

My friends,

Sad to say it's been a long time since we have been together for Mass and parish occasions. What started as light discomfort progressed to serious pain and 4 visits to the ER, bringing very little relief. You have been in my thoughts and prayers the entire time. Thank you for all your prayers. Please keep me in your thoughts and prayers. They have been, and are, greatly appreciated.

What was a hope to get better and be able to return to the parishes took a dramatic turn. I had a few falls, with the fall on Nov 13 being severe. I had fallen in my room and damaged my spinal cord. I fell and was unable to get up. I was taken by ambulance and immediately had spinal surgery, only to be followed by a second spinal surgery. After progressing at Eden Hospital, I was transferred to the Summit Acute Rehab Center where I have been since.

It has not been a secret that I am a member of the Eastern Coast region of the Conventual Franciscans; and that province/region immediately began arranging for me to return to the East Coast, which is now scheduled for January 14th.

At this time, I would like to thank Fr. Victor, the Provincial here in California, for his confidence in me in presenting my name to Bishop Barber, and then the Bishop's appointment of me as the Pastor for the 'cluster' of Transfiguration and Our Lady of Grace Churches. Thank you also to Fr. Luke, Fr. Kevin and Fr. Paul, not forgetting Deacons Tim, Marty, John and Burt, and all who assisted during these months when I was unable. It has been an honor, privilege and pleasure to have been a part of the life of the parishes and to have experienced the effort of having both Our Lady of Grace and Transfiguration Churches become comfortable with each other and share in their sacramental and social lives. Please know that many memories will remain in my mind and heart. Life is good in Castro Valley. May your commitment to the Church continue to be lived out each and every day. My presence here as Pastor has been cut short, but know that our bond of faith, hope and love remain. Thank you for welcoming me to your faith communities so warmly. From day one I felt a part of these communities. Know that I am taking part of who you are with me. God's blessings. Please say a prayer for me every once in a while.

Fr. Raphael Zwolenkiewicz, OFM Conv.

My new address:

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