

In Prayer

and Service



Saint Francis' Religious Sisters of Mercy serve in various roles... including the COVID-19 front line.

Sr. Mary Rachel Nurbun, RSM, MD



As anyone knows who has visited Saint Francis Hospital—or any other of the health system's regional facilities—the Religious Sisters of Mercy are familiar faces. They provide a calming presence and are readily available to join in prayer or lend spiritual support in any way they can.

But, what may not be as commonly known is that a growing number of these Sisters practice medicine and serve as physicians and other medical professionals. And, when the COVID-19 pandemic began months ago, several of them were called upon to serve in ways they could scarcely have imagined.



“It has been challenging on many levels; but it has also been amazing to see God’s hand at work.”

- Sister Mary Sarah Macht, RSM, APRN

Seeing God’s Hand at Work

Since the pandemic’s earliest days, Sister Mary Sarah Macht, APRN, certified nurse practitioner at Warren Clinic Urgent Care facilities throughout the area, has served at the site of the health system’s COVID-19 isolation clinic.

“As soon as the virus struck, we knew it was critical to establish a specialized clinic to meet the needs of those potentially infected by COVID-19. So, we converted an empty office on the fourth floor of the Saint Francis Broken Arrow Elm location into an isolation clinic,” Sister Mary Sarah says.

The clinic features a drive-through testing site and triage assessment area to help doctors and other healthcare providers identify those in need of further evaluation and possible admittance to the emergency room.

“As Sisters of Religious Mercy, we are called to love as Christ loved and to give of ourselves to others,” Sister Mary Sarah says. “During these uncertain times, we have treated patients who ranged from being worried, to those who were terrified. And, with each one of them, we did all

we could to provide the kind of care they need in the safest possible manner. It has been challenging on many levels; but it has also been amazing to see God’s hand at work. I believe the pandemic has forced people to slow down and contemplate the meaning of life and death—and what is profoundly important and what is not.”

Rooted in Prayer

Sister Mary Rachel Nerbun, RSM, MD, internal medicine physician at Xavier Medical Clinic, which is operated by the health system, shares a similar sentiment.

“Xavier Medical Clinic is unique in that its mission is to provide healthcare for adult patients who are uninsured or underserved within the community. And, so as you can imagine, the COVID-19 outbreak has presented a whole new set of difficulties that can negatively affect many of our patients’ health—which for many, is fragile to begin with since they have conditions such as diabetes, kidney or heart disease. Yet, throughout it all, we show our patients



Sr. Mary Benedicta Maier, RSM, with Dr. Ali Siddiqui at Saint Francis Hospital Muskogee



we are here for them no matter what and trying our best to meet their needs,” she says. “As Religious Sisters of Mercy, we strive to be a rock of stability for others during trying times. Our lives are deeply rooted in prayer and from that prayer, flows our strength to serve others. That is why we are here and what we are all about.”

As for family medicine physician, Sister Gianna Marie Savidge, R.S.M., MD, her time was rotated between Saint Francis Hospital on the main campus in Tulsa, Saint Francis Hospital South and Saint Francis Hospital Glenpool.

“For me personally, the whole experience has been rewarding. I feel deeply privileged to have this opportunity to be present and a loving witness to our patients during their time of need. I have been blessed to have conversations with and lend support to many patients and their family members. I think this communication helps to bridge the gap between doctor and patient. After all, we are all in this together,” Sister Gianna Marie says. “As

much as this pandemic has been a cross for everyone to bear, it has also been a blessing; a blessing in the sense that by caring for others—as well as for one another—we have created an immutable sense of solidarity.”

Paramount for each of the Sisters of Religious Mercy is the power of prayer. As stated by Sister Mary Nika Schaumber: “Our greatest service is prayer. No matter the professional area in which we work, we pray at least four hours each day, for our patients and for the needs of the health system. Prayer is the primary activity of our Institute. We attend the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass every day, and pray in our convent chapel every morning, evening and night. We seek to serve as conduits of the Lord’s love and mercy. Common life is also essential to us as Religious Sisters. We are grateful to Saint Francis Hospital for providing us with a beautiful convent where we can share our life of prayers and service together and enjoy recreation, often in our wonderful courtyard.”

Prayer for Peace in Anxiety During the Coronavirus Pandemic

Loving God, we come to You full of anxiety about what may happen in the coming days and weeks. Shower us with the peace Jesus promised to His disciples, and make us into steady pillars for those around us. In this time of uncertainty and epidemic, wake us up to the reminder that we are not alone.

Even as we are asked to keep our distance from others, help us to find ways to reach out to those who need our support. We pray especially for those whose incomes and livelihoods are threatened. For the children who will miss meals due to school closures. For those already isolated, lonely and scared. Loving God, give them Your peace, and through our hands ensure they have what they need.

Sustain, strengthen and protect all caregivers. Bless them as they offer compassionate care and show selfless courage in the face of risk.

Remind us, each time we wash our hands, that in our baptism You call us to let go of our fears and live in joy, peace, and hope. Amen.

Source: The Catholic Health Association of the United States