

Copy (on Harvard letter head)

March 3, 1988

Dear Roger,

I have just written to Fr. Dimnik thanking him for his letter announcing that I had been elected a Visiting Fellow of the Institute. I am both sad and happy that I have declined this great honor. Sad, because the thought of returning to PIMS and sharing all your wonderful knowledge and friendship and the joys of the library and research are tremendously tempting. Happy, because yesterday I did receive a tenure-track job offer. It is a position as Church Historian in the Divinity School at Duke University.

It will certainly be a tremendous challenge for me, with my Catholic background. The students are mostly United Methodists. The Dean (Dennis Campbell) and I talked at great length about this very fact, but he really wants someone in the Catholic tradition to present the patristics and medieval church history to the students in a way that will make them feel this is their heritage, too. I also talked about this with David Steinmetz, who as I understand is an old friend of yours from Harvard. He has a lot of respect for you. We hit it off very well. They were particularly interested in the fact that I am interested in the pastoral task for which their students are preparing, and want to try to make the patristic and medieval texts relevant to them as pastors in the U.S.A. today. Quite a challenge, indeed, but close to my heart.

They are very eager for me to offer such courses as "The History of the Liturgy," or "Baptism in late antiquity and the Middle Ages"! All the kinds of things I've been longing to teach but haven't been able to. Monasticism, Canon Law, people like Gregory of Tours or Caesarius of Arles-- it all seems pretty wonderful.

Also, I have already made contact with a lot of medievalists in the area. I knew David Ganz, working on the Corbie script at Chapel Hill, and he came over for my lecture (asked me a question about Theodulf!). Francis Gordon does paleography. I didn't know, but he told me, that Jim Hankins was his star student. David Steinmetz is really in Reformation studies, but he's been doing the earlier stuff. Many other people I met were very interested in my work, and there is a wonderful positive spirit about the place-- students and faculty. I had to do a lot of thinking and praying about going in the direction of Divinity School, but it just means a great deal to me, I realize, to work with people who are seriously committed to the study of the church for reasons that are going to help people understand our divisions.

I cannot thank you enough for your overwhelming recommendation for me for the Visiting Fellowship, as well as what you said to Professor Adler at East Carolina. (That, in fact, was a most touching visit. I truly enjoyed the people there, partly because they were so down to earth and no airs about knowledge. They offered the job to someone else anyway-- Adler told me he was surprised at how many applications he got from Toronto!)

I sort of have the feeling that people at PIMS might be thinking I viewed the Visiting Fellowship simply as a "if nothing else comes through." This is far from true, and probably if any other job but Duke's had come through I would prefer to be at PIMS, even without stipend. I still do hope that I will be able to come there as a Visiting Fellow. Duke is very positive about research and the teaching load is not that heavy.

I think I remember Fr. O'Donnell-- with snow white hair? I'm sorry PIMS has lost such a friend, but for him-- onward and upward! Last night I found out that a close girl friend of mine from Davidson died in a car crash. Boy, does it put our daily quibbles in perspective.

A billion thanks again for all your recommendations. I feel very, very blessed to have you for such a wonderful friend. It has only been through your constant mediatorship of my career and your faith in me that the Duke offer came about. Its a new path, and I ask all your prayers to meet the challenge.

As always
From