News

Bishop holds a little girl's hand as they walk among a group.

Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso, Texas, shares a smile with a Honduran girl named Cesia as he walks and prays with a group of migrants at the Lerdo International Bridge in El Paso June 27, 2019. (OSV News/Reuters/Jose Luis Gonzalez)

Gina Christian

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El Paso, Texas — March 14, 2025

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Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso, Texas, is spearheading a march and vigil to protest the Trump administration's plans for mass deportations of immigrants who lack legal authorization to live and work in the U.S. as part of its immigration enforcement strategy.

In a March 10 open letter to El Paso's borderlands community, Seitz invited area residents, "all people of faith and everyone committed to the common good" to gather March 24 at 6 p.m. at San Jacinto Plaza, located in El Paso's downtown, with participants marching to Sacred Heart Church. The El Paso church operated a shelter for migrants that served some 30,000 from 2022-2024.

The march and vigil, organized in partnership with Hope Border Institute — an El Paso-based immigrant advocacy nonprofit — will take place, as Seitz noted, on the

feast of St. Óscar Romero, the martyred archbishop of San Salvador known for his fierce defense of human rights and the marginalized.

Joining Seitz and community leaders will be Cardinal Fabbio Baggio of Bassano del Grappa, Italy, the undersecretary of the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, as well as bishops from the U.S., Mexico and Canada.

"The threat of mass deportations is untenable and immoral and demands a credible response," Seitz said in his open letter.

He added, "Together, we will march in solidarity with all our neighbors gripped by fear at this moment. Let us walk together, confident that God is present in our desires for a more just world and in our actions to make them a reality."

Seitz said he has sensed the "palpable anxiety" which has gripped both immigrant and non-immigrant area residents in the face of the administration's policies.

The bishop pointed to the recent "closure of the border to the vulnerable," along with "immigration enforcement actions against our neighbors and the denial of reasonable protections for our schools, hospitals and places of worship."

The Trump administration has declared a border emergency, halting the nation's asylum system and deploying additional troops to the U.S.-Mexico border.

In addition, Trump has rolled back general protections from immigration arrests at "sensitive locations" such as houses of worship, schools and health care facilities. However, a federal judge on Feb. 24 ordered Immigrations and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, not to make such detentions at some 1,700 locations in 35 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

The Trump administration also cancelled immigration appointments through the former CBP One app, which had been launched under the Biden administration's Department of Homeland Security to help asylum-seekers at the U.S.-Mexico border secure an appointment with Customs and Border Protection.

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On March 10, DHS released CBP Home, an app that enables immigrants to advise authorities of their plans to "self-deport," which the agency called "the safest option

for illegal aliens" and the most cost-effective for the federal government.

The app is part of DHS's $200 million "Stay Out and Leave Now" ad campaign.

"In recent days, I myself have lost friends who have chosen to self-deport back to immensely challenging conditions in their country," said Seitz in his letter.

Trump administration plans for mass deportations — a key campaign promise — stalled by early March despite a high-profile launch featuring Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem and television personality Phil McGraw on immigration arrest ride-alongs.

Analysts note that despite modest increases in arrests, enforcement resources are stretched, with Trump deportation numbers far behind those of the Biden and Obama administrations.

Legal, logistical and financial hurdles have stalled Trump's plans to use the U.S. naval base at Guantánamo Bay in Cuba as a detention center for an estimated 30,000 deported immigrants. The estimated transport cost tallied some $23,000 to $27,000 per person. Less than 200 immigrants from Venezuela — almost a third of whom had no criminal background — have now been processed there, with just 20 persons being held there as of March 5.

Still, many unauthorized immigrants remain fearful of arrest and deportation, leading some to withdraw from attending religious services, classes and medical appointments.

"The heartwrenching pain coursing through our community is real," wrote Seitz. "Indiscriminate immigration enforcement, the denial of due process, and the pulling apart of families strike at our community and are grave attacks on human dignity."

Baggio's planned participation in Seitz's march and vigil visibly underscores Pope Francis' recent letter of solidarity and encouragement to the U.S. bishops. The Holy Father described Trump's "program of mass deportations" as a "major crisis" that "damages the dignity of many men and women, and of entire families, and places them in a state of particular vulnerability and defenselessness."

The pope emphasized that government can develop policies for "orderly and legal migration" that also serve the "true common good" of welcoming, protecting, promoting and integrating "the most fragile, unprotected and vulnerable."

This story appears in the **Trump's Second Term** feature series. View the full series.