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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.

## Savor the Moment

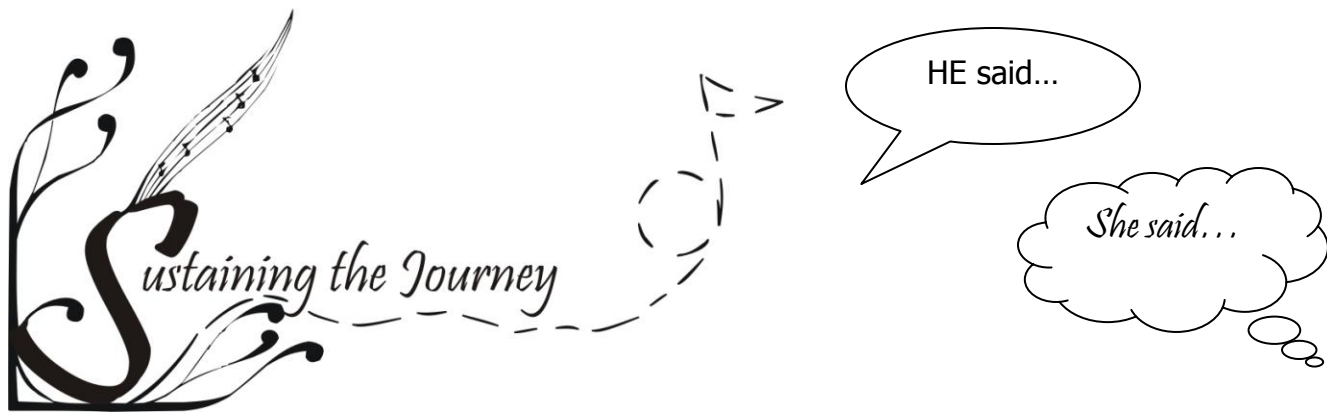
*Mary's Perspective:*

On Thanksgiving Day, in the middle of Mass, I had a moment. Actually, I had a couple of moments. (Standing joke between us... Bob had a stroke. I have issues. But this time, I had a moment!) Actually, over the past week, I've had a couple of moments. Let me explain.

At Thanksgiving Day Mass, we invite all assembled to participate in the Offertory. Even without reminders or bulletin notes or announcements, those who come to mass on Thanksgiving morning bring bags of groceries with them. They give from the heart, to restock the pantry of our St. Vincent de Paul ministry. Our SVdP feeds hundreds of families, not just Thanksgiving, but every week. However, at holiday times, their ministry is on our minds and we do what we can to support them financially and in the food pantry. So at the offertory, while singing the Taize setting of "In the Lord I'll Be Ever Thankful", folks came forward and filled baskets to overflowing.

At that moment, I had this overwhelming sense of "this is right". People who attend Mass on Thanksgiving Day do so because they want to, not because of obligation or habit. They come to give thanks to God for abundant blessings, to share in sacrament, and to celebrate being part of a bigger picture. Okay, maybe we don't always articulate it that way, but at that Offertory on Thursday, I was taken by the realization that THIS is who we are called to be. And *these folks* embodied that call. They shared their faith in action - feeding the hungry and joining together in thanks. They shared their faith in prayer - the mantra-feel of the song was truly spiritual. As we shared in the Eucharistic meal, the Spirit was palpable. After Communion, we joined our voices in a song of thanks, praise, and prayer for peace. At that point, it didn't matter if the instruments played - our voices raised up a song that was truly prayer, and again the Spirit was very present. *At that moment*, I recognized with clear eyes that what we do makes a difference.

I had another moment the previous week, while attending the St. Cecilia Sing. This event, sponsored by the Cleveland Chapter of the National Pastoral Ministers Association (NPM), is an opportunity to recognize St. Cecilia - patroness of music and musicians - through hymns, psalms, sacred songs, dance, and reflection. At the St. Cecilia Sing, over 100 people from various walks of



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life joined together at St. Noel's because we all value sung prayer. Even though it was a Sunday afternoon (not typically my best time of the week), I attended the event without much expectation. I was blown away by the beauty, preparation, and participation of all who gathered. During one of the songs, I had another moment. As we joined our voices in "Sing Out, Earth and Skies", there was a light-heartedness and true joy that I've missed as I've become mired in the details of life. (This time of year, especially, it's easy to go through the motions and try to tick off items from the to-do list without being very mindful of life around oneself.) [Click here to see a brief video clip of the event.](#) As I looked around, I saw simple joy that music evokes. I appreciated all the more the blessing that my daily job is inextricably entwined with music.

