News



Joshua J. McElwee

View Author Profile



Jesse Remedios

View Author Profile

jremedios@ncronline.org
Follow on Twitter at @JCRemedios

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March 16, 2020
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Welcome to NCR's Coronavirus Tracker, where you can find the latest news about the coronavirus pandemic as it relates to the Catholic Church and other institutions. We hope you find it useful in navigating these complex times and welcome your suggestions for how we might improve it. We're currently updating the Tracker twice a day, early in the morning and late in the afternoon. To receive the Coronavirus Tracker by email each weekday afternoon, sign up here. We completed updates to today's Tracker at 4:30 p.m. EDT.



Pope Francis prays in front of a crucifix at the Church of St. Marcellus in Rome March 15, 2020. (CNS/Vatican Media)

Vatican says public will not be admitted to papal Holy Week liturgies

Catholic News Service, March 16

The Vatican office that distributes free tickets to papal events has posted a notice on its website that "the liturgical celebrations of Holy Week will take place without the physical presence of the faithful."

Public Mass ban in Italy leads to new focus on 'spiritual Communion'

Catholic News Service, March 16

Public Masses are banned throughout Italy, but the faithful can still watch Mass on screens and receive "spiritual Communion."

Coronavirus kills Iran religious leader as death toll jumps again

Aljazeera, March 16

Ayatollah Hashem Bathayi Golpayegani, 78, a member of the clerical body that appoints the supreme leader, was killed by the coronavirus two days after testing positive.

Retrial of US Catholic official delayed over virus concerns

The Associated Press, March 16

The retrial of the only church official who has ever gone to prison in the Catholic sex abuse scandal was delayed because of the coronavirus outbreak.

Worshippers go online, those at services keep a distance

The Associated Press, March 16

Pastors across the country delivered sermons to empty pews as houses of worship adjusted to the reality of the coronavirus pandemic.

Pope makes mini-pilgrimage outside Vatican to pray for end of pandemic

Catholic News Service, March 16

With Italy on lockdown, Pope Francis left the Vatican March 15 in a mini-pilgrimage to an icon and to a crucifix associated with miraculous interventions to save the city and its people.

103 dioceses have issued statements lifting the obligation for Catholics to attend Mass

March 16

Italy ready to offer further measures to combat coronavirus, PM tells paper

Reuters, March 16

"The approved measures are not sufficient. Damage (from the coronavirus) will be serious and widespread. A true ‘reconstruction plan’ will be needed," Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte told daily Corriere della Sera.

"After the coronavirus nothing will be as before, we will have to sit down and rewrite the rules of trade and the free market."

Pope Francis at Mass: May families find new ways of showing love

Vatican News, March 16

"I am thinking of families who are cooped up," Pope Francis began the morning liturgy at the Casa Santa Marta on Monday morning. "May the Lord help them to discover new ways, new expressions of love, of living together in this new situation."

Italy coronavirus deaths rise 25% to 1,809

Reuters, March 16

Italy recorded 368 new deaths from the COVID-19 outbreak on Sunday as the total rose to 1,809 from 1,441 a day earlier, the country’s civil protection authority said on Sunday.

Vittorio Gregotti, renowned Italian architect, dies of coronavirus at 92

The Guardian, March 16

Vittorio Gregotti, an Italian architect who helped design the 1992 Barcelona Summer Olympics stadium, has died aged 92 after catching the coronavirus, Italian media said.

Church historic sites around the country close for coronavirus concerns

KSL NewsRadio, March 16

Historic sites for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are closed because of coronavirus.

At D.C. churches that remained open Sunday, a mixture of defiance, encouragement and faith

The Washington Post, March 15

"While public communal life was shutting down around the world, some Americans came together to worship. Some felt the urgent calls for social distancing were an overreaction. Some said the ritual just meant too much for them to miss."

I'm a nun and I've been social distancing for 29 years. Here are tips for staying home amid coronavirus fears.

NJ.com, March 15

"First, you need to establish structure."

