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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.

## Reflections of the Poet and the Philosopher...

### *Mary's perspective:*

It has been a year since we started publishing this blog, and anniversaries always cause me to pause and reflect... as I look over the past year, our writing has certainly presented the image of our lives' journey. From thoughts on remaining gainfully employed, to the nuts and bolts of liturgical ministry, to learning to surrender and place our trust in God, the year has not been without challenge. It also has been abundant with grace, though sometimes I need to clear my head to recognize that!

Our pastor once referred to us as the "Dynamic Duo" – spurring multiple conversations on who is Batman and who is Robin – but I digress. To be able to walk the road with a dear friend, one who understands how I think and likes me in spite of that, is truly grace. To have the opportunity to change peoples' lives for the better, on a regular basis, is grace. To be gainfully employed "playing" for a living, is grace. To share the journey with others, both in good times and in bad, is grace.

In a couple of weeks, on February 11, we are offering a talk at St. Mary Magdalene, as we begin the Novena to Our Lady of Lourdes. As we pondered what we wanted to share, I kept coming back to the concept of trust. Although Bob and I are both in the public eye, we are careful to keep our personal lives separate from the public side of ministry. We don't often share our personal challenges, and we are intentionally positive in our work. However, it's hard to address trust without at least acknowledging several elephants in the room.

So, here goes: Bob's wife, Maureen, passed away 18 months ago. Our pastor, Fr. Stephen Kaminski, passed away last year. My youngest daughter has been struggling with a chronic health issue that has caused seizures and pain. The bishop has installed three pastors in three years at our parish – part of a journey that has made me too familiar with finding grace, leadership skills, and calm in my own chaotic life. We understand the need for trust.

I suppose we are a dynamic duo... Bob's the philosopher, the wise owl, who can dispassionately look at situations and see the bigger picture. I'm enamored by the artistry of life. The beauty of flowers (when I walk, I literally do stop to smell them), the joy of coloring, crafting, singing and playing music – my soul is lifted by the poetry of life. And so as we have faced these challenges in life, Bob finds the lesson and sees how perhaps our handling of the struggle is instructive to others. I walk, throw rocks in the lake until I can't lift my arm over my head, color, and sit at the piano for hours hoping my brain can work on the challenge while the rest of me is absorbed in the music. God bless our families, who put up with us!



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My mother-in-law often used to admonish me not to pray for patience, because the only way you know if your prayers are answered is to have your patience tested. Sometimes I wonder if the same is true of trust! So my current prayer is for grace, to accept those challenges in life, to recognize the good that comes out of the challenge, and to travel the road with positivity, even when I don't know where the path leads. May we continue to be uplifted by sharing the journey, and may our work be a blessing to others. And may you be crazy enough to keep coming back and seeing where this blog goes over the next year!

*Bob's perspective:*

As Mary said, a lot has happened in the span of a little over a year. The truth is, we're not unique in that regard – just about anyone reading this can most likely make the same claim. The question is (to put it bluntly): “So what?”

I, for one, don't think that God moves us around the board like little chess pieces. Nor do I necessarily think that good things happen as a reward and bad things happen as a punishment. Sometimes bad things happen to good people and good things happen to bad people. It's just the way of the world. What gives us the fortitude, strength, and conviction to move forward is looking at the incidences of our lives (both good and bad) through the eyes of faith.

When something bad happens in our life, it may possibly be the consequence of something we've done, not as a punishment, but rather as a logical progression of events. Examining not only the event, but circumstances leading up to the event may give us that answer. If the answer isn't apparent, then digging deeper may be necessary. Questioning ourselves as to what good has come out of this may be the next step. Then, there are those times when God decides to intervene in order to teach us (or someone else) a particular lesson. Even in events (good or bad) that are merely the “luck of the draw,” lessons can still be derived.

Case in point: A few months ago, I decided to stop at the casino in Downtown Cleveland. I like to play video poker and usually walk away with a small profit. Behind the casino there is a limited amount of street parking, free after a certain time and when no special events are taking place. As I pulled up, I saw a number of cars already parked and a vacant space, which I soon occupied. I went into the casino for no more than 15 minutes and hit for \$200. Taking a brief moment to thank God for a quick and tidy profit (much more than usual), I gleefully and expediently cashed out with some serious weekend funds and made my way back to the car. However, when I arrived, my car was gone – all the cars were gone! It then occurred to me that I had forgotten that there was a Cavs game that night and so parking had been restricted and we were all towed away.

After uttering a few choice words (not fit to be repeated here – or anywhere for that matter) I flagged down a cab and asked him to take me to the impound lot. When I inquired as to whether he needed directions, he cheerfully



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informed me that he always comes down here before the Cavs play to “chauffer the towees” to the impound lot. “We have it all worked out with the police and the tow trucks,” the cabby informed me. “Is this a great country, or what?” Although slightly irritated, I couldn’t help but burst out laughing. Upon arriving at the lot, I paid the fare – plus a generous tip for the entertainment.

A number of people were waiting in line to pay their fines and spring their cars from imprisonment. From listening to some of the conversations, I was able to deduce that most of them were former “neighbors” from the same parking area. As each person approached the window, they pled their sad cases and hard luck stories in hopes of receiving a leniency that had no chance of happening. Thirty-five minutes later, I arrived at the window. Seeing that the attendee had just about enough, I quietly and politely filled out the form and paid the fine and fees – hopped in my car and took off. In total, after the cab, tip, fine and fees I spent a grand total of \$199.72, leaving me a grand profit of 28 cents (not bad for a couple hours). Needless to say, there wasn’t much partying that weekend.

I can look at this story from a number of angles. Did God give me a gift of \$200 and then rip it away because I intended to squander it? That sounds kind of biblical. Did I do something wrong and so was punished by having my car towed away? Was this a consequence of making an ununiformed or reckless decision? Was this all the luck of the draw (excuse the pun) with no significance beyond the event?

I intended to go out of town afterward, but instead I headed home to lick off my wounds and call it a day. Just as I pulled into my driveway, (half chuckling and half annoyed) my cell phone rang. The caller was a friend that I hadn’t heard from in quite some time. As it turned out, because I wasn’t able to go with my original weekend plans, I wound up spending some time with an old friend that evening who needed a shoulder to cry on and some words of comfort and encouragement – so maybe it was all just about that. Moved on the board like a chess piece? I don’t think so. Sent on a mission to minister? Maybe. Unconditionally loved by God? Always!