News



Sr. Silvia Tarafa, a member of the Servants of the Pierced Hearts of Jesus and Mary, greets Bishop Daniel Garcia during his installation Mass as the new head of the Diocese of Austin, at St. William Catholic Church in Round Rock Sept. 18, 2025. (OSV News/Courtesy of the Diocese of Austin/Aaron Smith)

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ROUND ROCK, Texas — September 19, 2025
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Bishop Daniel Garcia, Central Texas born and raised, delivered an emotional homily condemning racism and the harsh treatment of migrants as he was installed as the sixth bishop of the Diocese of Austin, Texas, on Sept. 18.

It was in the white-and-gold sanctuary of the same parish church, St. William in Round Rock, where, more than 10 years ago, he was ordained the first auxiliary bishop for the diocese he now heads.

"We cannot stand by and say we love God and look away from our neighbor, even if they are here legally or not," he said. "This hateful and vile rhetoric toward our immigrant brothers and sisters today is shameful. We will all be held accountable for our actions — or lack thereof."

Principal concelebrants at the two-hour bilingual installation Mass included Cardinal Christopher Pierre, the papal nuncio to the United States, and Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, retired archbishop of Galveston-Houston.

The congregation of 1,500 broke into a standing ovation when Garcia was led to the cathedra, the bishop’s chair, by Archbishop Joe Vásquez of Galveston-Houston and Cardinal Pierre.

Garcia, who turned 65 on Aug. 30, was previously the bishop of Monterey, California, a post to which he was named by Pope Francis Nov. 27, 2018, and installed Jan. 29, 2019. Before that, on Jan. 21, 2015, the pope appointed him as auxiliary bishop for Austin and his episcopal ordination was March 3, 2015.

He succeeds Vásquez, who was Austin's fifth bishop until he was named archbishop of Galveston-Houston in January and installed on March 25.

"Words cannot adequately express the feelings and emotions that I carry with me at the moment," Garcia began. "It was there in California that I learned what it means to shepherd a local church. I will always carry you with me."

Then he discussed his theme of describing a world "hungry for justice and mercy" while suffering from "hurt and misery."

"We find them in our families, and our friends and co-workers," he said. "We may not be able to prevent some of the hurt that is experienced, but we can make decisions about how we choose to respond to these events."

"Most of us," he continued, "are called to come down the mountain and to find God through the experiences of people we encounter along the journey of life. God is calling you and me to get our hands and feet dirty."

To that end, "he calls us to work with people who are hurting and find themselves in situations that are very messy and complex," the bishop said. "Why? I believe that God has created each and every one of us in his own image. But this image, over time, can become disfigured and perhaps undesirable. But to God, no one is undesirable.

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"Jesus never stopped trying to soften hearts, regardless of where they may be or where they are from. We have to re-learn to have conversations where we can disagree with one another and still be able to sit at a table and enjoy each other's presence, rather than look for what we do not like in the other."

Garcia said his own experiences with racism and religious differences "has often been heartbreaking, yet real." He called for "no tolerance for racism, prejudice or nonacceptance because one is different, or thinks different than I do."

"I believe God weeps each and every time one of our brothers or sisters are hurt by actions, words, gestures" which represent "an indifference to one's struggles."

"It is time for you and me," he concluded, "to change the way we treat one another, especially the least among us. If the church is to be one that is to grow, we must, first and foremost, make people feel welcome, and that they have gifts to be honored and treasured."

At a July news conference to mark his appointment, Garcia promised to be a voice for the "overlooked and the marginalized," including immigrants in the U.S. without

documents.

"That's where the church needs to be to make sure that people do not forget those who are often forgotten," he said.

"You can disagree on policy," he added. "But the church's role is to let people know that we are all created in the likeness of God."

Garcia was born on Aug. 20, 1960, in Cameron and grew up there. He is the oldest of four children; he has three younger sisters.

He has an associate's degree from Tyler Junior College and bachelor's degree and master of divinity degree from the University of St. Thomas in Houston.

He was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Austin on May 28, 1988, by Bishop John McCarthy, after which he earned a master's degree in liturgical studies from St. John’s University in Collegeville, Minnesota.

Garcia's first assignments were as associate pastor at St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Cristo Rey Parish, and St. Louis King of France Parish, all in Austin.

In the mid-1990s, he served in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston at St. Mary Magdalene Parish in Humble and was the founding pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Austin, where he guided the community through its formation and multiple building projects, including the construction of a permanent church and sanctuary.

Beyond parish ministry, Garcia held several diocesan roles, including service in the vocation office, priests’ personnel board, and the presbyteral council, where he also served as chair.

In 2014, he was appointed vicar general and moderator of the curia for the Diocese of Austin by now-Archbishop Vásquez.

Garcia has served on the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Communications and the Committee on Divine Worship. He is also a member of the board of directors for Catholic Relief Services.

The 25-county Austin Diocese in Central Texas has more than 678,000 Catholics spread across 21,000 square miles and contains 127 parishes, missions and university Catholic centers. Its website includes a page listing resources for immigrants.

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