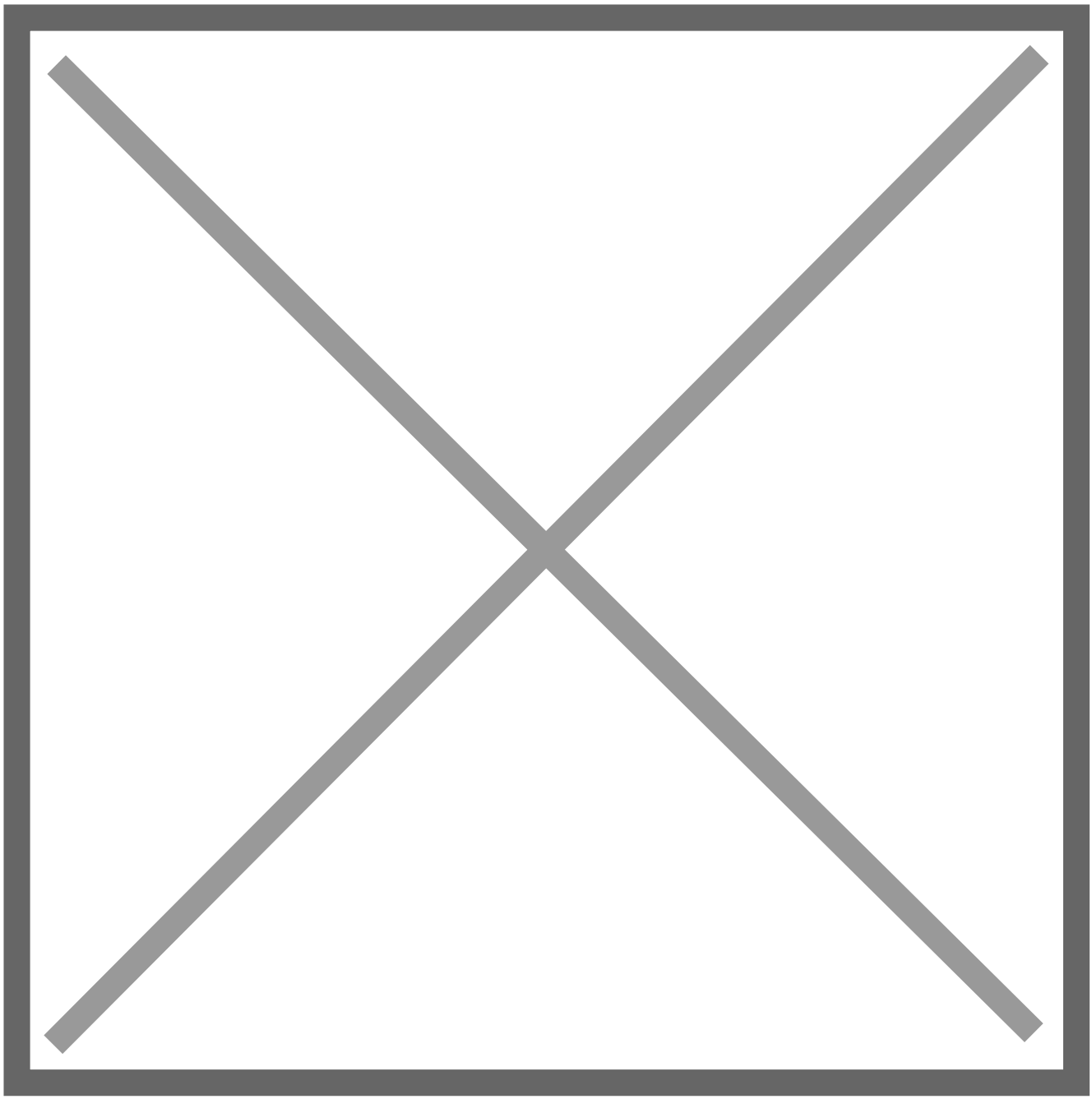
News



A child attends a candlelight prayer vigil at Holy Name of Jesus Church in New Orleans Dec. 9, 2025, for those affected by recent immigration raids during President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown. (OSV News/Reuters/Shannon Stapleton)

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New Orleans — December 11, 2025
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Amid immigration raids in Louisiana, dozens gathered at a New Orleans church for a candlelight vigil, praying for both those detained and for law enforcement officials.

