



## Member Message March 28, 2020

---

Dear Mothers and Sisters,

In response to the need for planning in face of the COVID-19 situation, we received the following suggestions from staff at the Hilton Foundation who offered them to us based on their experience dealing with epidemics in other countries. We hope you will find them helpful as you consider the needs of your sisters.

Effective emergency preparedness requires that we all operate under the assumption that we will need to manage and respond to a community member who falls sick. So, a helpful exercise is to ask yourself, "If someone I live in proximity with were to get sick tomorrow, what would I do? What actions would I take?" Or, "if someone who is a member of my community reports being sick tomorrow, what will be my guidance and advice to that member, and the sisters she lives with?"

In any kind of emergency preparedness situation, there is a 'best approach' which is: **"prepare for the worst, while hoping (and praying) for the best."**

With this in mind it will be helpful to approach the situation by assuming that we don't know how many sisters are positive, because it remains a challenge to get tested in the US, even in 'hard hit' locations. So, difficult as it may be, it is extremely important to observe social distancing (the recommended distance of 6 feet) as far as possible. For any groups who live in larger numbers in proximity (assisted living residents as well), someone could be positive but not know it, since symptoms are not always quickly detectable, or ever detectable. This means someone could infect others without realizing it. Unfortunately, in the scenario of a large congregation or assisted living home, this means several people could get infected and 5 – 14 days later, could get sick at the same time, in the same community.

For the sake of emergency planning, it would be prudent to assume that there are sisters who are coming into contact with the virus now, and they might be infecting others within their community unknowingly. If this assumption is true, and if sisters are not social distancing within their convents/communities or other living situations, then we could also anticipate that we will see whole communities that start to show symptoms at the same time, within a few weeks. Unfortunately, this has already happened in Italy.

If we use this worst-case scenario (which I know we are all praying, is not, and will not be the case), but for emergency planning purposes, we should start to support:

1. Preventive measures including cleaning and deep cleaning, clear messages from superiors to maintain 6ft between everyone, even within communities/convents, ensuring availability of soap, gloves, masks, as feasible (although these are hard to get, it's still worth trying to see if any are in stock, and to have some on hand).

2. Insofar as possible, be sure that older sisters, or any-age sisters with underlying health conditions, don't have to risk infection by going out into the general public.
3. Again, as far as possible, use technology to reach those in need of spiritual support. This will protect sisters while allowing them to continue to practice their critical ministry work. Online tutorials can help those quickly learn how to use Zoom, Skype, Go To meeting, Marco Polo, and other apps that are free and user-friendly.
4. Identify now, any sisters or friends of your communities with health care experience, to be on the 'ready' to respond with basic medical equipment (gloves & masks to self-protect, protective gowns, tests(?))... are there any respiratory therapists that can be identified ahead of time?
5. Decide now where to set up 'quarantine' quarters for infected sisters to be comfortable, while remaining a safe distance from others. This could be within the convent/community/mother house, or perhaps another community in the city/area has more space available for this. People with COVID-19 need constant, regular attention as symptoms progress.

Please know that we remember all of you in our prayer in these days. If you have any questions about this information or if we can help you in any other way, please don't hesitate to contact us.

In Christ,

*Sr. Mary Christine, RSM*

---



### **Vision Statement**

The Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious will be a collaborative body of life-giving women religious committed to "the full flowering" of religious life in the United States by placing our collective feminine genius at the service of the Church and one another. CMSWR will be a wellspring of hope and a trusted resource for the ongoing revitalization of religious life and the New Evangelization.

Connect with CMSWR

