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Migration



Jesuit Fr. James Miracky, vice president for mission integration and ministry at St. Peter’s University, prays during a pro-immigrant prayer vigil outside Delaney Hall, a migrant detention center in Newark, N.J., Oct. 22, 2025. The event was affiliated with the nationwide "One Church, One Family: Catholic Public Witness for Immigrants" initiative that had been organized in response to the Trump administration's continuing crackdown on unauthorized immigration. A similar event is scheduled for Nov. 13, the feast of St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, patroness of immigrants. (OSV News/Gregory Shemitz)

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Washington, D.C. — October 23, 2025
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A coalition of Catholic organizations held prayer vigils across the country on Oct. 22 for what organizers called "a national day of public witness for our immigrant brothers and sisters."

The vigils came amid growing concern from some faith communities — including a Catholic parish in Chicago — about the impact of the Trump administration's rollback of a policy that prohibited immigration enforcement in sensitive locations, such as churches, schools, and hospitals.

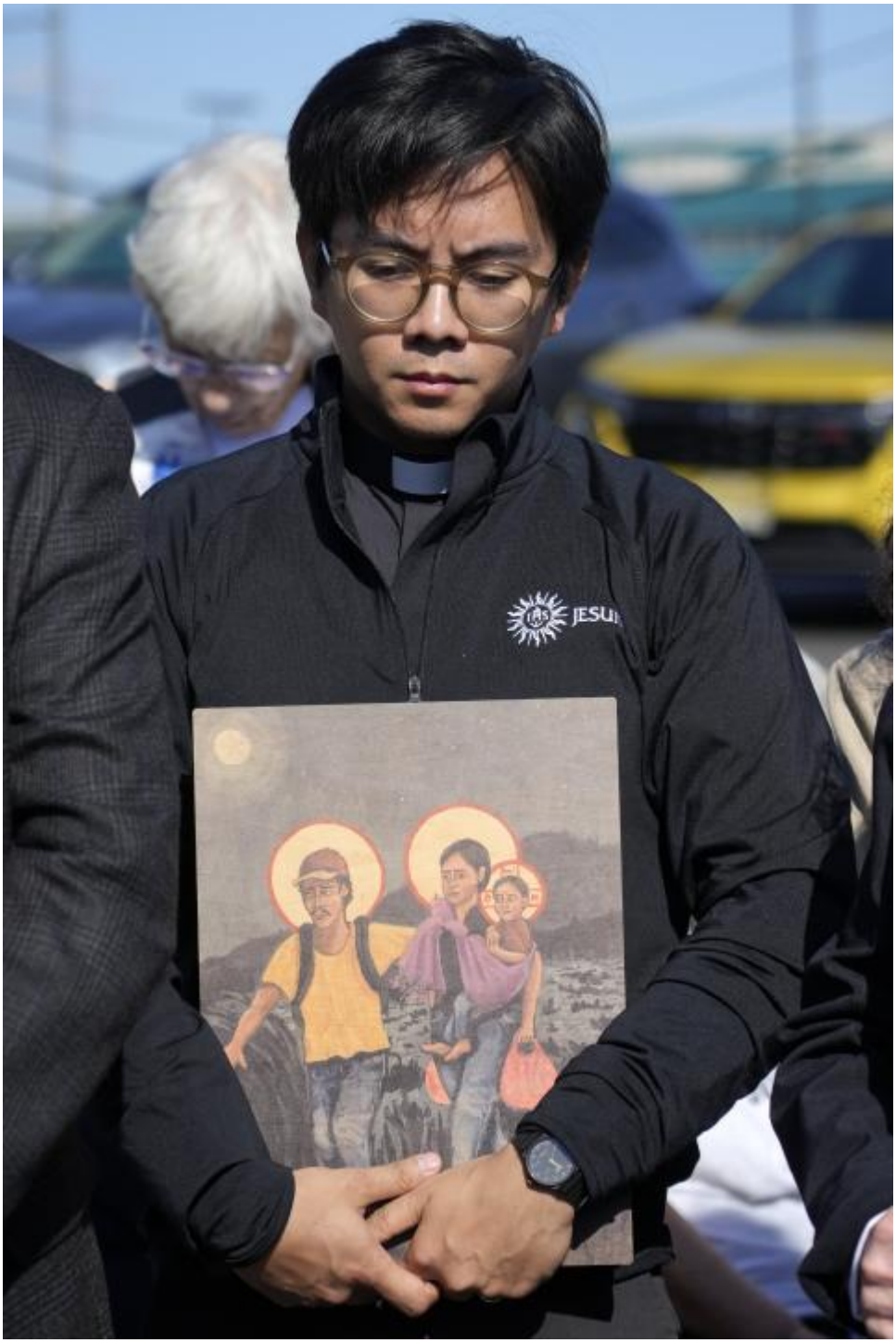
The "One Church, One Family: Catholic Public Witness for Immigrants," vigils took place in multiple locations around the country on Oct. 22. A second series of events is scheduled for Nov. 13, the feast day of St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, universal patroness of immigrants.

