

Dear Parishioners,

Many of you have heard me talk about spiritual pilgrimages to faraway holy places. This year my spiritual pilgrimage at home through Lent into the Easter season was most difficult.

I was sick the entire month of February. Weak, tired, with little energy. But I didn't know why. A visit to my doctor didn't help.

On Friday, March 2nd, I went to the emergency room of UPMC Mercy Hospital in Pittsburgh. I was admitted into the hospital for many tests. The doctors determined I had bacteria on the aortic valve of my heart. I needed open heart surgery to replace this valve.

I was transferred to UPMC Presby Hospital, where I was operated on Thursday, March 8th. The operation was a success, but the surgeon had told me that the road to recovery would be long and slow.

Through the care of nurses, doctors and technicians, and with your prayers, I have moved from the intensive care unit at Presby, to a step-down unit, to a week's stay in a regular hospital bed.

As you read this, I am in a nursing rehabilitation facility in the South Hills of Pittsburgh, for physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy and rest. Many more weeks of recovery are ahead of me on this physical and spiritual pilgrimage—how many nobody knows.

I am most grateful for everyone's prayers. Thanks to our priests and pastoral staff for taking such good care of our wonderful New Castle parishes. I am slowly getting stronger. I am sustained on this pilgrimage toward full health by God's love and your support.

May Christ the Divine Physician be there for all who are sick in our parishes and families. Pray for me, as I keep you in my prayers.

***Father Frank D. Almada
Pastor***