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Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, talks with Archbishop Edgar Pena Parra, substitute secretary for general affairs in the Vatican Secretariat of State, at the start of the third day of the meeting on the protection of minors in the church at the Vatican Feb. 23, 2019. Also pictured is Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)



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ROME — Two of Pope Francis' most regular contacts have tested positive for COVID-19, the Holy See press office confirmed on Jan. 18.

The Vatican's secretary of state, Italian Cardinal Pietro Parolin, and Venezuelan Archbishop Edgar Peña Parra, substitute secretary for general affairs in the Secretariat of State, are both in isolation after testing positive for the coronavirus in recent days.

Parolin, 67, is said to be experiencing "very mild" symptoms, while Peña Parra, 61, is asymptomatic. Both are believed to be fully vaccinated and boosted.

Earlier this month, the Vatican [tightened its COVID-19 regulations](#) and now requires mandatory vaccinations and boosters for its employees. The Vatican said the new measures came in response to "the progressive worsening of the health emergency."

The number of COVID-19 cases have [risen dramatically](#) in Italy in recent weeks. In order to enter any of the offices of Vatican city-state, proof of vaccination is required for visitors and employees alike.

At the time of publication, the Vatican press office has not responded to an inquiry as to the last time either Parolin or Peña Parra were in contact with Pope Francis.

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