

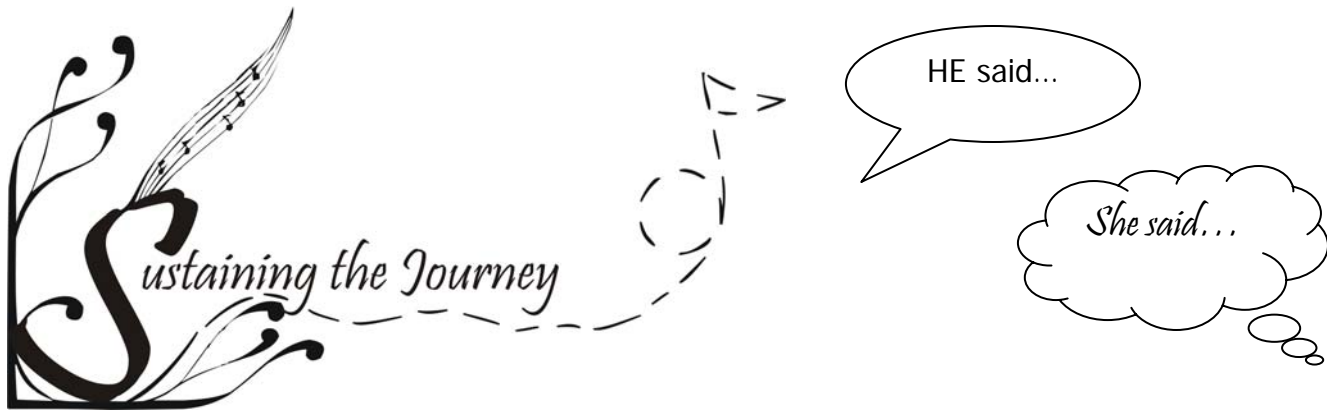
Although sharing much common ground when it comes to philosophy and ministry, often Mary and Bob find themselves approaching ministerial concerns from different angles... *He said - She said* is a venue to share differing perspectives and provide food for thought.

The Journey...Why Didn't Jesus Take the Easy Way?

Bob's Perspective:

There is definitely a fine purpose for the Cycle of Readings. As many times as I've heard (or read) the Passion narratives on Palm Sunday, I always seem to find a nuance that has eluded me in the past. This year the Church proclaimed the Passion according to St. Matthew. As I listened, I heard our Lord's words, "...all who take the sword will perish by the sword." I could almost feel Jesus rolling his eyes at Peter as he spoke. (Although not mentioned by name in this instance, I assume this was Peter from St. John's passion narrative.) Peter, the Rock on whom the Church is built, had probably heard Jesus talk about forgiveness and praying for our persecutors dozens of times (maybe even nodding his head in agreement), but at this moment still didn't quite get it as he hacked off the servant's ear. I asked myself, "Why did the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity do it the hard way? He could have chosen a much easier way, after all he's God." Jesus didn't choose Pharisees or educated aristocracy to be numbered as his Twelve – who then would authoritatively teach in relatively safe places of higher learning. Rather, he took simple, ordinary, maybe semi-educated people who roamed from town to town and place to place, enduring treacherous roads and dangers, talking to anyone would give an ear (no pun intended). Again, I ask, "Why?"

So, I took a little drive out to the country and sat at a spot on the river where my Dad (Pappy) and I frequently fished when I was a kid. As I took in the beautiful scenery, my mind wandered back in time. I closed my eyes and could almost hear Pappy telling me what bait to use and just where to cast in the river to catch some great fish. We both loved going for rock bass – they're great fighters and make for a good meal. Being an out-of-the-box thinker (or maybe just bull-headed), I always had to modify his instructions and usually didn't succeed. By the end of the day, he'd have a stringer full of fish and I had a couple (maybe...if I was lucky). As we would hike back to the car, he'd say "If you would have done as I suggested, you'd have a stringer full too," and then he'd laugh....and so would I because I knew that he was absolutely right. Similar to "Groundhog Day," this same scenario played out dozens of times throughout my youth. Pappy was always hopeful that I'd get what he was saying as I would nod and agree with his words, but at the end of the day he knew that it most likely wouldn't happen – at least not easily.