Washington Catholic priest is first in US known to be diagnosed with coronavirus

Catholic News Agency, March 15

A priest in the Diocese of Yakima, Washington, is the first U.S. priest to be diagnosed with COVID-19.

Millions confined to homes after Spain and France impose coronavirus lockdowns

Financial Times, March 15

Millions of Europeans were preparing to be confined to their homes to counter an explosion in coronavirus infections after Spain followed Italy by putting the whole country in lockdown and France ordered the closure of all non-essential public buildings.

Prime Minister Urged to Adopt Stronger Measures to Fight Virus in Britain

New York Times, March 15

After a week of mixed messages from the government, a rising chorus of scientists and public health experts is demanding a change of course.

UK coronavirus crisis 'to last until spring 2021 and could see 7.9m hospitalized'

The Guardian, March 15

The coronavirus epidemic in the UK will last until next spring and could lead to 7.9 million people being hospitalised, a secret Public Health England (PHE) briefing for senior NHS officials reveals.

Federal Reserve slashes interest rates to zero as part of wide-ranging emergency intervention

The Washington Post, March 15

The Federal Reserve announced on Sunday it would drop interest rates to zero and buy at least $700 billion in government and mortgage-related bonds as part of a wide-ranging emergency action to protect the economy from the impact of the coronavirus outbreak.

'A ticking time bomb:' Scientists worry about coronavirus spread in Africa

Science Magazine, March 15

So far, the official numbers seemed to suggest that sub-Saharan Africa, home to more than 1 billion people, had been lucky. The interactive map of reported COVID-19 cases run by Johns Hopkins University shows big red blobs almost everywhere—except sub-Saharan Africa.

But now the numbers are rising quickly.

Germany seals its borders as 100m Europeans on lockdown

The Guardian, March 15

Walls are being raised and mass quarantines enforced across Europe to combat the spread of the coronavirus, with Germany the latest to partly seal its borders, banning entrants from France, Switzerland and Austria from Monday.

Advertisement

Pope Francis' twin prayers for an "end to the pandemic"

Vatican News, March 15

Pope Francis left the Vatican on Sunday to visit two important pilgrimage sites in Rome to pray for the city and the world, in the midst of the Covid-19 coronavirus outbreak.

Illinois governor announces all bars, restaurants will be closed through March 30

The Chicago Tribune, March 15

Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker will order all restaurants and bars across the state to be closed to dine-in customers in a further attempt to curb the coronavirus, effective end of business Monday.

Washington governor orders restaurants and bars closed to combat coronavirus

The Spokesman-Review, March 15

As confirmed cases of COVID-19 grew Sunday with 127 new patients in Washington, Gov. Jay Inslee shut down restaurants, bars and entertainment and recreational activities.

Maine governor declares state of emergency after new coronavirus cases

Bangor Daily News, March 15

Maine Gov. Janet Mills declared a civil emergency on Sunday as the state announced seven confirmed positive tests of the coronavirus with another five likely cases over four days, including a couple that lives in a Falmouth retirement community.

Health officials confirm 39 cases of coronavirus in Tennessee

WREG News Channel 3, March 15

State health officials confirm they are treating 39 cases of the novel coronavirus, known as COVID-19, across the volunteer state.

Number of positive Coronavirus cases rises to 53 in Michigan

Detroit Free Press, March 15

The number of positive coronavirus cases is now up to 53 in Michigan, the state Department of Health and Human Services announced late Sunday night.

CDC Recommends All Events With 50 or More People Be Canceled for Two Months

Slate, March 15

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is calling on organizers to cancel any events that involve 50 or more people for the next eight weeks in an effort to slow down the spread of the new coronavirus. The CDC said its recommendations apply

to any type of gathering, including conferences, festivals, parades, concerts, sporting events, and weddings.

Living out these challenging times and staying connected with others

March 13

A reflection from Donna Orsuto, a professor at the Pontifical Gregorian University and the leader of Rome's Lay Center, a community for lay students studying in the eternal city.

This story appears in the **Coronavirus Tracker** feature series. View the full series.