

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

With the close of the Christmas season and the feast of the Baptism of the Lord last Sunday, we now transition into the liturgical season known as Ordinary Time. Despite the name “ordinary,” this is not a “less important” time, but rather a period for counting the weeks (the *ordinal* numbers) of Christ’s life and ministry, a season of growth and maturation. The liturgical green symbolizes this life and growth, as we seek to deepen our understanding of Jesus’ teachings (his *parables*) and apply them to our everyday lives.

Most of you are aware, Fr. Raphael wrote his farewell letter to us last Sunday. And at the 11:00 AM livestream Mass at our Church of the Transfiguration, we said goodbye to him. On January 13, 2026, Fr. Raphael flew back to Connecticut and entered the nursing facility of the Felician Sisters. I am truly grateful for his willingness to come out from his eastern province to help our cluster community even in a short period of time. I always enjoyed living and working with Fr. Raphael. His joyful heart and faithful service to the cluster will be remembered. In many ways he has given us an example of servant leadership so beautifully, and I look forward to continuing to build upon the vibrant community that he fostered. While we say goodbye with heavy hearts, we also look forward with hope, confident that God has great things in store for Our Lady of Grace – Transfiguration Parish Cluster here in Castro Valley. Let us continue to pray for Fr. Raphael as he makes a transition to his next chapter. We pray God's richest blessings upon him and his caregivers so that he may have full recovery and strength.

Now I direct your attention to the announcement this weekend “Vietnam/Philippines Typhoon Disaster Relief.” Our Vietnamese and Filipino brother priests of our diocese have written to our Bishop Barber out of deep concern for the suffering in their home dioceses in Vietnam and the Philippines. Both have suffered much damage to life and property. Given the pain and suffering to our brothers and sisters, and with the unanimous consent of the Presbyteral Council, Bishop Barber has authorized pastors to take up a voluntary second collection between now and February 1st to aid typhoon disaster relief in Vietnam and the Philippines. Please consider helping our brothers and sisters. This is not just about disaster relief; it's about living out our faith in a real, tangible way, reflecting God's commandment to love our neighbors as ourselves. Thank you for your generosity.

May God richly bless you for your compassionate hearts and generous spirits.

Fr. Luke  
Parochial Administrator