

# Former Annapolis and Baltimore pastor paralyzed in freak accident

By George P. Matysek Jr.

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Redemptorist Father John Murray, former pastor of St. Mary, Annapolis, and St. Wenceslaus, Baltimore, was paralyzed from the chest down in a freak accident Aug. 27.

During his morning stroll on the boardwalk in Long Beach, N.J., the 62-year-old priest fell and hit his head on a railing. He was rushed to the Jersey Shore Medical Center, where he underwent emergency spinal cord surgery. He is now undergoing rehabilitation at the Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation in West Orange, N.J.

Father Murray is a former weekly columnist for The Catholic Review. For the last 11 years, his ministry has focused on preaching across the East Coast. He has spoken many times at parishes within the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

"You always preach about learning to accept the cross," Father Murray said in a Sept. 13 telephone interview from his hospital bed. "This is a cross that God permitted to happen and I won't fight it or resist it and I won't even complain about it. You embrace the cross because it's the way to the kingdom. I really believe that."

Father Murray, who has been in residence at the San Alfonso Retreat House in Long Branch, N.J., said he has been overwhelmed by the support of former parishioners. He has received about 30 letters a day since the accident. Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien has also written and called.

"The people are very good," he said. "It's very, very touching. I appreciate their prayers. Grace always comes as a result of prayer."

Father Murray will undergo rehabilitation for 12 weeks. He believes he will likely spend the rest of his life in a wheelchair and hopes to continue his ministry by

preaching on a Redemptorist web site.

"I recognize what's happened as a cross and I'm learning to carry my cross," he said. "I had a very active ministry and, now, I'm preaching more by a quiet witness of faith."

*Cards may be sent to Father John Murray, c/o Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation, 1199 Pleasant Valley Way, West Orange, N.J. 07052.*