

As most St. Anthony's parishioners know if they have attended Mass lately, I fell through a rotten board in my deck on Oct. 6. I wound up with a broken rib and a right leg bruised from hip to ankle. It could have been so much worse.

I live alone on a street in the woods in South Beach where no one is home during the day except for an elderly neighbor who could not have heard me no matter how loudly I screamed. My foot plunged through the board and my leg was stuck up to my knee. The rest of me fell backwards

across the end of the deck. My cell phone, which I had been using to take fog photos, flew out of my hand.

I had to get out of that predicament by myself. It was not the first time I'd fallen in my yard, but it was the worst. Mustering all my strength, I pushed myself up onto the deck and pulled my leg out, gingerly checking it for broken bones. It was intact, with only scrapes and bruises. I carefully got up and found I could walk. "Oh God, thank you!" I said. Looking back, I know He must have helped me push myself up. I'm overweight, I don't get enough exercise, and I had a broken rib. But it felt easy. I had help.

I waited all day to go to the hospital. My injuries didn't seem so bad, although I had a persistent pain in my back. I was watching TV that night when I felt something pop in my ribs. A minute later, I sneezed and felt unbearable pain. I couldn't catch my breath. I knew I had to go to the hospital.

A couple years ago, I had an intense pain at night and drove myself to the hospital in Newport, even though I could barely stand. I might have been having a heart attack. I wasn't, but that was foolish. This time, I called a young neighbor. She was out of town, but said she would come home if I could wait 40 minutes for her to get there. No. Too long. I was shaking all over and still struggling to breathe. I called 911 and experienced my first ambulance ride. I put myself in the hands of other people. I'm not good at that, but it felt wonderful reaching out for a helping hand and finding it.

After X-rays and a diagnosis, they said I could go home, but how? I rolled through my list of

**WE ARE NOT ALONE**

**YOU ARE NOT  
ALONE**

**By**

**SUE LICK**

friends and sighed. My closest emergency contacts had moved away, but Teresa Grady had volunteered a while back when I said I needed a name to put on my forms. When I called, she didn't hesitate to drive all the way from Waldport at midnight to rescue me.

The next day, she and Tim brought me Lidocaine patches, Tylenol, and a giant bag of food for my dog Annie. The following day, after Saturday Mass, Martha Embley, Karen Eibner, and Paul and Evelyn Brookheiser came to my house with Communion, flowers, prayers, and dinner. Anything you need, just call, they said.

Father Joseph texted me, sending links to the Masses, checking on how I was. Karen brought more food. My young neighbor brought more flowers. You're not alone, everyone said. We love you. When I returned to the piano on Saturday, I found two wonderful soft pillows and a card. Thank you, Lisa Hoffman. They feel so good.

I'm tearing up as I write this. With my husband gone and no children, I often feel very alone, but I'm not. I have my St. Anthony family, and I have Jesus, who was there to help me up. My deck has been repaired, the weak boards replaced. I still hurt a bit. I will for a while, but it's not that bad. Don't worry.

In talking to other parishioners who live alone, I believe we need to join forces to help each other. My Advent plan is to start organizing something for us "elder orphans." We may be alone in our houses, but we are not alone in our community.