

Prayer service outside ICE headquarters

April 23, 2026

Welcome

Good morning everyone! We gather today on the feast day of St. George, famous for slaying a dragon, and who was a soldier who refused to abandon his faith, even when confronted with orders from the Roman army to destroy churches.

This week is also the World Week of Prayer for Peace in Sudan, and next week the Supreme Court will hear oral arguments about retaining Temporary Protected Status for Haitians and Syrians who have resettled in the United States. All three countries – Sudan, Haiti, Syria – suffer from extreme violence, human rights abuse, and displacement.

Finally, one week ago, April 16, a Cuban immigrant named Aled Damien Carbonell-Betancourt died while being held in ICE custody in Miami. He is the 17th person to have died in 2026 while in custody.

We remember them all as we pray together today.

Opening song

Opening prayer

Adapted from Pope Leo's prayer for disarmament and peace

Creator of Life,
you shaped every human being in your image and likeness.
We believe you created us for communion, not for war,
for fellowship, not for destruction.

You who greeted your disciples saying, "Peace be with you,"
grant us the gift of your peace
and the strength to make it a reality in history.
Today we lift up our prayer for peace in the world,
asking that nations renounce weapons
and choose the path of dialogue and diplomacy.

Disarm our hearts of hatred, resentment, and indifference,
so we may become instruments of reconciliation.
Help us understand that true security
does not come from control fueled by fear,
but from trust, justice, and solidarity among peoples.

Creator God, enlighten the leaders of the nations,
so they may have the courage to abandon projects of death,
halt the arms race,
and place the lives of the most vulnerable at the center.
May the nuclear threat never again dictate the future of humanity.

Holy Spirit,
make us faithful and creative builders of daily peace:
in our hearts, our families,
our communities, and our cities.
May every kind word, every gesture of reconciliation,
and every choice for dialogue be seeds of a new world.

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 St. George, a symbol of good triumphing over evil, we seek 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, deporting people to unsafe countries or places they have never been to, utilizing disproportionate force, and detaining people, all without transparency or due process and all funded by taxpayer dollars. Many people victimized by these actions came to the United States legally, only to have their legal status revoked under the current administration.

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

- An investigation into use-of-force violations and immigrant deaths.
- Restraint that brings an end to racial profiling, warrantless arrests, and enforcement at sensitive locations including schools, hospitals, and places of worship.
- Oversight by Congress to ensure accountability and respect for state requests to remove federal agents from local streets.
- A halt to construction of new immigrant detention centers.
- No forced deportations.

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 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*

That we might transform the billions of dollars spent on weapons of war and maintenance of a security state into a budget that feeds those who are hungry, houses those who are homeless, caring for those who are sick, and other crucial human needs

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!

Closing prayer, read by all:

O holy God, heart of heaven and earth, praised be your holy name. Your children, from all peoples of the world, regardless of borders, praise you. We praise you and give you thanks because you have placed in our midst your beloveds, migrants, asylees and refugees.

We ask for your mercy in how we have failed to be doers of your love for our immigrant children, workers, students, parents, torture survivors and trafficked persons who are terrorized by ICE and inhumane migration policy.

We ask for your grace to be impelled by the Suffering Christ in our midst, and pray for your blessings on all faith leaders, activists, communities, NGOs, and elected officials who are acting in continued solidarity, which is your love in action. Love is never indifferent.

We praise you and give you thanks because you walk always with those who cross borders, in search of wellbeing and safety.

O Lady of Guadalupe, mother of the Americas, be always our protector and intercessor for love, nonviolence, and the building of just peace for all. Amen.