

DIOCESE OF JOLIET

GUIDELINES FOR ADMINISTERING ANOINTING OF THE SICK TO COVID-19 PATIENTS IN DANGER OF DEATH

Effective April 2, 2020

Out of an abundance of caution, specific and detailed protocols must be followed concerning the ministering of the Anointing of the Sick to confirmed COVID-19 patients and only the following priests should administer this sacrament to those patients:

- A priest who is not in a high-risk group (i.e. over 60 years of age)
- A priest with no comorbidities (i.e., when two or more chronic illnesses are present. For example, hypertension, diabetes, Crohn's disease, any cancers, rheumatoid arthritis, asthma, COPD, heart disease, or weakened immune system)
- A priest who is not exhibiting symptoms of any infection (e.g., sore throat, fever, congestion)

If a priest is not able to administer this sacrament for one of the reasons above, he should find a replacement or contact his Dean, who will help find a priest to administer the sacrament. Also, priests living in community should take into consideration the health of other members of the house.

Please read these guidelines in full as they outline in precise detail the necessary actions before, during and after administering the sacrament.

Engagement process:

- I. When a priest receives a call from the family, confirm the condition of the patient:
 - a. If the patient is in imminent danger of death or if the family is unsure, proceed following the guidelines below.
 - b. If the patient is not in imminent danger of death, explain that at this time, we cannot administer the sacrament due to current healthcare and diocesan regulations concerning exposure.

IF THE PATIENT IS IN A HOSPITAL OR HEALTHCARE FACILITY

- The facility's guidelines for protective measures, including garments, prevail. Ask for assistance if procedures are unclear.
- Most of these facilities are allowing one designated priest in or no one is allowed.
- Medical facilities such as hospitals and nursing homes already have established practices in place so **priests who are allowed** in those facilities and assiduously follow the practices will not have to self-quarantine after anointing someone in such a setting. Rigorous handwashing after a visit will minimize the possibility of spreading the virus inadvertently to others.

IF THE PATIENT IS NOT IN A HOSPITAL OR HEALTHCARE FACILITY

Preparation Prior to Making the Call

- Ahead of time via phone, inform the family or caregiver at the home that:
 - You will need a clean and private area to prepare yourself and your supplies immediately when you arrive and will need to use the area again; suggest that this be a kitchen or bathroom.
 - You will also need clean paper towels and soap if available.
 - Work tactfully with the family to see what is possible in their space.
- Dip a large cotton ball in the oil and place the wet ball in a plastic zip lock bag and seal closed.
- Place a consecrated Host in a clean sealed zip lock bag and seal closed.
- If available, place a plastic spoon in a plastic bag and seal closed.
- If needed, print a copy of the ritual and place in a sealed bag. (Do not bring a book with you.)
- Place the following in sealed bags. Each item should be packed in a separate bag and sealed.
Note: Bags are not to be reused. The equipment includes:
 - Mask
 - Disposable gloves (latex, nitrile, or other available medical-grade gloves)
 - Eye shield (if available)
- Pack sanitizing wipes and hand sanitizer in your supply kit.
- Do not bring a stole. It is difficult to clean and keep sanitized.
- It is best to wear clothes that are washable, not items that need dry cleaning.
- Wear only closed-toe shoes.
- Check your supplies before you leave.

PREPARATIONS WHEN ARRIVING AT THE HOME

- Put your mask and gloves on before entering the home.
- Leave all non-essential items in your car.
- When entering maintain social distancing with all members of the household
- Ask to be shown to a room, if possible, where you can don your equipment with no one else near you.
- If you need to lay out your protective equipment before you put it on, sanitize with wipes the surface you will use to lay out the items. Let the surface dry before unpacking your items.

DONNING YOUR PROTECTIVE GEAR

- Wash your hands (gloves) or sanitize them before touching your gear. (you can wash or use sanitizer on the gloves) Be aware not to touch face or mask.
- Remember: NEVER place your protective equipment on a potentially contaminated surface.
- If you touch a contaminated surface during the donning of your equipment, stop and wash or sanitize your hands/gloves immediately before continuing.
- Gather your sealed bags of oil, consecrated Host and copy of rite if needed.
- When ready, bring your bagged and sealed sacramental supplies with you into the patient room.

