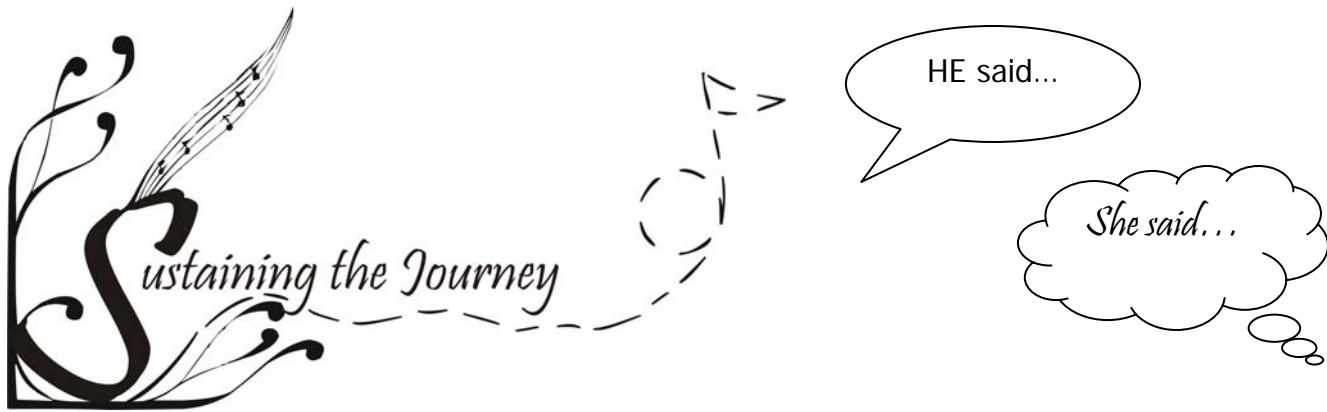
Even something as annoying as contracting chicken pox as an adult can pose opportunity. I usually walk in the park for exercise. It's easy to just go through the motions without paying attention to God's glory around me - until I was so weak from illness that the most I could muster was a very slow stroll around the block. Being forced to slow down provides a chance to write, reflect, pray, reconnect with friends, and even appreciate my color-coded planners!

What challenges seem like stumbling blocks in your life? Where is the good in the situation? How can you grow from it?

Seize the moment!

Bob's Perspective:

"Carpe Diem" has always been one of the axioms by which I live my life. "Seize the Day", or in our case, "Seize the Moment." So many times opportunities to grow and flourish are lost because we just stick to the tried and true. The definition of insanity is "doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result each time." While I do believe that planning your work and working your plan is essential for success, sometimes when things aren't working out as well as expected we need to change it up.



Some of the most successful ventures in my life happened because something else wasn't working, so I improvised. A few years ago, our parish had a choir that always sang at the 10am Mass on Sunday. The other Masses were led by the organ (or piano) and a Cantor. Over time, as jobs changed and life situations evolved, rehearsal and Mass attendance for the choir was becoming more and more of an issue. My Dad served at one time in the United States Marine Corp. Many times I heard him say, "improvise, adapt, overcome." So rather than panic or get depressed over the situation, I carefully prepared and changed our modus operandi. Now we have four ensembles that rotate through the Mass schedule along with Cantors. Rehearsals are also on a rotational basis. The system allows for people being able to serve our community as Music Ministers with less commitment of time. We then recruit a choir for Christmas and the Triduum. Our attendance improved radically (from averages of 68% to 97%) at any given rehearsal or event.

The art of improvisation is not just taking a haphazard stab at something and depending on sheer luck. Rather, it's banking on your talent, intellect and instinct to make wise and educated decisions in the face of varying from the plan. The basis for good improvisation is confidence in your own abilities – and sometimes, the only way to build confidence is to put yourself out there. Then, if that particular thing doesn't work out, then chalk it up to experience, learn from it, fix it and try again.

The attitude of seizing the moment doesn't give us license to run amok, live on the fringe, or to be disrespectful of the laws or regulations of an institution or society. To seize the moment is to view all of the possibilities within the structure and feel free to explore and experience them in meaningful ways.