Vatican
News



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The Vatican confirmed March 28 that a resident of the Domus Santa Marta, where Pope Francis lives, tested positive for the coronavirus and has been recovering at a Rome-area hospital.

In a statement, the city-state also said it had now conducted tests of all those who had been in "close contact" with the contagious person, an official at the Secretariat of State, and found another person who had been infected. The second person, it said, does not live at Santa Marta.

The two new infections raise to six the number of Vatican staffers announced to have tested positive for the virus.

The March 28 statement said the Vatican has now tested more than 170 people for the virus. Francis, it stressed, is "not included" in the group of positive people. Neither, it said, were his "closest collaborators."

News of a resident of Santa Marta testing positive for coronavirus was first reported by the Italian newspaper *Il Messaggero* March 25. Journalists have been pressing the Vatican for more information in the days since, especially given the person's relatively close proximity to Francis.

In its new statement, the Vatican said that following the official's positive test it had sanitized the person's living space, work space, and other areas inside Santa Marta.

A modern hotel just inside the Vatican City's walls, Santa Marta is a full-time residence for dozens of priests who serve as officials at various Vatican offices. The hotel usually also offers hospitality to guests of particular Vatican events, but has not done so since the beginning of the coronavirus epidemic in Italy.

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After his election as pontiff in March 2013, Francis elected to remain resident in Santa Marta instead of moving to the apostolic palace. He lives on the second floor of the building, and access to that floor is strictly limited.

News reports have indicated that since the outbreak of the epidemic Francis has changed his usual pattern of taking meals with the hotel's other guests in its ground-floor cafeteria, and is instead having meals brought to his room.

The pontiff has however continued to take meetings throughout the epidemic. Included on his calendar the morning of March 28, for example, were Cardinal Marc Ouellet, the head of the Congregation for Bishops, and Rome Mayor Virginia Raggi.

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