



Dear People of God in Western Washington,

Peace be with you and your families during this unprecedented time.

As your pastor, I want to assure you of my continued prayers for you, for the sick in our community, for their families, for health care workers on the front line, and for leaders who are diligently working to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

It is during difficult times like this that we must turn to God for his comfort and strength. While we cannot physically be together, we are still here for you – and you are still part of the universal family of faith called the Catholic Church. Together, we are praying; we are checking on our neighbors; we are livestreaming Masses; we are supporting our parishes and schools; and we are still living as disciples of Jesus, despite these temporary restrictions.

As many of you know, yesterday Governor Inslee issued a new “Stay Home, Stay Healthy” order to slow the spread of the coronavirus. This ban goes into effect at midnight tomorrow, Wednesday, March 25, and it requires every Washingtonian to stay home unless they need to pursue an essential activity.

I echo the governor’s call for all people, especially those who are vulnerable, to stay home unless it is absolutely necessary to go out. We need to flatten the curve and slow the trajectory of this virus. We do this, not out of fear, but out of love for our neighbors. Because of this, we will be closing our parish offices and asking our parish employees to work remotely.

However, there are essential activities of our parishes that will continue, as long as we are able to meet public health requirements. Many of our parishes will continue to operate food banks to serve those in our local communities who need it most. Our pastors will continue outreach and homebound visits as requested by parishioners. We will continue to livestream Masses so that the faithful can enter into eucharistic spiritual communion while not able to join in public worship. While we cannot have any public celebration of Mass or any gatherings, many of our churches will be open on a regular basis so that our faithful can pray in sacred space.

By following in the footsteps of Pope Francis, who reminds us that “the Church does not close its doors to anyone,” we will continue to feed the spiritual needs of our parishioners.

However, it is up to the pastor’s discretion whether an individual parish is able to meet all necessary requirements to keep the church doors open. For while we want to remain present and available for our parishioners, we do not want to put anyone in a potentially unsafe environment.

This is a historically significant moment – and an opportunity for us to truly live out our faith. I pray that we will look back on this time and be delighted by how people witnessed their love of God and neighbor. I pray that we see courage, kindness, and selfless acts of love that foster community, help the needy, and encourage everyone to grow stronger in their faith and relationship with Jesus Christ. This is what it means to be Catholic.

Continue to pray. Continue to listen to God. Continue to offer your life as an instrument of God's mercy and love. How is he speaking to you in this moment? How can you respond? We are preparing materials to help you continue to grow in faith at home and around Holy Week and Easter, so please be on the lookout for those.

Please know that I continue to pray for you and your families. I invite you to join me daily for Mass at 8:30 a.m. on the Archdiocese of Seattle [Vimeo Channel](#) or on the Archdiocese's [Facebook page](#). Additionally, following Mass at 9 am, I invite you pray the rosary with me to help strengthen your faith and communion with the mystical body of Christ, the Church.

In the heart of Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul D. Etienne". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning of the first name.

Most Reverend Paul D. Etienne, DD, STL
Archbishop of Seattle