The grassroots initiative was spearheaded by the Jesuits West province, with additional sponsors including Jesuit Refugee Service USA, the Ignatian Solidarity Network, Maryknoll, Network Lobby for Catholic Social Justice, Pax Christi USA, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Migration and Refugee Services and several orders of women religious.

The protest and prayer vigil in the nation's capital took place in front of the headquarters for the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement as ICE employees entered the building and as rush-hour drivers occasionally honked at the group in apparent acknowledgment.

"We wanted to be a witness," Judy Coode, communications director for Pax Christi USA told OSV News at the Washington vigil.

"Both as Catholics and also as U.S. citizens, we have a responsibility to bear witness to injustices that we see," Coode said. "And so part of our tradition is to pray publicly. We have the right to do that, and so we take advantage of that, and we want to bear witness to those who are in power, who are making decisions. We want to call to their consciences, ask them to consider praying for another outcome, praying for another way to be."



Jesuit scholastic Angelo Jesus Canta, campus ministry director at St. Peter’s University, holds an icon of the Holy Family during a pro-immigrant prayer vigil outside Delaney Hall, a migrant detention center in Newark, N.J., Oct. 22, 2025. The event was affiliated with the nationwide "One Church, One Family: Catholic Public Witness for Immigrants" initiative that had been organized in response to the Trump administration's continuing crackdown on unauthorized immigration. A similar event is scheduled for Nov. 13, the feast of St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, patroness of

immigrants. (OSV News/Gregory Shemitz)

The day before the vigils, the Department of Homeland Security, which oversees ICE, objected on social media to a CBS News article about pastors expressing concern that fear of ICE raids is keeping some of their congregants away from church. In a post on X, DHS claimed it was "PROTECTING innocent people in our churches by preventing criminal illegal aliens and gang members from exploiting these places of worship."

"DHS's directive gives our law enforcement the ability to do their jobs. Our agents use discretion and have secondary supervisor approval before any action can be taken in locations such as a church or a school," the post said.

In the CBS report, ICE Director Todd Lyons claimed that despite the rollback, houses of worship are not a target.

However, earlier in October, reports of ICE agents near St. Jerome Catholic Church in Chicago's Rogers Park neighborhood prompted warnings of caution from its pastor, although a spokesperson for ICE denied the church was targeted, NBC Chicago reported.

The rollback of the sensitive locations policy is among the Trump administration's immigration actions that have been met with criticism from the U.S. bishops. They recently offered their support to a lawsuit challenging the policy change, submitting an amicus brief, sometimes called a friend-of-the-court brief, to the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia.

"The church is a sanctuary and refuge," Art Laffin, a member of Dorothy Day Catholic Worker House, told OSV News at the Washington vigil.

