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Sunday Morning

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the differences are out in the open, contribute to the rich mix of ideas, and generally are worked through professionally and without feuding or rancor. We like each other, and that is a blessing easily overlooked because we are quite used to it.

As the day of retirement draws near and I think back, I believe that it was God's providence that led me, via obedience to the Abbot and the needs of the community, to the teaching of liturgy. It may not have been, initially, my own fervid choice, but it has been an area of study and work that has captured my interest and enthusiasm sufficiently enough for it to have been a satisfying "career." More importantly, it has been God's way of keeping me near to my central monastic vocation, to theological and personal *lectio*, to the vibrant center of the church's pastoral life, despite the vacillations, fidelities, and failures of my own spiritual journey. I do not think that teaching *Beowulf*, Shakespeare, Keats, O'Connor, or Hemingway would have been, for me, as grace-filled. Still, I have been distanced enough from the work that it does not define who I am, and I am able to put it aside without regret or anxiety. And I am sure that the future, as the past, is in God's hands. There is no safer place.

To end, I want to share what I wrote last year in my letter to Bill Cahoy telling him of my intent to retire in the Spring of 2008:

I have especially appreciated the courage of the SOT in maintaining its high intellectual and pastoral standards and strong centrist approach to theology in the Catholic academy (grounded in history, the fathers, the monastic ethos and without being beholden to any theological 'school') especially over the past more than 25 years, as the official Catholic Church moved and continues to move further and further away, in fact if not in rhetoric, from the rich promise of Vatican II. Its retrograde moves, especially in the area of worship and liturgy, have been the cause of considerable pain for me, and are also a small part of my decision to retire at this time.

Be assured that my fond regards, moral support, and best wishes for you, the School of Theology, its faculty, staff, alums, and current students is strong and will continue to be so long into the future. †



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