

Dominican Sisters

of Houston

March 13, 2020

Dear Sisters and Friends:

We want to share with you the Council and extended Leadership Team’s decision to enact, temporarily, some immediate measures aimed at helping to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus. The measures, which take effect this afternoon, March 13 through March 31, 2020, provide for preventative action, including the practice of "social distancing," (i.e., intentionally staying away from groups and social gatherings and keeping larger spaces between yourself and others) to protect our most vulnerable population of Sisters and all who minister with and to them, as well as the wider communities in which we live and work.

Given the recent pandemic declaration from the World Health Organization, disaster declaration issued for Harris County and after consulting with health professionals, we take the measures outlined below in that spirit - for the common good of our own community and the larger communities in which we live and serve. Today, we held an open session for our sisters on campus about this.

**As such, effective March 13 through March 31 (or until further notice):**

* **No volunteers or off-campus guests, other than Dominican Sisters of Houston, may visit St. Dominic Villa.** This includes sisters’ family and friends.
* **Weekday, Saturday Vigil Mass and all liturgical celebrations at St. Dominic Villa Chapel are closed to volunteers and off-campus guests.**
* **All Meeting Room programming is suspended through April 30 (or until further notice).**
* **No guests will be permitted to stay in the Villa guest rooms until further notice.**
* **Other than essential medical appointments, Sisters are asked to limit their off-campus activities and are strongly discouraged from attending public events.** We are encouraging our co-workers to do the same.
* **In accordance with the CDC guidelines, a 14-day self-quarantine is required** for Sisters who regularly visit, prior to returning to the campus, after personal travel to any countries where the virus has been reported.
* **Dominican Sisters of Houston are to suspend any personal travel to countries where the virus has been reported.** If an emergency arises, a Sister must discuss it with a member of the Council to ensure that measures for 14-day self-quarantine are in place.
* **All Sisters should avoid travel and large groups at this time.**
* **No one who has symptoms of a cold, a fever, or other illness is to come on campus, and Sisters with such symptoms are to remain in their rooms.**
* **A separate protocol for our co-workers is being developed.**

We recognize that we are asking all of us to make sacrifices, taking significant measures for the larger common good. We are not alone in taking such prudential action. On Wednesday morning, LCWR notified all members that it was calling for the suspension of all programs, regional meetings, and workshops scheduled between now and June 30. The LCWR communication noted:

We came to this decision out of prayerful concern for the safety and well-being of the members of our congregations, and the people with whom we minister and serve, recognizing that as each of us travels to meetings we risk exposing not only ourselves but also all those at home.

Thank you for joining with us in taking these "social distancing" measures to help mitigate the spread of coronavirus and its impact on our community and all with whom we minister and serve. Human Resources Director, Paula Porter, is assuming responsibility for overseeing the implementation of these efforts, with the support of the Council and extended Leadership Team. As the month unfolds, we will assess whether conditions warrant extending the suspensions beyond the end of March.

Please join us in praying for all members of our Earth community who are suffering the effects of this virus - and that our steps, added to those taken by others, will help bring an end to this outbreak.

With love and in prayer,

Donna Pollard, OP, Mary Jean Olsovsky, OP, Kitty Carter, OP,

Laura Henderson, Paula Porter and Jose Enriquez