ENTERING THE PATIENT'S ROOM

- Practice social distancing from all other residents and as much as possible from the patient as well. (Studies say you don't want to spend more than 10 minutes with a person who has tested positive to COVID-19.)
- Try not to touch any surfaces with your clothes if possible.
- The anointing must be done with the already wet cotton ball which is to be replaced and resealed in the plastic bag immediately and burned or buried after use later.
- As the pastoral situation suggests, it is permissible to omit the anointing of the hands.
- If Holy Communion is given, it should preferably be given in the hand. If this is not possible because of the condition of the patient, determine if it is possible to take a tiny section of the Host, place it on the plastic spoon you brought, and place it in the mouth of the patient.
 - Holy Communion is not to be given to any person other than the patient.
 - All who are present may be invited to make a Spiritual Communion, which the priest may include in the rite.
- Do not offer comfort with any physical contact.
- When the anointing is complete, leave the room as soon as possible, taking all your bags and used supplies with you.
 - Empty Host bag
 - Bag with cotton ball used for anointing
 - Bag with paper copy of rite if used
- Do not return to the patient's room.
- Return to the private space again, if available, and remove your gear following the instructions below.

HOW TO REMOVE YOUR PROTECTIVE GEAR

- Once you are in the designated room remove your gloves, turning them inside out, careful not to touch any infected areas with your bare hands. Do this
- Wash your hands
- Remove eye protection or face shield
 - Clean the eye protection (might be your eyeglasses)
 - Use bleach wipes or soap and water for the sanitizing of your eye shield.
 - Let the eye shield dry for at least 45 seconds, then
 - Place in the designated bag
 - close the bag
- Wash your hands
- Remove your mask
 - Place the mask in the designated bag
 - close the bag
- Wash your hands
- Seal the bags when the items are dry.

RETURNING HOME

- When you arrive home, if you are using an N95 mask and/or eye shield that are not disposable, leave them in a place that is not in the regular living area of the home.
- These same guidelines are extended for hospital and nursing home visits adopted to the procedure of the institution.
- Dispose of the sealed bags with the gloves, paper copy of rite, disposable mask, etc.
- Place the bag with the used cotton ball and the empty bag that housed the consecrated Host in a sealed container until they can be burned or buried.
- NEVER touch the cotton ball with ungloved hands.
- As soon as possible, change clothes and wash clothes worn in soap and hot water.
- Shower as soon as possible.
- It might be good to do a nasal rinse also.

AFTER EXPOSURE TO AN INDIVIDUAL WITH COVID-19

- The following should be checked or tracked for 14 days
 - Temperature twice a day (watch for a fever of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or greater)
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath
 - Sore throat
 - Others
 - Myalgia's (muscle or body aches)
 - Diarrhea
 - Vomiting
- If you experience any of these symptoms:
 - Isolate yourself
 - Consult your physician for further evaluation and testing.
 - If you have difficulty breathing contact your doctor or go to the hospital immediately.

APOSTOLIC PARDON

- The Apostolic Pardon may be said by the priest for someone who is dying and is often done in conjunction with Viaticum. It may take one of two forms:
 - “Through the holy mysteries of our redemption may Almighty God release you from all punishments in this life and the life to come. May he open you to the gates of paradise and welcome you into everlasting joy.” OR
 - “By the authority which the Apostolic See has given me, I grant you a full pardon and remission of all your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”
- Priests ministering to those in danger of dying should not neglect to impart the Apostolic Pardon and its indulgence. However, where a priest cannot be present the Church grants such persons who are rightly disposed a plenary indulgence to be obtained *in articulo mortis* (at the approach of death) provided they regularly prayed in some way during their lifetime.
- The use of a crucifix or cross is recommended in obtaining this plenary indulgence.
- The usual conditions for a plenary indulgence are substituted by the condition that the individual ‘regularly prayed in some way’.

IF YOU ARE ASKED TO ANOINT A PATIENT AT HOME WITHOUT COVID-19

- Take the same precautions because we don't know if anyone in the home is infected.

Please keep in mind that on March 27, 2020 the USCCB Community on Divine Worship has clarified the following:

“With regard to the Anointing of the Sick, it is not possible for the anointing with oil to be delegated to someone else, such as a nurse or a doctor.”

I might add that when it is possible to administer the Sacrament, then what the Apostolic Penitentiary said about the Sacrament of Penance might be applied analogously to the Sacrament of the Sick: “Where the individual faithful find themselves in the painful impossibility of receiving sacramental absolution, it should be remembered that perfect contrition, coming from the love of God, beloved above all things, expressed by a sincere request for forgiveness (that which the penitent is at present able to express) and accompanied by *votum confessionis*, that is, by the firm resolution to have recourse, as soon as possible, to sacramental confession, obtains forgiveness of sins, even mortal ones (cf. CCC, no. 1452).”

Once again, I recommend the use of prudence.