

THE DIOCESE OF YAKIMA • PASTORAL OFFICE

LA DIÓCESIS DE YAKIMA • CENTRO PASTORAL

Memo

To: Priests, Diaconate Community, Religious, Seminarians, Parish Staff

From: Msgr. Robert Siler, Chancellor

Date: March 17, 2020

**RE: Proposed Directives for Pastoral Care During
Coronavirus Pandemic through Easter Sunday**

Happy St. Patrick's Day! Perhaps a good way to start this memo is with a shortened form of "St. Patrick's Breastplate."

*Christ be with me, Christ within me
Christ behind me, Christ before me
Christ beside me, Christ to win me
Christ to comfort me and restore me.
Christ beneath me, Christ above me
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger
Christ in hearts of all that love me
Christ in mouth of friend or stranger.*

This morning at 12:01 a.m., Washington Governor Jay Inslee's [Proclamation No. 20-14](#) went into effect, **restricting large gatherings of 50 or more.** This is a significant reduction from the number of 250+ proclaimed by the governor just last Friday, and consistent with current guidelines from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control in places where there is moderate spreading of

the COVID-19 coronavirus. The proclamation further states that **"activities of less than 50 people are also prohibited**, unless organizers of those activities comply with social distancing and sanitation measures established by ... the USCDC or the Washington State Department of Health guidelines ([click here to read or download](#)). The provisions of this order shall remain in effect until midnight on March 31, 2020, unless extended beyond that date." Finally, the proclamation notes that a violation of these restrictions could be criminally charged as a **gross misdemeanor**, which carries a maximum penalty of **364 days in jail and / or a fine of \$5,000**.

Besides these new directives at the state level, the CDC just yesterday issued even more stringent guidelines (available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/index.html>) The key change is a recommendation to cancel events of 10 or more people. Here are key guidelines from the CDC:

If there is minimal or moderate spread in your community:

Cancel events for groups of 250 people or more.

3/16/20 UPDATE: During the next 15 days, all U.S. events of 10+ people should be cancelled or held virtually.

For organizations that serve people who are at **higher risk** of serious COVID-19 illness, **cancel events for groups of 10 people or more.**

If there is substantial spread in your community:

Cancel events of any size.

If there is a case of COVID-19 at your event:

Separate anyone who has COVID-19 symptoms from others until they can go home.

Anyone with symptoms should not take public transportation or shared rides.

Contact local public health officials.

Communicate with staff and attendees about possible exposure.

Clean and disinfect the event space.

As the case of our own Father Alejandro Trejo illustrates, this pandemic is an extremely serious matter; failure to follow the law could result in criminal charges; and failure to follow the most recent guidelines, even though they

may be a hardship, runs the risk of allowing serious harm to come to the people we are called to serve.

In light of all this, Bishop Tyson has drafted proposed directives for pastoral care at this time, drawing from several sources. They are offered for reflection prior to discussion this Wednesday with the Bishop and the Vicars of the Diocese as well as the Executive Committee of the Council of Priests. Following those discussions the Bishop will likely promulgate the final version of the directives as particular law for the Diocese of Yakima. Please note he has already done so in regard to prohibiting all public Masses, with only a few exceptions for services that have already been arranged, and then, only with permission. [Click here to read the proposed guidelines](#), which also are attached to this email.

Finally, please note that the White House has called for a 15-day campaign, until the end of March, to slow the spread of the coronavirus. This effort to promote the common good, with the cooperation of as many as possible, has the potential to bring much good out of the evil we are experiencing in this pandemic.

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