

# I'm not going back to school: Musings on my retirement



*“All changes, even the most longed for, have their melancholy; for what we leave behind us is a part of ourselves; we must die to one life before we can enter another.”*

*-Anatole France, French journalist, novelist, poet (1844-1924)*

**For the first time in my life, I am not getting ready to go back to school.**

My friends in education have been entrenched for the past two weeks in faculty meetings, new student orientations, and classroom preparations. And I have not been caught up in this educators' season of “August, the month of Sundays.”

My summer, on the other hand, has included travel (from South Florida to Northwestern New York), special family events, and projects around the house. Most mornings have found me drinking coffee on the deck, reading the morning newspapers, and planning my low stress to-do list. There were no meetings, retreat prep, liturgical planning, or the juggling of orientation schedules.

## **Trusting in God's Providence:**

I made a huge move three months and announced my retirement after 33 years of ministry at The John Carroll School. My husband had just retired at the end of March after almost 48 years in the business world. We prayed and discerned when might be the right time for me to join him in this new stage of our life together.

Our trip to Italy in April found me praying privately at each basilica, shrine, and chapel, as well as the tomb of St. Francis, and St. Peter's Basilica for an affirming

sign from “Up High” and a sense of peace that this was the right thing to do.

My husband though was the one who sealed the deal when he told me, “I’m healthy and you’re healthy. We deserve to have some fun while we are able after all our years of hard work.” George’s words came from the heart, recalling the early death of his first wife fourteen years ago. As for me, I agreed, understanding exactly where he was coming from... I had spent many years working closely with families who were going through crisis... whether it was serious illness, death, or a multitude of tragedies which would strike at any time at any age. Yes, we needed to step back and enjoy the journey ahead.



So now, after over 80 combined years in our respective careers, George and I are retired.

Almost everyone I encountered this summer asked me how I was enjoying my new retirement. And I always replied that it felt like summer vacation. And it has.

Until now.

Our public schools are back in session today and most of the private and Catholic schools are holding orientations and gradual openings. So it is finally sinking in that I am indeed retired.

One of my other newly-retired friends emailed me this morning and asked, “Doesn’t it feel a bit strange – and strangely wonderful – to not be starting school today?”

The answer is yes. It is exciting to officially start this new chapter in our lives. But it is a bittersweet time as well. My heart is heavy as I will dearly miss the kids at school. They were the ones who inspired me for more than three decades to be ready to meet each new day and new challenge. I hold all of them close in my heart this week.... as I do their cousins, parents, aunts and uncles, and friends who also passed through the doorways of my John Carroll office and classroom over these many years.

And I will certainly miss my dear school friends. There are a handful of women and men who have been like family to me over the years. Our shared experiences and friendships have gotten me through the tough days and, though we will always be close, I will miss our daily interactions, morning coffee klatches, and lunch breaks.

***“You are never too old to set another goal or dream a new dream...” —C.S. Lewis***

As for now, George and I are getting busy with our bucket list. We have lots of good things to tackle, many of which were previously set aside for when we had more time. Family, grandchildren, travel, hobbies, and good times with friends top our collective list. My personal list includes lots of long-term tasks, especially a number of archival projects that I started working on this summer.

### **As for the work that I loved and leave behind:**

Change is good for everyone involved.

I wish all the best to the two people who were hired to take my place at school. I know that Gary and Michelle will bring new energy and new ideas to the school community. Their work is in my heart and prayers always. And many best wishes to all my friends, colleagues, and students who are starting a new school year: Godspeed!!

As I conclude this retirement blog, I recall the poignant prayer that has long been attributed to Archbishop Oscar Romero. It speaks so eloquently of how we who minister, by our work, do plant and water the seeds for a future that we will not see:

And such is life as I venture on to the start of retirement.

May God be with each one of us on the road of life as we transition into a new normal. Amen.

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**Archbishop Oscar Romero Prayer:**

*It helps, now and then, to step back and take the long view.*

*The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is beyond our vision.*

*We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that  
is God's work.*

*Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying that the kingdom always  
lies beyond us.*

*No statement says all that could be said.*

*No prayer fully expresses our faith.*

*No confession brings perfection.*

*No pastoral visit brings wholeness.*

*No program accomplishes the church's mission.*

*No set of goals and objectives includes everything.*

*This is what we are about:*

*We plant seeds that one day will grow.*

*We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.*

*We lay foundations that will need further development.*

*We provide yeast that produces effects beyond our capabilities.*

*We cannot do everything and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.*

*This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.*

*It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for  
God's grace to enter and do the rest.*

*We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master*

*builder and the worker.*

*We are workers, not master builders, ministers, not messiahs.*

*We are prophets of a future not our own.*

—Archbishop Oscar Romero\*, martyred Archbishop of San Salvador (1917-1980)

\*This prayer was composed by Bishop Ken Untener of Saginaw, drafted for a homily by Cardinal John Dearden in Nov., 1979 for a celebration of departed priests. As a reflection on the anniversary of the martyrdom of Bishop Romero, Bishop Untener included in a reflection book a passage titled “The mystery of the Romero Prayer.” The mystery is that the words of the prayer are attributed to Oscar Romero, but they were never spoken by him. —USCCB Website

