

Date: March 26, 2020

TO: All Pastors and Administrators

From: Sister Veronica Schueler, F.S.E.  
Chancellor and Delegate for Catholic Health Care

RE: Hospital Visits

### **Mercy Medical Center**

- Mercy Medical Center is permitting priests to provide final rites or the sacrament of the sick, as long as the priest has successfully passed the COVID-19 screening criteria, is trained on how to don and doff protective equipment, and has agreed to wear the required medical grade PPE.
- The priest should go to the normal screening station at the upper entrance to gain access. If he has any challenges entering after explaining the special circumstances of the visit, he can contact David Price, Mission Leader at 541-580-9398. This number should be used only if absolutely necessary.

### **PeaceHealth System**

- All of the hospitals in the Oregon Network have been under strict visitor restrictions since the morning of March 18, 2020. There are no visitors in the hospital with limited exceptions, such as two support people for patients at end-of-life. There are no visitors for any suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients.
- Father Joseph Echeme is attending to all of the sacramental needs of Catholic patients. He is connected with Fr. David Brown to ask local pastors to contact the Spiritual Care department if they need to visit a parishioner so that he or one of the chaplains can facilitate the visit, while also discerning if it is possible for the pastor to offer pastoral care by other means (by phone and with family) while Fr. Echeme provides the sacrament.
- All chaplains receive regular training in the proper donning and doffing of personal protective equipment (PPE) and the staff are assessing opportunities for visits by phone with patients who are in isolation unless it is absolutely necessary for the priest or chaplain to enter the room wearing appropriate PPE.
- Father Echeme may be reached at [jecheme@peacehealth.org](mailto:jecheme@peacehealth.org)

### **Providence Health and Services**

The administration of Providence Health and Services has asked that prior to coming to a Providence hospital, all clergy contact the Director of Spiritual Care of the hospital. In hospitals with priest chaplains, those clergy will provide the sacraments in the safest manner according to current restrictions in place at the hospital. All hospitals are

experiencing a severe shortage of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), such as face masks and gowns. Therefore, please note the following:

- Providence asks that all clergy wishing to make visits contact the Director of Spiritual care first for guidance about the protective measures currently in place.
- Priest chaplains on staff will do all they can to provide the sacraments to those requesting them. Providence St. Vincent and Providence Portland Medical Center have priests covering through the night who are willing ensure the sacraments are provided. Where Providence does not have 24/7 in house coverage, it will make every effort to provide access, within current restrictions.
- Providence has enacted a no-visitor rule for isolated patients. However, they have exceptions for those at the end of life and other emergencies. A priest should be admitted to the dying patient if no staff priest is available. If the patient is COVID- positive or presumptive positive, admittance may depend on the current availability of PPE supplies, which are critically low. This is another reason for contacting the Director of Spiritual Care ahead of time.
- In an emergency situation, the hospital operator of each facility is the best way to reach the chaplain on duty and the chaplain can reach the Director.

If you find that you are unable to reach the Director of Spiritual Care or a chaplain, contact me at [vschueler@archdpdx.org](mailto:vschueler@archdpdx.org) or 713-459-3513 and I will connect with the hospital.