

Prayer service outside ICE headquarters

March 12, 2026

Welcome

Today we commemorate two members of the great cloud of witnesses, whose lives and sacrifices are more than 1,500 years apart. March 12 is the feast day of St. Maximilian of Tebessa, a third century man who is the earliest recorded conscientious objector, martyred for his refusal to carry a weapon and kill. We also remember Blessed Rutilio Grande, a Jesuit from El Salvador who spoke out clearly and strongly against the repression of the Salvadoran people by their government. He, along with two lay people, was assassinated on this date in 1977, the first priest to be killed during the Salvadoran civil war; his death deeply affected his good friend, Archbishop Oscar Romero.

Opening song

Opening prayer – *A prayer for Blessed Rutilio Grande, written by the late Sr. Dianna Ortiz, OSU*

God of Justice, we remember Blessed Rutilio Grande's compassion and love for those who are poor and disenfranchised.

May we learn from his example to be shoulders of comfort and rest for those walking through storms of persecution and injustice.

May we learn from his example to be prophetic and pastoral witnesses where we are led by the voices of those who are poor and the everyday leaders in our communities.

May we learn from his example to be credible signs of hope in a world divided by conflict and the carnage of violence, and may we learn from Blessed Rutilio Grande and other martyrs that the sins of El Salvador's violent past can serve as a vehicle of change for the common good, shape our actions as servant leaders, and build a culture of love, respect, and nonviolence.

Amen

Response – Read by all:

God of love and mercy, we know you are with us always, even at times of tremendous pain and suffering. Through the intercession of Blessed Rutilio, we hope to strengthen our commitment to nonviolence, to justice, to continuing to walk with our neighbors, sisters, and brothers.

A reading from the Book of Zechariah:

The word of the LORD came to Zechariah: Thus says the LORD of hosts: Judge with true justice, and show kindness and compassion toward each other. Do not oppress the widow or the orphan, the resident alien or the poor; do not plot evil against one another in your hearts.

The word of the Lord.

Statement

We stand outside ICE headquarters as people of faith to defend the dignity of our immigrant neighbors. Currently, ICE and CBP operate with impunity, separating families and utilizing disproportionate force without transparency or due process—all funded by taxpayer dollars.

We demand an immediate halt to DHS funding and operations until the following reforms are enacted:

- We demand an investigation into use-of-force violations and immigrant deaths.
- We demand restraint that brings an end to racial profiling, warrantless arrests, and enforcement at sensitive locations including schools, hospitals, and places of worship.
- And we demand oversight by Congress to ensure accountability and respect for state requests to remove federal agents from local streets.

We call on Congress and DHS to recognize the inherent worth of every individual. The violence must end, replaced by policies rooted in human rights and basic respect.

Intercessions – Participants can rotate each taking a prayer to read:

Together, we mourn the injustices and wounds inflicted on those who are suffering. Please respond, “Hear our prayer.”

For all immigrants who have been kidnapped and disappeared.

ALL: *Hear our prayer*

For first generation citizens, children of immigrants, and naturalized citizens, enduring the terror of being falsely detained or deported because of their accent or the color of their skin

ALL: *Hear our prayer*

For children fearing that their parents will be kidnapped from them each time they separate

ALL: *Hear our prayer*

For immigrants fearful of going into their own house of worship

ALL: *Hear our prayer*

For students who are terrorized and blocked from receiving the education they deserve

ALL: *Hear our prayer*

For mothers and fathers who have sacrificed everything in the name of hope for their families

ALL: *Hear our prayer*

For all our migrant sisters and brothers currently being held in ICE detention centers without due process, and without sufficient food, water, and bedding

ALL: *Hear our prayer*

For spending billions of dollars on building immigration detention centers, hiring extreme numbers of ICE agents and other ICE spending rather than funding the feeding of the hungry, housing the homeless and caring for the sick

ALL: *Hear our prayer*

For people of conscience around the country who have been brutalized violently for standing for their migrant sisters and brothers

ALL: *Hear our prayer*

For immigration lawyers of conscience and those within the legal system working tirelessly for due process and justice for all

ALL: *Hear our prayer*

For ICE agents and all border control and homeland security employees, that they may reject the narrative of fear and hatred and instead protect the lives and dignity of citizens and non-citizens alike

ALL: *Hear our prayer*

For all people of faith and conscience, that each may hear the cry of those who suffer and respond with welcome, protection, promotion, and integration

ALL: *Hear our prayer*

For all those gathered here today, that we greet each other with love and kindness, and share the same with migrants and refugees, and with all those who are vulnerable

ALL: *Hear our prayer*

Jesus, may your light and love fill the broken places in our hearts, and give us the grace to move us into action. Grant us the patience, strength, and courage to be channels of your peacemaking.

ALL: *Amen*

Plea to political and immigration officials and agents:

Today we appeal to all political and immigration officials and agents who have devised, ordered and are carrying out ICE raids on immigrant communities across the United States. We remind you that we are all created in God's image and all life is sacred. God's love knows no borders. We implore you to respect the dignity of each person you encounter, especially the most vulnerable. We invite you to welcome our neighbors, not to arrest, detain and deport them. The cries of all those who live in fear and are detained rise to heaven more loudly each day. We implore all political leaders overseeing immigration policy and ICE agents: Stop the cruelty of the raids! Stop the repression! Release all those unjustly held captive, reunite families, and allow immigrants to get on a path to long-term status!

In affirmation of conscientious objection

We gather outside ICE to pray for those affected by immigration enforcement and for all caught in the cycles of global militarism. Today, we commemorate St. Maximilian of Tebessa, an early martyr executed for refusing Roman military service. We stand in solidarity with those currently weighing the moral weight of service or the possibility of a draft.

Conscientious objection is not mere defiance; it is an act of deep discipleship. Rooted in Jesus's rejection of the "cogs of empire," it aligns with the Church's consistent witness against violence. Faith-informed objection is a dignified choice, supported by decades of Catholic teaching and the courage of figures like Ben Salmon.

Our church leaders have given witness to this over the years:

- Pope Francis denounced war as "always a defeat" and urges us to move beyond "just war" theory.
- Pope John Paul II begged the world to turn from violence and resist the temptation of militarism.
- Pope Benedict XVI reminded young people: "Do not be afraid to take a stand for peace, even when it costs something."
- And the U.S. Bishops Conference in 1983 said they formally support those who refuse war, calling their stance a "prophetic call to us all."

By choosing Gospel nonviolence, we join a cloud of witnesses who recognize that peace is not marginal—it is central to the Christian life.

Closing prayer, read by all:

God of all nations, we lift up to you our brothers and sisters who have left their homelands seeking safety. We pray for immigrants everywhere, especially those who are vulnerable and marginalized. Be with them on their journey, Lord. Protect them from harm, guide them to safe haven and open doors of opportunity filled with hope and dignity. Surround them with your love and the kindness of others.

We pray for our Church, that it may be a beacon of welcome and support for immigrants in our communities. Inspire us to show the same compassion and generosity that you have shown us. Help us to embrace the richness of diversity and to work for justice for all.

God of mercy and compassion, keep us ever mindful of those who suffer because of dispossession, war, violence, homelessness, and exile, who are forced to be pilgrims and strangers. Grant us, we pray, a far-reaching mercy and compassion, that we may open our hearts and homes more fully in welcome and care for the strangers and refugees in our midst.

Grant us the strength and courage to face the systems, policies, and structures of our day that divide the human family, and transform them with Your love. We ask this in Your name. Amen.