News

Los Angeles County Sheriff's deputies detain a woman during a standoff by protesters and law

Los Angeles County Sheriff's deputies detain a woman during a standoff by protesters and law enforcement following multiple detentions by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement in Compton, Calif., June 7, 2025. Los Angeles business leaders joined Archbishop José Gomez July 23 to unveil a new fund aimed at helping families affected by recent immigration raids. (OSV News/Reuters/Barbara Davidson)

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A lineup of Los Angeles business leaders joined Archbishop José Gomez July 23 to unveil a new fund aimed at helping families affected by recent immigration raids.

"This program will provide direct support to families who are suffering financial hardships because of the current climate of uncertainty and fear," said Archbishop Gomez at a press conference at St. Patrick's Catholic Church near downtown LA.

Funds raised by the Archdiocese of LA's "Family Assistance Program" — believed to be the first of its kind in a U.S. Catholic diocese — will support parish-based outreach ministries that have been delivering groceries, meals, medicine and other essential supplies. Families who need assistance are encouraged to apply by contacting their local parish.

"Our parishes know their people's needs best, and are therefore leading the effort to distribute aid in the most effective and compassionate way possible," said Catherine Fraser, the archdiocese's chief development officer, who added that the program aims to help people regardless of religious affiliation.

> 'Never in my life did I think that I would see the day where Catholics are afraid to go to church, afraid to send their children to school.'
> —Michael Molina
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The announcement comes as immigrant communities across LA County remain on edge following weeks of raids by Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents on local businesses and city sidewalks across Southern California. While the sweeps were temporarily halted by a federal judge's restraining order on "roving patrols" earlier in July, speakers at the press conference described a "climate of fear" caused by the Trump administration's deportation campaign that hasn't gone away.

"Never in my life did I think that I would see the day where Catholics are afraid to go to church, afraid to send their children to school," said Michael Molina, chairman of the Catholic Association of Latino Leaders, or CALL, a local organization of business leaders that has pledged $10,000 to support the fund. Molina said CALL is inviting its members to also donate individually to the fund.

The businesses represented at the event pledged support in various forms. Locally owned Vallarta Supermarkets, a chain of Mexican food grocery stores with 55 locations in California, pledged $10,000 in gift cards to the program. The Beverly Hills Teddy Bear Co. donated both money to the fund and stuffed animals for children affected by the raids. Parishioners Federal Credit Union also pledged a cash donation.

Among the speakers at the morning press conference was real estate mogul and former LA mayoral candidate Rick Caruso, who announced a $50,000 up-front donation and a pledge to match every dollar donated on the fund's webpage up to $50,000. In his remarks, Caruso warned that families could end up "on the street" because of immigrant jobs lost due to the raids.

"The ecosystem of many immigrant families that rely on many people working to support the whole family is part of the culture of our great region, and our great city," said Caruso, a parishioner of St. Monica's Church in Santa Monica. "This region will not survive without their workforce being part of our economy."

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Gomez said the archdiocese has been working with LA city officials, including Mayor Karen Bass, to "find a practical, peaceful solution to the situation with the federal authorities." Meanwhile Caruso, together with other business leaders at the event, echoed Gomez's call on political leaders to "fix this broken system which is causing so much heartache and suffering for ordinary people."

Joining Gomez and Auxiliary Bishop Matthew Elshoff behind the podium were a handful of priests from inner-city LA parishes. Among them was Msgr. John Moretta, pastor of Resurrection Church in Boyle Heights and a longtime advocate for immigrant and environmental rights.

"I've been a pastor (at Resurrection) for 42 years, I've lived in LA for 84 years, and I've never seen such fear, a consistent fear," Moretta said when asked about the effect of the immigration sweeps on his parish. "As an Angeleno and as a Catholic priest, I'm just very embarrassed by the whole thing."

ICE agents detain migrants on church grounds at 2 California parishes, diocese says

The Family Assistance Program is designed to support parish food banks like the one at Resurrection, which distributes to about 100 families daily, six days a week. The parish also sends donations to a local YMCA program that brings food to another 550 families every week.

"It's going to be a very, very needed process," Moretta said of the new fund. "Hopefully the other parishes that have the resources will come to the fore also."

At St. Patrick's, parishioners told Angelus that church attendance has dropped by around 50% since the raids began. Patricia, who has lived in the U.S. without legal status for nearly 30 years, said she's kept coming, drawn by a simple message from her pastor, Msgr. Timothy Dyer.

"He keeps encouraging us not to be afraid," said Patricia, one of the dozens of parishioners who sat in St. Patrick's pews during the press conference.

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Sitting next to Patricia, Guadalupe Moreno said she agrees that immigrants with criminal records should be deported. But while the raids seem to have paused for now, she's noticed a loss of trust in law enforcement in her community that will be hard to restore.

"The problem remains the discrimination," Moreno said. "The (ICE agents) have been terrorizing our community, and that's not right."

Patricia knows of several families who've turned to the church in recent weeks for help after losing jobs or seeing relatives detained.

"Yes, people (in the parish) are afraid," Patricia said. "But we find a lot of peace here."