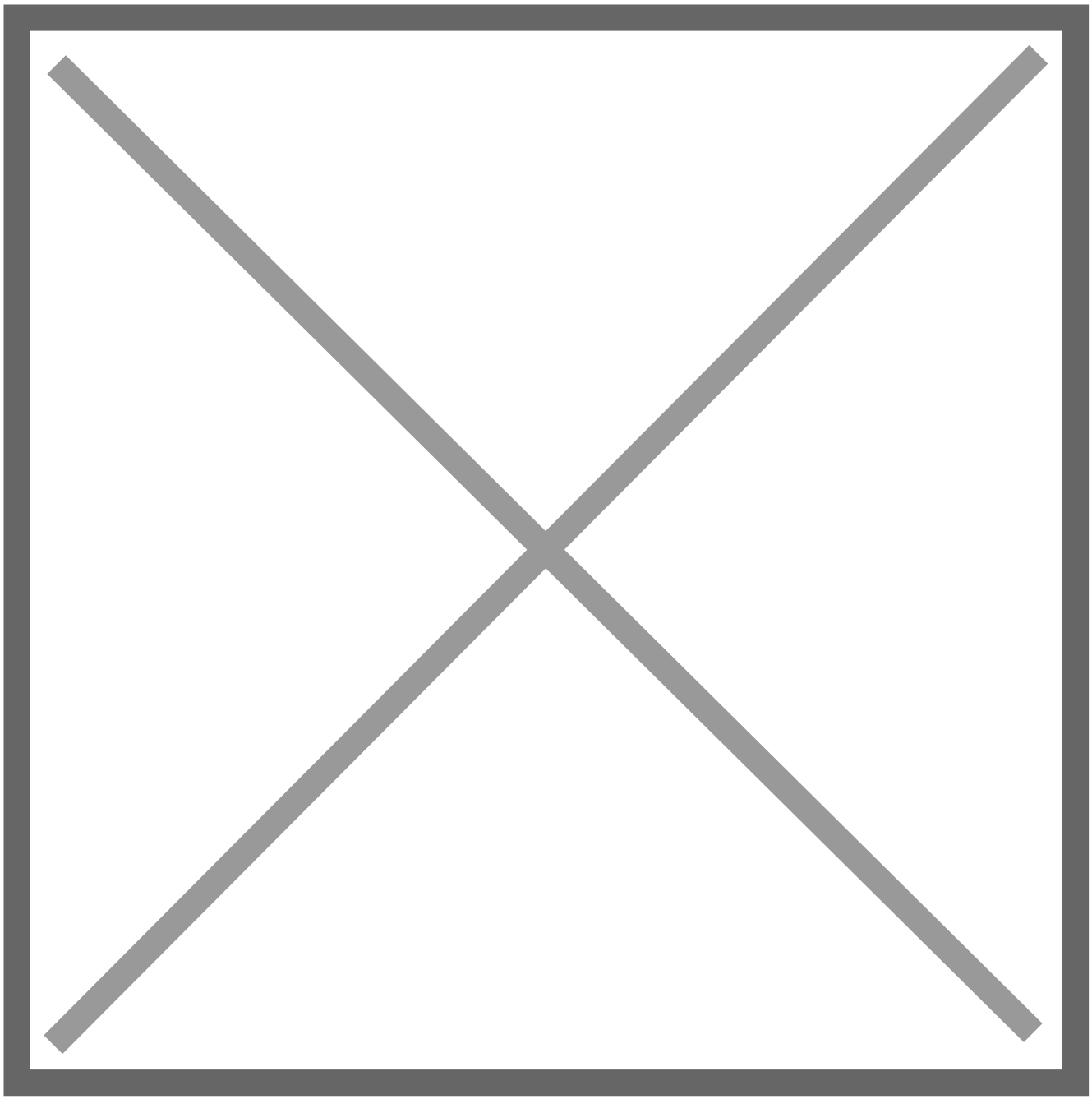
News



Francisco Pedro and his wife, Lucia Juan Diego, pose after attending a prayer vigil July 6, 2025, on behalf of their grandson Pascual Pedro Pedro at St. Joseph Church in West Liberty, Iowa. Their grandson, who was in ICE custody, was deported the following day to Guatemala. (OSV News/The Catholic Messenger/Barb Arland-Fye)

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WEST LIBERTY, Iowa — July 10, 2025
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Hours after a July 6 prayer vigil that Bishop Dennis Walsh of Davenport, Iowa, led for immigrant construction worker Pascual Pedro Pedro, Immigration and Customs Enforcement authorities deported the 20-year-old West Liberty, Iowa, parishioner to Guatemala, his homeland.

