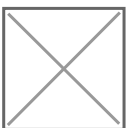




Tim Hansen carries a statue of an angel retrieved from the debris as his wife, Shelly, and Nancy Fuller survey their destroyed home in Spokane, Wash., Aug. 3, 2026, after a wildfire swept through the neighborhood. (OSV News/Reuters/David Ryder)

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August 5, 2026

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A Washington state bishop is calling for prayer as wildfires have torched entire neighborhoods, leading to thousands of evacuations and hundreds of destroyed buildings.

"As our region continues to face the devastating effects of the wildfires, I ask all people of goodwill to join me in praying for our neighbors who have been forced to evacuate, those who have lost homes or property, and all whose lives have been disrupted by these fires," said Bishop Thomas Daly of Spokane in an Aug. 3 pastoral message titled "Standing in Hope."

More than 65,000 have been driven from their homes as the Spokane Complex blazes — comprising the Old Trails, Autumn Lane and Fairview fires — have advanced amid dry, hot conditions. The wildfires are among the 17 currently raging in Washington state at present.

So far, no fatalities due to the fires have been reported.

In his message, Daly said, "We also lift in prayer the brave firefighters, law enforcement officers, emergency personnel, medical professionals, utility workers, and countless volunteers who are working tirelessly to protect lives and care for those in need."

He added, "Their courage and selfless service are a profound witness to the goodness that shines even in moments of great uncertainty."

Daly urged "everyone to stay informed by following the guidance" of public safety and emergency management officials.

"Please heed evacuation orders, check on your neighbors, especially the elderly and vulnerable, and continue to support one another in whatever ways you are able," he said.

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The Archdiocese of Seattle announced it is asking the faithful of that archdiocese to donate to Catholic Charities Eastern Washington fund to help victims of the Spokane fires.

At least one of the three Spokane Complex fires is thought to be of human origin.

On Aug. 2, authorities arrested 37-year-old Aaron F. Farinacci, charging him with one count of first-degree arson. Farinacci, previously convicted of manslaughter in Arizona, was reported to police for suspicious behavior near the ignition site of the Old Trails fire Aug. 1.

So far, more than 700 structures are thought to have been leveled by the flames, with some 8,000 acres in the Spokane area consumed as of Aug. 3.

An image taken by photojournalist Loren Elliott for The New York Times showed an outdoor statue of Mary before the charred remains of a private home, of which only the fireplace and chimney remained standing.

The Diocese of Spokane posted a similar photo of the site, taken from a slightly different angle, on its Facebook page Aug. 3, saying that "in the midst of unimaginable loss, this image speaks without words."

"To those who have been affected by these fires, please know that you are not alone," said Daly in his message. "The Catholic community stands with you in prayer and solidarity. In times like these, we are reminded that our greatest strength is found in caring for one another with compassion, generosity, and hope."

The diocese said in its Aug. 3 Facebook post that "the fires may consume homes and forests, but ... cannot consume faith, hope, or the love that binds a community together."

In addition, said the diocese, "our prayers must always become action," since "faith calls us not only to pray for our neighbors but to care for them."

"As a diocesan family, let us be people of hope," said Daly. "Even amid tragedy and uncertainty, Christ remains with us. May He bring comfort to those who are suffering, strength to those serving on the front lines, and peace to every anxious heart."