News



U.S. Cardinal Raymond Burke, pictured in an Oct. 1, 2020, photo in Rome, says he has tested positive for COVID-19. (CNS/Paul Haring)



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Cardinal Raymond Burke has tested positive for COVID-19, the archconservative prelate announced Aug. 10 on Twitter.

Burke, a former Vatican official who has expressed skepticism about the need for distancing measures to contain the coronavirus and has opposed mandatory vaccination schemes, did not say when he contracted the coronavirus. He only told his 32,000 Twitter followers that he had "recently" tested positive for the respiratory viral illness.

"Thanks be to God, I am resting comfortably and receiving excellent medical care. Please pray for me as I begin my recovery," said the 73-year-old cardinal.

In the hours before his announcement, Twitter had been awash in speculation and rumors about Burke's health. Steve Skojec, the founder of the traditionalist 1 Peter 5 blog, tweeted that he had heard "through the grapevine" that the cardinal was "severely ill" and that it was uncertain if the cardinal would survive.

Subsequent tweets from others in traditionalist and conservative Catholic circles shared a message, purported to be from Msgr. Roger Scheckel at the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in La Crosse, Wisconsin, that Burke had just been tired out from a busy schedule at the shrine and a sinus infection. The message said the cardinal had not been diagnosed with COVID-19 and was "not deathly ill."

Burke did not say if he had recently been feeling ill or not. He resides in Italy, but travels frequently, and appears to have been in Wisconsin when he contracted the virus.

The cardinal also did not say whether he had been vaccinated for COVID-19. In previous remarks, homilies and speeches, Burke has raised concerns about the way governments have handled the virus and vaccines in ways that echo far-right conspiracy theories.

In a Dec. 12, 2020, homily, the cardinal referred to the coronavirus as the "Wuhan virus," a derogatory nickname former President Donald Trump used to refer to the first reported cases of the virus in Wuhan, China.

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Burke also said the virus "has been used by certain forces, inimical to families and to the freedom of nations, to advance their evil agenda."

"These forces tell us that we are now the subjects of the so-called 'Great Reset,' the 'new normal,' which is dictated to us by their manipulation of citizens and nations through ignorance and fear," said the cardinal.

In a May 2020 talk he delivered at the virtual Rome Life Forum, Burke spoke out against government imposing vaccination mandates. He also warned that some groups in modern society would suggest that "a kind of microchip needs to be placed under the skin of every person, so that at any moment he or she can be controlled by the state regarding health and about other matters which we can only imagine."

In a lengthy March 2020 statement he posted on his blog, Burke wrote, "In combating the evil of the coronavirus, our most effective weapon is, therefore, our relationship with Christ through prayer and penance, and devotions and sacred worship. We turn to Christ to deliver us from pestilence and from all harm, and He never fails to respond with pure and selfless love."

Burke served as bishop of La Crosse from 1995 to 2004 and as archbishop of St. Louis from 2004 to 2008 before coming to Rome as the prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura.

Pope Francis removed Burke from the last post in 2014, and the cardinal has been a consistent, vocal critic of the pontiff since.