

September 15 2020

Dear Friends,

For the past 15 years, I have had both the privilege and the responsibility of being the President of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas. I stepped down from that position last week, handing the keys of office to my successor, Dr. Scott Woodward.

I leave this office with a feeling of gratitude. The fifteen years here have been good years. I am proud of where the school has grown to, and I am happy with what those fifteen years have brought into my own life in terms of Oblate community, Oblate ministry, friendships, opportunities for growth, and graces of every kind. I'm deeply grateful.

What's next for me? The word on the street is that I "have retired". Not exactly, and not even close! I have stepped down as President, but not into retirement. I will still be working, full-time, except no longer in administration. I will remain here at Oblate School of Theology as a full-time faculty member and will continue to teach within all three levels of our Spirituality Institute, particularly in our PhD program where I will also be directing theses. But the freedom from administrative tasks will afford me much more quality time to write and, beginning already next week, I will start to work on a book on what is asked of us in our autumn years and how, in the end, we are asked "to give our deaths away". The book will complete the trilogy of *The Holy Longing* and *Sacred Fire*. I will, of course, continue to write my weekly column and plan a series of articles for *The Tablet* on "Chastity as our Lost Virtue".

The plan is to stay here at the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas, as long as my health permits me to be productive. I am a two-time cancer survivor, still undergoing ongoing chemotherapy, so I leave it to God and the wonderful cancer specialists in South Texas to determine how long that will be. In discerning what I should do after stepping down as President here a number of signs converged to suggest that I stay here and continue to work at Oblate School of Theology.

What conspired to suggest that decision? i) Given my age and my ongoing treatment for cancer, this is probably not a good time to launch out into a new mission; ii) my ministry and work for the past 15 years has been here so what makes the most practical sense is to simply continue here; iii) the programs I most want to teach in are here in our Spirituality Institute; iv) I am better resourced as a writer and theologian when I am in an academic milieu and being on faculty here provides that; v) I am already directing a number of students in their PhD theses and do not want to abandon them; vi) I am very much still responsible for our *Forest-Dwelling* program here which I believe is an important program and which I want to help thrive and grow; vii) finally, and not least, I am living within a good Oblate community and working at a school which is doing important Oblate work. I am not sure I would find as valuable a ministry for me elsewhere at this stage of my life.

So, I have moved offices, but not residences or ministry.

Now that I am free of most administrative duties, I am looking forward to having some less-pressured time for prayer, for study, for teaching, and for writing ... and especially for friendship and family.

Thank you all for your friendship, prayers, and support these past years – and for your forgiveness for the many times I found myself too busy to be present to you as I should.

Peace

Ron Rolheiser OMI

