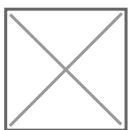




A woman places a candle at a makeshift memorial at Mechanics Park in Biddeford, Maine, July 13, 2026, after a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent fatally shot a motorist. The Department of Homeland Security in a statement said that "fearing for public safety," the officer opened fire after the driver allegedly tried to use his vehicle as a weapon against ICE agents. (OSV News/Reuters/CJ Gunther)

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July 20, 2026

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Two U.S. Catholic bishops are lamenting recent deadly immigration enforcement encounters, calling for God-given human dignity to be respected in every individual.

"As Catholics, we believe that all persons are created in the image and likeness of God and, therefore, grieve all situations where human life is brought to an unnatural end. This is a core teaching of our faith and one we can never grow weary of proclaiming as disciples of Our Lord Jesus Christ," said Bishop Daniel E. Garcia of Austin, Texas, and Bishop Brendan J. Cahill of Victoria, Texas.

The two issued a July 20 joint pastoral reflection as chairs, respectively, of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Subcommittee for the Promotion of Racial Justice and Reconciliation and the USCCB's Committee on Migration.

Their statement follows three separate deaths recorded days apart in July amid operations by Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers as they implement the Trump administration's hardline crackdown on immigration.



People march on the day of a candlelight memorial service at Mechanics Park in Biddeford, Maine, July 13, 2026, after a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent fatally shot a motorist. The Department of Homeland Security in a statement said the officer opened fire after the driver allegedly tried to use his vehicle as a weapon against ICE agents — a claim that has been disputed. (OSV News/Reuters/CJ Gunther)

Lorenzo Salgado Araujo, a 52-year-old Houston area man, was fatally shot en route to work in his vehicle July 7 during an ICE traffic stop. On July 14, ICE agents shot and killed 26-year-old Johan Sebastián Durán Guerrero, a Colombian, after being stopped by ICE agents near a laundromat. Juan Jairo Coronilla Durán, a 28-year-old man from Mexico, was struck and killed by a tractor trailer July 15 in St. Augustine, Florida, while fleeing ICE and Homeland Security agents on foot.

ICE's claims that Salgado and Durán attempted to ram officials with their respective vehicles have been disputed, with Houston law enforcement officials expressing frustration over the federal agency's lack of collaboration in investigating forensic

evidence in Salgado's death.

A Department of Homeland Security spokesperson confirmed that Salgado — a Mexican national who had been in the U.S. for some 35 years, and who was in the process of obtaining legal authorization to reside and work in the country — was not the intended target of the ICE operation in which he died.

In Colorado, an employee of the GEO Group — a private firm that contracts with ICE to operate its Aurora processing center — opened fire July 16 on a protester at the site, injuring the woman's foot.

The Trump administration briefly halted, then resumed, ICE traffic stops in the wake of the deaths.



Texas Bishops Brendan J. Cahill of Victoria, and Daniel E. Garcia of Austin, are pictured in a combination photo. On July 20, 2026, the two prelates lamented recent deadly immigration enforcement encounters, calling for God-given human dignity to be respected in all persons. (OSV News/CNS/Paul Haring/Aaron Smith/Courtesy Diocese of Austin)

In their statement, Bishops Garcia and Cahill quoted from the USCCB's November 2025 special pastoral message on immigration: "We are disturbed when we see among our people a climate of fear and anxiety around questions of profiling and immigration enforcement."

Drawing on the USCCB's 2018 pastoral letter on racism, "Open Wide Our Hearts," the bishops stressed that "racial profiling in particular violates God-given dignity," adding the practice "also inflicts profound harm on individuals, families, and communities by fostering fear, eroding trust, and increasing the risk of unjust and even tragic outcomes. "

"Our pastoral concerns are distinct from what the civil law itself may permit," said the two bishops.

They warned that "acts that diminish or disregard the dignity of any person or group of people should never be normalized in our society," pointing to both "the dehumanization of immigrants, regardless of their legal status" and "the vilification of law enforcement officers" as examples.

Bishops Garcia and Cahill said they "continue to affirm the legitimate role of civil authorities to implement the law in a humane manner and with respect for fundamental human rights, including the rights to life and due process."

Underscoring that "the power of the state must always be exercised within the limits of the moral law," they called for "accountability, transparency, and justice, which require that meaningful reforms be made to our immigration system."

The bishops said they "join in praying for the souls of those killed and for their families, for our nation, and for all those entrusted with the duties of public service."

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They also prayed "for an end to dehumanizing rhetoric, racial prejudice, and violence and for a renewed commitment to recognizing the inherent dignity of every person as a child of God," and pleaded for "the intercession of Mary, Our Mother, who is the model of perfect faith in times of grief, hardship, and uncertainty."

According to data analyzed by The Guardian, eight persons — including U.S. citizens Renee Good and Alex Pretti — have been shot to death by federal immigration agents under the current Trump administration as of July 15, with 13 injured and another 9 other shooting incidents with no injuries.

In a report released in June, Human Rights Watch and Physicians for Human Rights counted 52 deaths in ICE custody during the first 500 days of the second Trump administration. The two organizations said ICE "fails to disclose adequate information about the circumstances surrounding deaths in its custody," with medical neglect suspected as a key factor.

As of April, more than 60,000 are in ICE custody, the majority of whom (just under 71%) have no criminal convictions, according to Syracuse University's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse.

This story appears in the **Immigration and the Church** feature series. [View the full series](#).