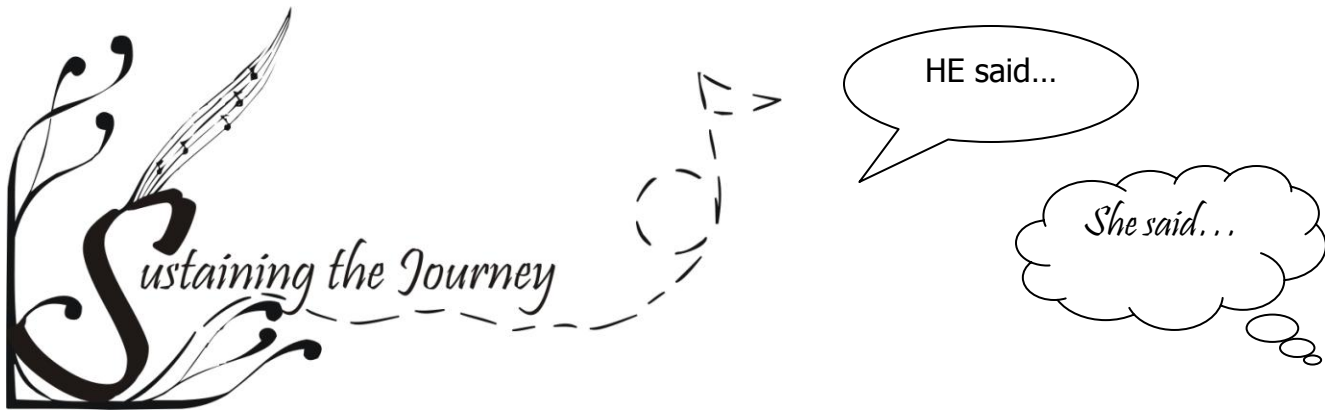
One more moment... this one over Thanksgiving weekend. I've always had a sense that I was called to have a big family. The liveliness and loudness and bustle of needing two refrigerators in the kitchen, yes the sleepless nights, but the joy of having teens that don't mind hanging out on the couch with me - all of this is very comforting to my soul. Because of the fast pace of all of our lives, reality rarely matches the Currier and Ives picture. Most nights, it's grabbing dinner on the go while making sure everyone gets where they need to be, and meaningful relaxed conversation usually means we figure out who needs to get their car out of the driveway first. For the holidays this year, my husband and I have made the conscious decision to try to have fewer expectations, less "have to do" and more "want to do" items, and to savor the *moments*. While spending quality time with each of my offspring (and their significant others), I was struck by how blessed I am to have a houseful of love. Yes it's crazy and loud and not pristinely clean, but to recognize that truly quality human beings have grown up here certainly makes up for some dishes in the sink and only having a luke-warm shower at times. That moment of "this is good" really goes a long way to feed my soul.

Christmas is on a Monday this year. If you are a liturgical minister, this is that most challenging calendar it could possibly be. I think, somehow, these *moments* have helped ease my mind from dread to hopeful anticipation. Do you have a survival strategy yet? My suggestion:

Take time to savor the *moments*.

*Bob's Perspective:*

I spoke briefly about moments worth savoring in our blog of October 15<sup>th</sup> ([Sing It Like You Believe It](#)) and basically suggested that most of these experiences are few and far between. However, as I began to think about this particular topic, I found myself retracing the last forty or



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so years that my ministerial career has spanned. I was actually taken back by the sizable number of memorable moments that had taken place. I recalled the faces of many friends and neighbors, some still with us and many who no longer walk this earthly plain – and brought to mind the significant events that we shared. Event that in hind-sight I apparently savor.

Maybe the old adage, “youth is wasted on the young,” holds a bit of truth. In the brashness of my youth, I didn’t see the significance of such meetings or events. As I have gotten little older, I’ve come to realize that in some ways, I’m just beginning to understand and savor many of those chapters in my story – many of which hold important life-lessons.

I also attended the St. Cecilia Sing that Mary referred to earlier. My experience of what was occurring around us was very much the same – the joy of being together and making music in celebration was a quite moving experience. Again, the key was that we all wanted to be there (to some degree or another), we all slowed down for the moment and took time for ourselves, and we all sang it like we believed it.

Mary and I have a dear friend who has said on many occasions, “We run from one thing, to another to the next - and it’s only at certain times that we’re challenged to stop and reflect on our lives. Do I tell those who are truly close to me that I love them, or do I just assume that they know it? Is there someone to whom I owe an apology or need to accept an apology from?” The quote’s a little loose, but I think you get the idea.

Society is quickly spinning out of control, and many times each of us come dangerously close to getting sucked into the vortex. How do we combat this situation? I think Mary has nailed it right on the head: “Do you have a survival strategy yet? My suggestion: Take time to savor the *moments*.”