

Guidelines for the administration of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick to those suffering from Coronavirus

In hospitals:

1. Priests over the age of 70 must not visit any patient in hospital regardless of the patient's illness
2. Ensure a rota is in place so that a younger priest is available for emergencies. If this is not possible and the patient is unable to communicate via telephone, then ask staff chaplains to offer prayers at the bedside having first sought the patient's/family's consent
3. Whichever priest attends the sick person, he must be sure not to have any underlying medical condition that could compromise his own well-being
4. Before visiting the patient inform ward staff. Be sure to don the required PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) and follow any post-visit cleansing indicated
5. Do not take books or oil stocks with you into the room. Take a printed sheet which must be left in the clinical waste. In a similar way, have a cotton bud prepared with the oil for anointing. This must also be left in the clinical waste

In the home:

1. In the absence of the PPE which is available in a hospital, pastoral visits should not be made to people who are self-isolating at home until the isolation period ends. Priests over the age of 70 should refrain from making any such visits. However, the use of telephone support where possible is very much encouraged as such contact with the priest can offer great reassurance and hope
2. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are likewise encouraged to make regular telephone contact with the housebound and to offer prayers but should refrain from visiting the sick in person in keeping with the current social-distancing policy

For any anointing during this period the Oil of the Sick should be applied using a cotton bud which can be burned afterwards (one end for the head and the other for the hands) and the priest should extend his hands over the sick person for the "laying on of hands", without physical contact. Holy Communion will be a "Spiritual Communion"

Bishop Paul Mason
23 March 2020