Immigration enforcement actions in churches, he said, would be "a terrible sin and injustice, and so it really calls for all the people of God to stand together with those who are being targeted and criminalized, whether it's in the sanctuary or whether it's in the streets."

Catholic social teaching on immigration also balances three interrelated principles — the right of persons to migrate in order to sustain their lives and those of their families, the right of a country to regulate its borders and control immigration, and a nation's duty to regulate its borders with justice and mercy.

Sister of St. Joseph Bethany Welch, part of the national planning team for "One Church, One Family," told OSV News in a phone interview Oct. 22, "It's essential that we stand in solidarity, particularly with our brothers and sisters who are being detained."

Sr. Bethany had attended the Oct. 12 binational pilgrimage led by Bishop Gerald Kicanas, apostolic administrator of the Diocese of Tucson, Arizona, as part of a mission to stand in solidarity with migrants. She said her participation in the "One Church, One Family" Oct. 22 vigil at an immigration detention center in Newark, New Jersey, was a continuation of that effort — and of "the Gospel call to be attentive to those who are being harmed or marginalized."

While immigrants are often seen "as other," she said, "in fact, they are part of our church."

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Across the U.S., Christians account for approximately 80% of all of those at risk of Trump’s mass deportation effort, with the single largest group of affected Christians being Catholics, according to a joint Catholic-Evangelical report published by World Relief. The report found one in six Catholics (18%) are either vulnerable to deportation or live with someone who is.

"The church in Philadelphia, the church in Newark, the church in D.C. has been built and sustained through various histories of migration, whether that be Irish immigrants or Latin American immigrants or African or Haitian, etc.," said Sr. Bethany. "So often, as we become more prosperous or have more advantage, we forget our origins and our own humble beginnings."

She added that "lack of memory," along with a "scarcity mindset" — which fails to see that God's love, compassion and mercy are "enough for all of us" — lie at the core of anti-immigrant sentiment.

According to Pew Research Center data released in June, more than four out of 10 Catholics in the U.S. are immigrants (29%) or the children of immigrants (14%). Eight out of 10 Hispanic Catholics are either born outside the U.S. (58%) or are the children of an immigrant (22%), while 92% of Asian Catholics are either immigrants (78%) or are the children of an immigrant (14%). In contrast, the vast majority of

white Catholics are three generations or more removed from the immigrant experience: just 6% were born outside the U.S., with another 9% born in the U.S. to at least one immigrant parent.

Sr. Bethany said the "One Church, One Family" vigils are "an invitation to remind ourselves where we came from," she said.

Several dozen participants at a "One Church, One Family" vigil in Philadelphia, which took place outside of that city's ICE offices, reflected on Christ's announcement of his earthly mission to the poor, the blind and the captive, as recounted in Luke 4:16-30.

"Who are the poor among us who need to hear the Gospel, and who are the blind who need to recover their sight?" asked Sister of St. Joseph Linda Lukiewski, one of the event's speakers.

Sr. Linda — whose longtime ministry has included assignments in Central America and among U.S.-based Latino communities — responded, "I believe that the poor among us who most need to hear the Gospel are those who lack a sense of compassion and a sense of justice, who suffer from poverty of right judgment, and who are deficient in the knowledge that we are all brothers and sisters, and that we all deserve respect and dignity. I believe the poor among us are those starving for power and domination."

Peter Pedemonti, founding member and co-director of New Sanctuary Movement of Philadelphia — an immigrant advocacy nonprofit based on Catholic teaching — noted in his address that "we are standing in front of some captives right now." He said "at least four people" had been arrested by ICE that morning and were in detention in the building behind vigil participants.

"Let us hold those people who are in holding cells behind us in our hearts, in our prayers," said Pedemonti.

He also urged those present to "let our hearts break over and over again" so that such detentions do not become "normal."

This story appears in the **Immigration and the Church** feature series. View the full series.