

December 19, 2022

## **Merry Christmas! May this find you well and celebrating!**

What marked 2022 most for me?

First, this was a year of good health. For the first time since 2014, I spent a year without any form of cancer treatment – no chemo, no chemo drugs. Thanks to a surgery at MD Anderson in Houston in July of 2021, I enjoyed full health and full energy this year. I am deeply grateful for this, though I remain conscious of the lingering fact that my cancer is in remission rather than cured and that I live by my oncologist's good graces (who deals out the assurance of good health to me in 6 month dosages.) My next scan is set for late January. So prayers for my health are still appreciated.

It has been a very busy year! I remain a full-time faculty member here and, trust me, it is "full time" – teaching, directing theses, giving lectures to various groups here and elsewhere, working in two national *Forest-Dwelling* programs, writing, helping with fundraising, serving on various boards, and trying to stay on top of emails and other correspondence. No complaints though. There's something worse than having too much to do ... having nothing to do. With Covid restrictions less severe, I have also been on the road a lot this year, including a number of jaunts to Canada (where I hadn't been since the onset of Covid). It was good to touch some Canadian soil again.

It was a year of a couple of major milestones. In October, within the span of one week, I celebrated both my 75<sup>th</sup> birthday and the 50<sup>th</sup> year of my ordination. I am a three-time cancer-survivor, so being healthy for my 75<sup>th</sup> birthday was not something I took for granted. I exhaled deeply in gratitude. The same holds true for 50 years of ordination. They have been good years, and I have been wonderfully blessed in the ministries assigned to me. Looking back, all I can say is "thanks". As well, on November 11, 1982, my first "*In Exile*" column was published. Forty years later, the column is in more than 70 newspapers. One more such highlight. In May, my grand-niece, Maxine, asked me to be her godfather for her Confirmation. What an honor, and what a delight!

What's next for me? The plan (insofar as one may plan at 75) is to stay here at Oblate School of Theology as long as health and energy allow, and then move back to Canada to an Oblate residence. Right now, prayerful discernment and good sense dictate that I should continue on here, i.e., my work is here, I am useful here, and I am needed here. Among other things, in dialogue with the Oblates in Canada, Oblate School of Theology is in the process of setting up my archives here.

In terms of my writing, I had a disappointing year in that I was unable to finish the book that I have been working on for last couple of years, a book on Aging and Dying, to complete the trilogy of *The Holy Longing*, *Sacred Fire*, and *Insane for the Light*. It is three-quarters finished,

but neither the publisher nor I am happy with that. Writing the column for another year has been a happier experience.

Underneath all of that, how am I? Essentially, good. I am at peace, working with full energy, much enjoying the wonderfully interesting work that constitutes my “job”, and undeservedly surrounded by a supporting family, community, and friends. I am considerably more settled in terms of restlessness than ever before in my life, am finding my sense of humor still intact, and am trying to ready myself to face with courage and peace the many letting goes that will no doubt face me in the coming months and years. I no longer nurse any false sense that life somehow owes me something. What has been is miracle enough, and what still will be is pure bonus.

I love the line from Karl Rahner, where he writes that “*At Christmas, God gives us permission to be happy!*” Take that to heart, we get few enough permissions of this sort!

Merry Christmas!

Ron Rolheiser