

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.

How Do We Rise Again?

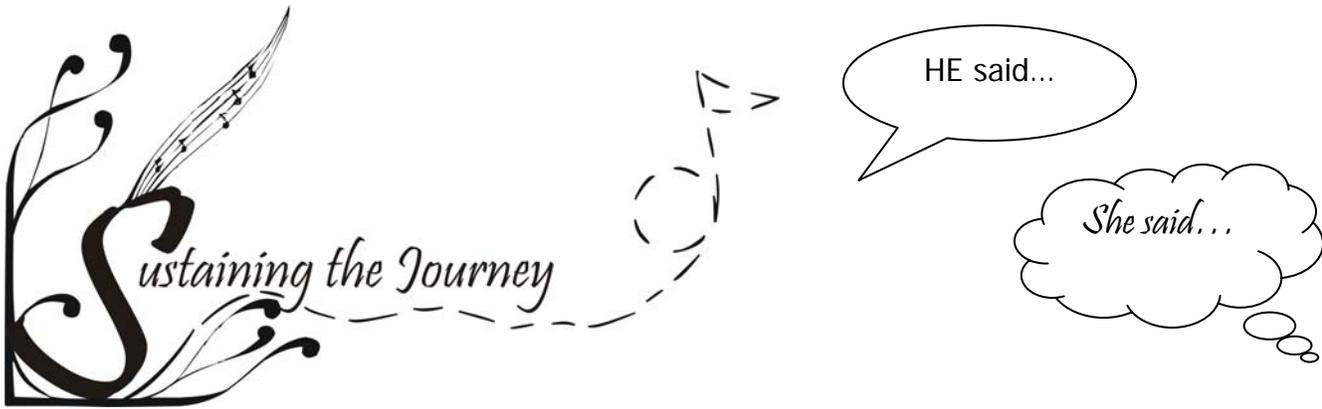
Bob's Perspective:

Working in a sizable parish, I am frequently called upon to provide music for those assembled to participate in a funeral Mass of Christian Burial. During the homily, I am often struck by the wide variety of perspectives that our priests explore at such occasions. One such tact deals with the resurrected body.

The particular priest that I have in mind often brings up the following point: if Jesus was so well known to Mary Magdalene or the disciples heading to Emmaus, how is it that they didn't recognize him after the Resurrection (just a short time after his death) until he said a particular phrase or performed a familiar action? He concludes that although Jesus truly rose from the dead, his body obviously underwent some type of physical metamorphosis. Jesus was the same person in the same body, but somehow significantly different.

Building on his hypothesis, we might consider the butterfly. Although the butterfly doesn't die and come back to life, when it emerges from the cocoon its body is quite different in appearance than when it entered the cocoon as a caterpillar. It's the same little being in the same body, but it's significantly different. As another example, our parish is blessed to be associated with a Parochial School. Over the school year, I get to know a number of students fairly well. Yet, after summer break, I find that some of them grow and mature to a point where I barely recognize them upon their return until we speak to each other or I see them in a familiar context (serving Mass, playing music, etc.). Again, the children don't die and come back to life, but they change significantly.

From yet another perspective, my wife passed away a couple years ago and was cremated (as I will be – hopefully *after* I die). It will be interesting to see how our glorified bodies will turn out after the resurrection on the last day. Other than the obvious (particles reuniting to again form a human body), what will be the transformation? What metamorphosis would I want to see? I can't see how God could make me any more handsome – *just kidding*.



In his exchange with Martha, Jesus assured her that Lazarus would rise again – and she didn't doubt that in the least. But then Jesus switched gears on her, "I am the Resurrection and the Life..." (now giving "resurrection and life" a whole new meaning – a transformation of sorts) after which Martha makes a beautiful profession of faith. Jesus then raises Lazarus from the dead. The Gospel never tells us if Lazarus went through any kind of transformation (other than coming back to life, of course). I sometimes wonder if he changed spiritually or psychologically in some way – similar to cases we often hear regarding those who go through a near-death experience. When you think about it, one would have to admit that for some people, waking up in a tomb - bandaged from head to toe - could be a quite traumatic life changing event to say the least.

