

## DIOCESE OF ST. PETERSBURG

Office of the Chancellor

*Mailing Address:*  
Post Office Box 40200  
St. Petersburg, FL 33743-0200  
[www.dosp.org](http://www.dosp.org)

*Office:*  
6363 Ninth Avenue North  
St. Petersburg, Florida 33710  
727-344-1611  
Fax: 727-345-3086

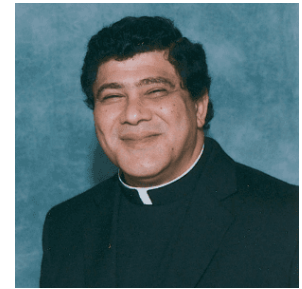
### MEMORANDUM

TO: Priests and Parishes in the Diocese,  
Pastoral Center, Bethany Center,  
Calvary Catholic Cemetery, and Spirit FM Staff

FROM: Deacon Rick Wells, J.C.L., Chancellor for Canonical Affairs  
*RW*

RE: Death of Rev. Rafael E. Martos

DATE: August 19, 2024



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The Chancellor's Office was saddened to learn of the passing of **Reverend Rafael Eduardo Martos Nimer, 64**, Administrator of San Juan Diego Mission, Dover, on Friday, August 16, 2024, at Advent Health Hospital, Tampa, following a months-long battle with cancer.

Father Martos was born in Santiago de Cuba, Cuba and was ordained to the priesthood for the Archdiocese of Santiago de Cuba on September 12, 1996. After serving his home diocese for four years, he learned of the need for Spanish-speaking priests in the Diocese of St. Petersburg and arrived here in 2000, where he was assigned as Parochial Vicar of St. Anne Parish, Ruskin (2000-2005). This was followed by appointments as Parochial Vicar of St. Rita Parish, Dade City (2005-2008), and St. Clement Parish, Plant City (2008-2013). In 2013, he was assigned as Chaplain to the Migrant Apostolate in the Dover area of east Hillsborough County, while providing assistance to St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Seffner.

In 2018, Father Martos returned to St. Clement Parish, where he was once again assigned as Parochial Vicar, with pastoral and administrative oversight of the migrant community within the parish boundaries. Several years earlier, the community had adopted the name "San Juan Diego Mission." On July 1, 2023, Bishop Parkes formally established San Juan Diego Mission as a mission of the Diocese of St. Petersburg and officially appointed Father Martos as its first Administrator. Today, weekend attendance at Masses at the Mission typically averages between 1,000 and 1,200.

In addition to his ministry in parishes and his leadership to the Mission, during his years in our diocese, Father Martos also served as chaplain of the following ministries: Dialogo Matrimonio MDS, Movimiento Parroquial Juan XXIII, and the Spanish-speaking Cursillo movement.

Father Martos was preceded in death by his parents, Manuel and Martha (Nimer) Martos. Surviving family members include Father Martos' brothers, Ramon, Manuel, and Carlos, along with surviving cousins, nieces, nephews, and many extended family members.

During a recent hospitalization, and fully aware of his rapidly declining health, Father Martos requested that Bishop Parkes receive him as an incardinated priest of our diocese. On Thursday, August 15, 2024, he was effectively incardinated as a priest of the Diocese of St. Petersburg, exactly one week after his 64<sup>th</sup> birthday and one day before his passing into eternal life.

**All funeral arrangements will take place on Saturday, August 31, 2024, at San Juan Diego Mission (Catholic Charities' San Jose Mission building), 3238 San Jose Mission Drive, Dover and are as follows:**

**Visitation: 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., immediately prior to the Funeral Mass**

**Funeral Mass: 12:00 p.m.  
Bishop Gregory Parkes will preside.**

**Burial arrangements have not yet been finalized, but the burial will immediately follow the Funeral Mass on August 31<sup>st</sup>.**

Expressions of sympathy may be sent to the family of Rev. Rafael E. Martos, c/o San Juan Diego Mission, at the above address.

Please keep Father Martos' family members, loved ones, and members of San Juan Diego Mission in your kind thoughts and prayers as they grieve the loss of their brother, uncle, friend, and dear priest.

*"He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, [for] the old order has passed away." – Revelation 21:4*