News

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March 20, 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. The Tracker was last updated at 4:40 pm EDT.

Pittsburgh Catholic newspaper terminates all employees, comes as 'a shock' to staff

Post Gazette, March 20

Changing markets and coronavirus shutdowns lead to halt and distribution of 166-year-old Diocese of Pittsburgh publication

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Vatican issues decree for Holy Week liturgies with pandemic restrictions

Catholic News Service, March 20

While conferences and meetings can be postponed for months because of the coronavirus pandemic, the liturgies of Holy Week and Easter cannot, with the exception of the chrism Mass, said the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments.

Coronavirus gathering bans raise religious freedom questions

The Associated Press, March 20

Churches and other religious institutions are under heightened scrutiny as calls to avoid public gatherings become edicts from government officials.

No Mass, no offertory: Parish, diocesan, national collections take a hit

Catholic News Service, March 20

A byproduct of no offertory collection is puncture wounds in the budgets of parishes, dioceses and national collections.

Vatican makes clear: general absolution allowed during coronavirus contagion

Joshua J. McElwee, March 20

Addressing the difficulty Catholic priests globally are having in hearing confessions of individual persons affected by the highly contagious coronavirus, the Vatican made clear March 20 that it is acceptable for bishops to offer general absolution to groups of people as deemed necessary.

Amid coronavirus crisis, Cardinal O'Malley offers special blessing for healthcare workers

The Boston Globe, March 20

Pope advises about how to confess when a priest is not available

Vatican News, March 20

Once again, the Pope prayed for healthcare providers in the hard-hit Bergamo region of Italy during his Mass at the Casa Santa Marta on Friday. He also advised people to speak to God directly if they cannot find a priest for confession in this difficult time.

Still, we find ways to connect

Tom Roberts (NCR), March 20

In a matter of a few weeks, the world has shrunk.

We've become our neighborhoods in a microscopic sense. We've become the last surface touched, the last person we've passed, the last hint of an ache or shiver that could mean you-know-what.

Competent coronavirus management matters, and it's political

Michael Sean Winters (NCR), March 20

Many people have asked me in recent days what the political consequences of the COVID-19 crisis will be. The short answer is: It's complicated and, like so much else about this virus, not entirely foreseeable. We also need to start addressing the related question, which contains a high quotient of moral consideration: Is it wrong to politicize the virus, and what exactly does it mean to politicize it?

Pandemic response raises institutional stresses, new ways to be church

Don Clemmer (NCR), March 20

As the Catholic Church in the United States responds to the COVID-19 pandemic, the shock and awe of local churches suspending all public Masses for the foreseeable future draw a great deal of attention. But behind the scenes, the public health emergency has prompted additional layers of response that bring into focus how the church is intertwined with the wider society, reliant on revenue and served by people on payrolls.

'How we can show love for the most vulnerable': Churches cancel in-person Easter services

USA TODAY, March 20

The coronavirus crisis is forcing believers to scramble to maintain traditions without bringing large numbers of people together.

Coronavirus gathering bans raise religious freedom questions

Associated Press, March 19

Churches and other religious institutions that have chafed at public health experts' calls to fight the virus by avoiding gatherings are under heightened scrutiny as those experts' pleas become edicts from government officials, including Trump. In a nation where faith can be as politically polarized as any other part of life – and where freedom to worship has become a rallying cry on the right – some conservative religious institutions are acknowledging that the government's word comes first during a pandemic.

The Catholic University of America president tests positive for COVID-19

March 19

I want to thank everyone for your continued messages of prayer and concern as I awaited the results of my COVID-19 test. Today I received word that my test result is positive.

Train services across Britain to be stripped back from Monday

The Guardian, March 20

Train services are to be pared back across Britain from Monday as passengers are urged to stop all non-essential travel to slow the spread of coronavirus.

Ministers and rail operators across England, Scotland and Wales have agreed to make progressive cuts to timetables, with the aim of keeping core services running – but reflecting a drop of almost 70% in passenger numbers since the outbreak started.

The Biggest Art Show of the Year Has Been Thrown Into Darkness

Bloomberg, March 20

Italy’s blockbuster Raphael show has been covered with black sheets, and the lights are off.

'We're clearing the decks': a British doctor on watching the coronavirus pandemic unfold

The Guardian, March 20

On 13 January, a bulletin from Health Protection Scotland was sent to all GP practices in the country describing a “novel Wuhan coronavirus”. I work in a small clinic in central Edinburgh with four doctors, two nurses and six admin staff. It was the first time I’d heard of the virus. “Current reports describe no evidence of significant human to human transmission, including no infections of healthcare workers,” it said reassuringly.

Advertisement

Coronavirus order: Gov. Gavin Newsom tells Californians to stay at home

San Francisco Chronicle, March 19

Gov. Gavin Newsom ordered all Californians on Thursday to stay home and leave only for essential trips, escalating efforts to slow the spread of the coronavirus, which state officials estimate could infect more than half the population if drastic steps are not taken.

Senator Richard Burr Sold a Fortune in Stocks as G.O.P. Played Down Coronavirus Threat

The New York Times, March 19

After the sales in February, the North Carolina Republican warned a group that the virus could soon cause a major disruption in the United States. Three other senators also sold major holdings around the same time.

A Message From Italy: It’s Going to Get Worse. Much Worse.

Slate, March 19

A conversation with a journalist in Milan about how the coronavirus has affected life in Italy, and what we might see in the U.S. very soon.

My Life on Italy’s Coronavirus Frontlines, and in Quarantine

The New York Times, March 19

I had to cover Italy’s coronavirus outbreak. All I had was a ski mask. Speeding south for hours, I typed the names of the closest centers of infection into Google Maps. I spelled the town of Casalpusterlengo wrong over and over.

France reports another huge spike in coronavirus deaths, raising total to 372

Reuters, March 19

French health authorities reported 108 new deaths from coronavirus on Thursday, taking the total to 372 or an increase of almost 41%, the toll rising sharply yet again

as the country was in its third day of a lockdown aimed at containing the outbreak.

Coronavirus Will Change the World Permanently. Here’s How.

Politico, March 19

A crisis on this scale can reorder society in dramatic ways, for better or worse. Here are 34 big thinkers’ predictions for what’s to come.

Screw This Virus!

The New York Times, March 19

Opinion columnist David Brooks writes: "Social solidarity is more tenacious. It's an active commitment to the common good... This concept of solidarity grows out of Catholic social teaching."

NYC's De Blasio pleads with Trump for military aid amid 'staggering' spike in coronavirus cases

Politico, March 19

Mayor Bill de Blasio made an urgent plea for military aid to combat the coronavirus, as the number of confirmed cases in New York City surged to 3,615 on Thursday and the city increasingly becomes the epicenter of the crisis in the U.S.

"All Hell Is About to Break Loose:" Could Wall Street’s Coronavirus Tsunami Get Worse?

Vanity Fair, March 19

In the current crisis, private equity, with its mountains of debt, could be the weak link, said a very senior Wall Street banker. If limited partners don’t kick in cash when asked, things could get very bad.

A one-page, printable guide for preparing to shelter at home

Vox, March 19

Now isn’t a time for panic, but it is a time for preparation — to be ready for weeks or even months when much is shut down. Even if you’re in a location where stores are staying open, many of us won’t want to go into the crowded public spaces we typically frequent without another thought.

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