



Epifani Martinez and her brother, Miguel Martinez, walk to dry land after rescue personnel evacuated them from their home in an area flooded by the Snohomish River in Washington state Dec. 10, 2025, as an atmospheric river brings rain and flooding to the Pacific Northwest. Washington Gov. Bob Ferguson declared a statewide emergency Dec. 10, saying, "Lives will be at stake in the coming days." He estimated that as many as 100,000 Washington residents may soon face

evacuation orders.(OSV News/Reuters/David Ryder)

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Seattle — December 16, 2025

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Several parishes and schools across Western Washington have shut down operations due to historic flooding in the state.

Gov. Bob Ferguson announced Dec. 12 that President Donald Trump signed the state's request for an emergency declaration, permitting federal funds to be used as aid in 16 counties and several Tribal Nations affected by the floods.

"This situation is extremely serious. The next few days are critical," Ferguson said at a press conference Dec. 10. "I want to encourage all Washingtonians to listen carefully to alerts from your county and emergency management departments. If you receive an evacuation order, please follow that order. It's critical to your safety. Thank you to all the first responders who are in the field helping Washingtonians."

The Laudato Si' Movement-Washington State Chapter released a statement Dec. 11, saying, "We are working together with Archdiocese of Seattle, Catholic Community Services, and additional collaborative agencies to prepare for and provide emergency assistance, as needed."

St. Charles Parish in Burlington, St. Catherine Mission in Concrete, Our Lady of Sorrows Parish in Snoqualmie, St. Joseph School in Issaquah and Immaculate Conception School in Mount Vernon are among the closures. The Tri-Parish Food Bank at St. Charles has also been shut down.

José Ortiz, a member of St. Charles who helps run the food bank with its director and his wife, Lilia Ortiz, stopped by the facilities to grab food, equipment and other things from the parish and food bank to move to higher ground.

The entire 100-Year Flood Plain in Skagit County has been classified as an evacuation level 3, which means there is danger in the area and immediate evacuation is recommended.

In an interview with Northwest Catholic, the news outlet of the Archdiocese of Seattle, Ortiz said he and other church representatives have been working with Skagit County officials to determine how to provide shelter, food, blankets and other necessities to those who have been displaced by the flooding. He hoped to be able to reopen the food bank the week of Dec. 15 if the area is safe.

While many residents have been trying to get to hotels on higher ground, the Red Cross was preparing the back half of Bethany Covenant Church in Mount Vernon as an evacuation site. St. Catherine had offered to open its hall for the Red Cross to use as an evacuation site before Concrete was evacuated.

The National Guard has also been in Burlington going door-to-door to help residents evacuate their homes.

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Farther south, employees of St. Barbara Parish in Black Diamond discovered about an inch-and-a-half of water covering the floors of a few low-level rooms in one of its buildings Dec. 11.

Three employees quickly began to vacuum the water up and have since run fans in the affected rooms. The rooms are dry now, and flooding in the area has lessened since yesterday.

Our Lady of Sorrows also experienced flooding in its basement below the church. Parishioner Tina Laguna said there was about 5 inches of water Dec. 11 before a group of around a dozen volunteers came to clean up.

Two sump pumps ran through the night, and volunteers today are working on removing carpet and sweeping, mopping and disinfecting the basement.

Laguna said many other parishioners have been dropping off brooms, squeegees, fans and dehumidifiers to assist the efforts.

In its statement, the Laudato Si' Movement-Washington State Chapter said it "holds all those affected in prayer."

"This devastation is heartbreaking, and yet another stark reminder of how climate change intensifies natural disasters and exposes the wounds inflicted on our common home," the chapter said.

"Until we as a nation collectively advance and implement policies that meaningfully reduce fossil fuel emissions and foster true ecological conversion," it continued, "Washington communities will continue to endure climate-driven disasters such as these terrible floods. We seek to care for God's gift of creation through addressing both the root causes of these crises and responding to the needs of those most impacted among us here in Washington, and around the world."

Catholic Community Services in the Seattle Archdiocese is mobilizing its efforts by working with Airbnb's Emergency Response Program to offer shelter options for those displaced by the floods.

Ferguson's office said the governor would be visiting impacted communities "in the coming days."

Early on Dec. 15, the National Weather Service said that "a period of very active weather will dominate the week ahead as a series of strong frontal systems produce cascading impacts across Western Washington."