Pappy was a firm believer in Ockam's Razor which basically states that given a problem, the simplest solution is most likely the right one. In my view, I think that Jesus would have liked Ockam's Razor too. For the most part, our Lord's teachings are very pragmatic (i.e., the two great commandments, don't worry about tomorrow, you're either with me or against me, etc.) – deeply rooted and profound, but definitely not rocket science. However, most human beings (myself included) have to try to find a better way (or a different way). We convolute his teachings with politics, technology, and other multifaceted nonsensical stuff, when the simple way (our Lord's way) is the right way. Sometimes I think that in his humanity, Jesus was hopeful that the people of his time (and us as well) would "get it," but his divine nature knew that it wouldn't be easy – although "with God all things are possible." To that end, the example set in our Lord's ministerial life gave his Church a *modus operandi* – and through his passion, death and resurrection gave us a foretaste of the victory we all can attain (if we're smart enough to follow).

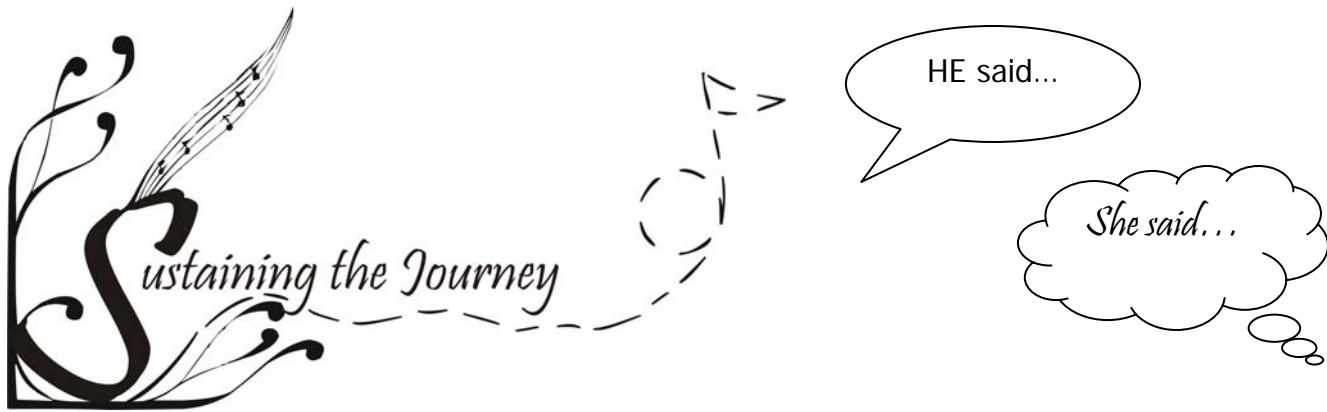
Mary's perspective:

Bob and I have had many conversations about aspects of this blog... everything from pondering why Jesus chose a bunch of knuckleheads as his apostles, to the fact that trust would make things a lot easier. I, too, was struck anew by part of the Passion this year. When I was preparing the documents our readers use for Mass, I read with fresh eyes:

"Do you think that I cannot call upon my Father and he will not provide me at this moment with more than twelve legions of angels? But then how would the Scriptures be fulfilled which say that it must come to pass in this way?"

Back to the initial question – why did Jesus have to do it the hard way?

As we have chatted about this, we both came to the conclusion that we mere mortals sometimes need to learn by example. Certainly, if we follow our Lord's pragmatic teachings, we can mimic his divine nature. However, like the Bob that would go fishing with Pappy, we don't just trust and follow. We, in our humanity, think we may know a better or easier way. We are tempted. We fail. And so we have been provided with pretty straightforward instructions.



But then, when we fail to trust and follow, we have also been provided an example in human form. Perhaps if the apostles had been educated men, well-known and respected, they might have followed instructions. Maybe. But our Lord knew that, in our humanity, we don't always make the right choices. So he showed us how simple men, even when they don't always trust, can go forth and live the call of discipleship. Jesus, truly divine, became human to show us how to live, so that we might see his example, recognize that he endured the human condition, and yet good triumphed over evil. Pretty profound stuff.

Indeed, perhaps if we could all trust, it wouldn't seem like we have a hard path. Why worry – look at the birds of the air and the grass of the field, clothed in the splendor of Solomon... If we trust in God's plan, there is no need for worry. If we love one another as God has commanded, daily life would be much easier.

Easier said than done.

In a few weeks, Bob and I are presenting a talk to a group of Clergy and Music Ministers, about the relationship between the two roles. In our preparations, we keep coming back to trust. As in any work relationship, if there is mutual trust and respect, if each person's charisms are best utilized, growth occurs. In fact, when there is true trust, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

If we – the knucklehead disciples of today's day – trust in God's word, follow the instructions, and live the example, our whole is much greater than the sum of our parts. Yes, we can do things the hard way... or we can simply trust!