



SANT'EGIDIO

Urgent Appeal of the Community of Sant'Egidio: Solidarity with Vulnerable People in Nursing Homes in the COVID-19 Pandemic

The [Community of Sant'Egidio](#), an international lay association of the Catholic Church, calls on all people of goodwill to engage in active solidarity with vulnerable people living in nursing homes, in order to stop the life-threatening social isolation brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. We believe that drastically improving medical care to the highest quality standards reflects the inherent dignity of all human beings, regardless of age or economic productive capacity.

The COVID-19 pandemic is quietly devastating the lives of thousands of vulnerable elderly and disabled residents of nursing homes in the United States.

With restricted mobility and means of communication, as well as dependence for their most basic needs, nursing home residents caught in the storm of this pandemic have no control over their fates and are dying at unprecedented rates. According to the Wall Street Journal, as of April 22, at least 10,700 people have died in nursing homes in 35 states due to complications of COVID-19. The actual count is likely much higher since comprehensive data is not available.

In addition, the severe social isolation of residents—who are barred because of health precautions from personal contact with friends or family and confined to their rooms—threatens to severely compound the downward spiral of health risks and increased mortality.

We acknowledge that many nursing homes are indeed providing high quality care under the extreme circumstance of this pandemic, and we recognize the hard work and dedication of nursing home staff across the country. However, considering the rapidly deteriorating situations in many nursing homes, the Community of Sant'Egidio calls for:

1. Full compliance of all nursing home facilities with CDC guidelines on preparing for and dealing with COVID-19, including the provision of testing, effective quarantining and high quality medical care for all confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases and immediate supply of personal protection equipment for all nursing home staff.
2. Accurate and transparent tracking by all state-level Departments of Health of COVID-19 deaths by vulnerable populations, including nursing home residents.
3. Immediate, proactive, and fully transparent provision of the medical status of nursing home residents to family members and/or designated responsible parties.
4. Provision of frequent opportunities for nursing home residents to overcome social isolation through direct access to phones and/or portable devices for electronic or telephonic communication with friends and family.

As the death toll mounts, it is clear that many nursing homes have become places of death and abandonment. This must change, and we have the power to change it. Starting now we can all play a part in saving lives and overcoming deadly social isolation.



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Therefore, the Community of Sant'Egidio encourages all communities of all faiths as well as all interested groups in the U.S. to actively begin outreach and partnership with nursing homes in their vicinity, in order to build vitally necessary bridges of communication with isolated residents. We also invite anyone to contact us for specific opportunities to engage with isolated residents in Boston, MA, Minneapolis, MN, New York, NY, South Bend, IN, and Washington, DC.

Together, we can take these first steps to rebuild a society in which vulnerable people are cared for with the dignity every human being deserves. By joining this effort, we commit to the hope and vision of strengthened intergenerational bonds, of a healthcare system guided by the common good, and of increased respect for our elderly, because as Pope Francis rightly said, they are “our roots, our story, our memory.” They deserve nothing less than our full support and we will not abandon them now in their hour of greatest need.

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The Community of Sant'Egidio USA

The Community of Sant'Egidio, a Christian lay association, was founded in 1968 and has been dedicated to living the Gospel through service to the poor including the elderly, migrants, homeless, street children, disabled persons and in prisons. From the beginning, the community has experienced how the poor, especially the elderly and homeless can be abandoned by society to social isolation and neglect. For more information please visit www.santegidio.org or www.santegidiousa.org

Media Inquiries – Pietro Bartoli, pietro.bartoli@santegidio.org