As 300 participants prayed and sang at St. Joseph Church in West Liberty, hopeful for his release, they were unaware that deportation was already in progress for the West Liberty High School graduate, who arrived in the U.S. as a 13-year-old. Pedro's immigration attorney Timothy Farmer filed a 135-page "stay of removal" petition with ICE on July 7, before he learned that his client had been flown to Guatemala. Pascual Pedro called his family in Iowa later that morning from Guatemala City.

Heartfelt letters from civic, school and faith leaders vouching for Pascual Pedro's upstanding character accompanied the Stay of Removal petition. Walsh wrote in his letter, Pascual Pedro's "continued detention poses a significant hardship given his deep integration into American society and his exemplary conduct."

The bishop said Pascual Pedro "has acclimated remarkably well to life here, demonstrating a strong commitment to his community and personal growth. … As

an adult, he has been a hardworking individual in the construction industry, contributing to the economy and maintaining a valid work permit. He has consistently complied completely with the terms of his supervised release, proving his reliability and respect for the legal process."

The bishop expressed concern that returning Pascual Pedro to "an unfamiliar environment exposes him to significant risks, including violence and extortion. … He has made a home here, and severing ties would be devastating."

"This is a travesty, there was no due process and our message is bring him back now," Fr. Guillermo Treviño, pastor of the West Liberty parish and president of the advocacy group Escucha Mi Voz, said in a July 7 statement. Escucha Mi Voz and the Diocese of Davenport's Social Action Office organized the prayer vigil.

Escucha Mi Voz and other supporters have organized "Bring Him Home" actions that include a visit to the Davenport congressional offices of U.S. Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks, R-Iowa, and U.S. Sen. Joni Ernst, R-Iowa, planned for July 10. The supporters will continue to work together for justice for immigrants.

ICE authorities detained Pascual Pedro July 1 during his annual check-in in Cedar Rapids. They sent him to the Muscatine County Jail in Muscatine because he had an order of expedited removal from seven years ago when he arrived in the U.S. as a juvenile with no documents. He came with his father, who was later deported.

An earlier prayer vigil, outside the county jail July 1, drew more than 75 people including some of Pascual Pedro's former high school soccer teammates. The vigil was part of a growing call for his immediate release and a broader end to unjust deportations, the advocacy groups said.

"I knew him personally," Treviño told The Catholic Messenger, Davenport's diocesan news outlet. "I was his confirmation sponsor. I've seen him grow up and mature."

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He described Pascual Pedro as "a kind, humble young man who came to this country seeking safety and a better life." He received permission to visit his parishioner July 2. They prayed together and Pascual Pedro said to say hi and to thank everyone for their support, the priest said.

Jahsiah Galvan, a former soccer teammate and good friend of Pascual Pedro, spoke to The Catholic Messenger July 3 by phone from California, where he is a senior at Stanford University.

"Through soccer, we spent a lot of time together as a team. A lot of the guys on the team liked him," Galvan said. "He was a pretty easygoing person, super likable, someone you wanted to be around."

Galvan's cousin plays for the Guatemala National Football Team and Pascual Pedro texted his friend a photo after the game in Minneapolis shortly before his ICE check-in. "I tried texting him (back) … but I think someone else had his account. I don't think it was him who answered."

Before the July 6 prayer vigil began, Pascual Pedro's grandfather Francisco Pedro, speaking in Spanish, briefly described his grandson's life in Iowa and the anxious first phone call they exchanged after Pascual Pedro's detention. "Papa, they won't let me go," Pascual Pedro told his grandfather, who became his caregiver after the deportation of Pascual Pedro's father. Grandfather and grandson couldn't understand why he had been detained since Pascual Pedro had followed all the rules, excelled in soccer, graduated from high school and worked construction with his grandfather.

During the prayer vigil, Walsh shared his remarks in Spanish, among them: "Brothers and sisters, I have great admiration for your courage. You are not alone in your struggle for justice. Jesus, who himself experienced injustice and suffering, walks with us. The kingdom of God is not built without tears and without martyrs."

Later, he told The Catholic Messenger, "Pascual and his family are hardworking people who came to the United States for a better life, the same reason that my ancestors and the ancestors of many others came to start a new life. By my presence, I wanted to communicate to the community that the church stands with them. Just as the bishops of Iowa committed to in their open letter to the community. I hoped to remind the community that the greatness of this country has always been its respect for human dignity and the intrinsic rights of each and every person."

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