

Roman Catholic Diocese
of Sault Ste. Marie



Diocèse catholique romain
de Sault Ste-Marie

Clergy Directives for Critically Ill and Dying patients in Healthcare Facilities and Homes

Jesus calls us to be as present as possible to people in these circumstances. During this time they may feel abandoned or isolated. Let us remember the very clear words of Jesus when he taught us the Corporal Works of Mercy:

"I was naked, and you clothed me. I was sick, and you took care of me. I was in prison, and you visited me." Matthew 25:26

Informed by best practice health care recommendations, and in unity with other dioceses, the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie is establishing the following directives for clergy providing **emergent** Sacramental care for patients in healthcare facilities and those who are homebound parishioners during this time of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak. Our faith requires us to continue the ministry of our Lord Jesus – including anointing of the sick – ensuring that all appropriate protocols are followed. However, there are key items to consider:

1. **If this sacramental ministry is provided in a hospital or healthcare facility, the guidelines for protective measures, including garments, prevail. Practically all healthcare institutions have suspended visits of Eucharistic Minister to lessen traffic, However the Sacrament of the Sick for critical and emergent patients is still very much welcomed.**

If you are visiting a patient in an **isolation room**, please follow these important tips:

1. **Report to the nursing station before entering the room.**
2. An isolation sign will be posted at the doorway to the patient's isolation room. This means that everyone entering the room must take the precautions shown on the sign.
3. Leave outerwear outside of the patient's room.
4. Always clean your hands before entering the isolation room. Use the hand sanitizer solution placed outside the patient's room.
5. Put on the personal protective equipment (PPE) as indicated on the sign and as instructed by hospital staff. Depending on the type of isolation, this may include a gown, gloves, a mask, goggles or a face shield.
6. Do not bring in any item that cannot be disposed of before leaving the isolation room.
7. Ask at the nursing station for disposable medicine cups to bring in items necessary for the Sacramental Needs of Patient. (ie. Holy Oil)
8. Use disposable, paper copies, of liturgical readings that can be disposed of in waste basket before leaving patient's room.

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9. If you are unsure about items entering an isolation room, ask a staff member for further direction.
10. The anointing may be done with a gloved hand and cotton-tipped swab or a cotton ball which is to be burned or deposited in red medical waste containers after the visit. (please see nursing station)
11. Maintain social distance (six feet) with everyone in the room, except the patient.
12. Before leaving the isolation room, discard the gloves, mask, goggles or face shield, medicine cups and paper copies of liturgical readings in the waste basket in the patient's room. Remove the gown and place it in the soiled linen hamper also located in the patient's room.
13. Always clean your hands when entering and leaving the isolation room.

I. **If emergent sacramental ministry is requested in a home, the following directives additionally apply. Visits to the critical ill and dying should continue as much as possible but only if precautionary measures are respected.**

1. Call ahead to ensure the individual is still accepting visitors and to discern the health risk and precautions needed. We although invite you to contact the sick by phone or other electronic means to see how they are doing, to pray with them and offer moral support.
2. Use a hand sanitizer once entering the home and again before anointing
3. If the communicant usually receives Communion on the tongue, strongly encourage him or her, for your safety as well as his / hers, to receive Communion in the hand.
4. Maintain social distance (six feet) with everyone in the room, except the person you are visiting.
5. Avoid any physical contact with the person or family during the visit;

Note: Any Clergy who has had *unprotected close contact* with someone who has the coronavirus (*by not following the guidelines above*) must self-quarantine for two weeks and follow the guidelines issued by the Public Health Department.

We are presently arranging future training with our hospitals in order to support these directives

For further support please contact

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