The Dec. 9 service was held at Holy Name of Jesus Church in New Orleans, located on the campus of Loyola University.

Jesuit Fr. Mark Thibodeaux, the parish's pastor, welcomed attendees to the "solemn occasion" of prayer "for refugees and immigrants."

As several held candles in the darkened church, participants prayed the sorrowful mysteries of the rosary, which was interspersed with Scripture verses as well as the chorus from "Jesus, See the Traveler" by singer-songwriter Sara Groves — the lyrics for which implore, "See the mother, see the father, see the child; have mercy on the traveler."

The vigil took place just days after the Department of Homeland Security announced "Operation Catahoula Crunch" — named for a dog breed native to Louisiana — which the agency said targeted "criminal illegal aliens roaming free thanks to sanctuary policies that force local authorities to ignore" U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement arrest detainers.

That operation — part of the Trump administration's ongoing nationwide crackdown on immigration — has prompted both Archbishop Gregory Aymond of New Orleans

and Bishop Michael Duca of Baton Rouge to issue dispensations to the faithful in their respective dioceses from the obligation to attend Mass for those concerned for their safety.

The dispensations follow a similar one from Bishop Alberto Rojas of San Bernardino, California, as well as guidance from the Diocese of Nashville, Tennessee, on Mass obligations during immigration raids.

While the DHS Louisiana operation, launched Dec. 3, has been welcomed by state officials, immigration advocates in Louisiana have reported detentions of U.S. citizens in the sweeps, and have accused ICE officials of racial profiling.

In the New Orleans suburb of Marrero, security footage showed a 23-year-old woman, identified by NBC News as Jacelynn Guzman, a U.S.-born citizen, being pursued Dec. 4 by masked immigration agents as she ran to her home.

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Guzman told the outlet she had repeatedly advised the agents she was a U.S. citizen. The agents stopped at the property line, as Guzman's stepfather ordered them away. DHS later said that the U.S. Border Patrol agents had been targeting a "criminal illegal alien" with a felony theft charge and stolen property conviction, and had "encountered a female matching the description of the target." DHS said Dec. 6 it "determined the individual in question was not the target."

"In the quiet light of these candles, we place ourselves in your presence, trusting that you are already at work in this city, in our nation," prayed Thibodeaux ahead of the rosary. "We bring before you tonight all who have been affected by the immigration raids, those who have been detained or deported, families separated in fear and uncertainty, and neighbors whose sense of safety has been shaken."

He implored the Lord to "hold them close … and let them know that they are neither forgotten nor alone."

"In the spirit of your son Jesus, who invites us to see God laboring in all things, we ask for the grace to look upon one another with deep understanding and compassion," Thibodeaux continued. "Calm what is anxious within us, soften what is hardened, free us from judgment that closes the heart, and from fear that blinds us

to your presence in one another."

In addition, he prayed for "those who serve the common good through military service, law enforcement and all forms of public responsibility.

"Surround them with your protecting care. Grant them safety, sound judgment and peace of heart," he said. "Lead them always to carry out their duties with respect for human life, reverence for conscience, and a sincere desire for justice and mercy held together."

On Nov. 12, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a special pastoral message on immigration, urging respect for human dignity and restating Catholic social teaching on immigration, which 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.

As of Nov. 16, well over 65,000 individuals are in ICE custody, with 73.6% of those detained having no criminal conviction, and many of those with convictions were responsible for minor offenses such as traffic violations, according to Syracuse University's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse.

Pew Research Center has reported that close to half of the nation's Latinos (47%) report feeling less safe in their neighborhoods due to the Trump administration's deportation campaigns.

Latinos' daily routines have been impacted, said Pew survey respondents, with 19% recently changing their everyday activities over concerns of being asked to prove their legal status, and 11% reporting they now more often carry documentation proving their citizenship of immigration status.

In addition, some Latinos "are engaging in certain activities less often in recent months," reporting to Pew that they're avoiding local community or cultural events (10%), speaking a language other than English (9%), family and friend gatherings (9%), grocery shopping (8%) and religious services (7%).

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