



May 22, 2020

In response to President Trump's statement today regarding church reopenings, the Bishops of Washington state would like to provide a unified response. We want to let you know that the public celebration of Mass was suspended, not out of fear, but out of our deepest respect for human life and health. As disciples of Jesus, we are called to be instruments of God's protection for the vulnerable and the public common good. Our love of God and neighbor is always personal and not partisan. While we share the desire to bring people back to Mass as quickly as possible, we will wait to schedule our public worship when it is safe and we are prepared to do so.

The bishops across the state are working through the Washington State Catholic Conference to engage the Governor on a plan and schedule for safely gathering. Based on expert guidance from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Thomistic Institute and public health experts, we created practical guidelines outlining how we can safely return to public worship, while ensuring reverence and respect for the Sacred Liturgy of the Mass. It is our understanding that these are in review with the Governor's office now. We look forward to his rapid response.

At the same time, we are now preparing parishes across the state for re-opening. Parishes must create an environment that is not only safe, but is liturgically reverent. Right now, we do not have a date or determination of size for Mass gatherings.

It is our hope that our right to responsibly and safely gather for worship will soon be honored so we can collaborate in a manner that respects both our Catholic tradition as well as our civic responsibilities. We eagerly await the Governor's response to our suggestions on this so we can proceed together with our re-opening plans.

We look forward to welcoming people back into our parishes.

In the heart of Christ,

Most Rev. Paul D. Etienne
Archbishop of Seattle

Most Rev. Joseph J. Tyson
Bishop of Yakima

Most Rev. Thomas A. Daly
Bishop of Spokane

Most Rev. Eusebio Elizondo, M.Sp.S.
Auxiliary Bishop of Seattle

Most Rev. Daniel H. Mueggenborg
Auxiliary Bishop of Seattle