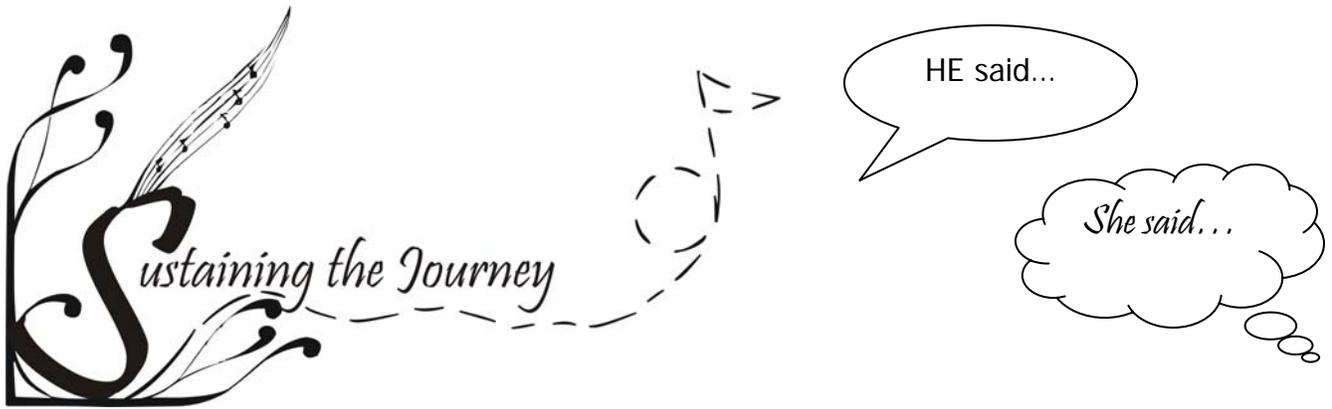
Going back to Jesus' resurrection, maybe his friends didn't recognize him because they weren't looking for him. While it's true that Mary Magdalene was looking for Jesus' body, she wasn't looking for Jesus alive and so didn't expect to encounter him. The Emmaus disciples weren't looking for Jesus at all. In fact, it seems that they had pretty much given up on him at this point - and so never expected to see him again. Or maybe they were in shock from the events that had taken place or in grief or despair – which didn't allow them to immediately see the reality before them.

This whole topic obviously brings up more questions than answers (of which I have none). There are so many lessons that the Resurrection presents – lessons about how we die and rise in our daily lives. When die to sin we rise to holiness. When we die to despair we rise to hope. When we die to doubt we rise to faith. When we die to hatred we rise to love. In all of these cases we experience a metamorphosis of sorts - significant transformation.

My conclusion: If we are only looking down to see the caterpillar, we may never look up to see the butterfly.

Mary's perspective:

I've spent quite a bit of time recently pondering transformation... from Triduum through the stories of Pentecost, our scriptures are rich with images that stretch the mind's eye. In my own household, these past few weeks have been momentous - one son graduating from college and another from high school have given me reason to marvel at their transformation. No longer little boys, shorter than me, they are fine young men (proud Mommy moment!), and their sisters, too, make my heart swell with gratitude.



When I meet with families grieving the loss of a loved one, I frequently remind them of our faith: that life is changed, not ended. While there is a tiny part of me that misses those days when the babies were little, I need to let go so that they could grow to fill their destiny. We've talked over the years about roots and wings - as a parent, with God's grace, I hope to instill roots and wings so they always know they have a home, but can extend the full breadth of their wingspan to reach the heavens. I think the blessing of seeing young people grow is God's way of showing that we may not be able to predict what our resurrected bodies will look like, but we can surely trust that transformation will occur.

As I reflect on the future, there's a lot that I don't know. I'm not sure where Sustaining the Journey will take us. I don't know what careers my children will ultimately celebrate. We are a diocese in transition, in a city that is changing remarkably, and I don't know what either will look like in as little as 10 years. What I do know is *change will happen*. Life is changed, not ended, and our earthly bodies may not resemble our resurrected bodies - but I agree that we need to be open to the transformation, open to the Spirit...open to seeing the butterfly.

My blog entries may take a hiatus for a while as we look to the next chapter. Whether you are a writer or musician, a parent inspired by your children, or enjoying your sunset years, may we all take the time to listen for the Spirit's gentle breath, to be restored in these warm summer days, and know with confidence that resurrection happens. Perhaps think of that the next time you see a butterfly!