



COVID-19 demands we all make sacrifices for the common welfare

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A cyclist passes a "Health Advisory" sign on March 18, 2020, in Miami Beach, Florida. Photo by Cliff Hawkins | Getty Images

We are glad that Gov. Doug Ducey at last has **issued a stay-at-home order**. It will help keep the people of Arizona safer from COVID-19. Even still, it's imperative that we all do everything possible to go above and beyond the requirements of the order. We represent clergy from around the state who closed our doors to gathered worship two weeks ago, and we fear for our community.

The lives and well-being of the most vulnerable are at stake. Our health care workers and first responders desperately need our help to slow the COVID-19 spread. They are already under-supplied with the specialized safety equipment they need, while the coronavirus places them directly in harm's way. Many are expecting to become ill and are making plans to stay distant from their own families out of a profound sense of duty to their vocation. We should stay home for them.

We are concerned for those workers who produce, transport, stock, and sell our food and essential goods. These are usually the most overlooked workers, but their risk and sacrifice provide the rest of us the ability to remove ourselves from normal activity. They work in grocery stores, pharmacies and gas stations, among others. We need to reward them for this extraordinary service and to ensure improved safety measures for them and their families.

The governor's "Stay Home, Stay Healthy, Stay Connected" order still loosely defines essential businesses as golf courses, nail salons and gun shops. These employees would have to continue reporting to work, catering to non-essential needs, at great risk of contracting the virus and spreading it to others. That's in no one's interest.

Perhaps we have never seen a time that so clearly illustrates how the seemingly unconnected actions of an individual can have profound consequences for others. Our personal inconvenience or temporary



hardship actually contributes to the common welfare. We know how to revive an economy, but not a lost human life. The images of New York’s hospitals are harrowing, and they predict our future.

So, we, as clergy leaders of Valley Interfaith Project, ask our state leaders to reassess what we deem absolutely essential and to protect us all. There’s still time for improvements to this order that would diminish the spread of this epidemic.

Every hour matters.

Many of our clergy colleagues already have congregants and family members who have become sick and cannot get tested, but their symptoms clearly indicate that they have been infected by the virus. To date, more than 1,300 Arizonans **have contracted COVID-19**, and more than two dozen have died.

These numbers will seem paltry next week, and we’re all wondering how many funerals we’ll be called to officiate.

Let’s stay home, be safe, and be smart.

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