News



Archbishop Jose Gomez of Los Angeles gives a blessing after celebrating a Mass in Recognition of All Immigrants at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels Sept. 21, 2025. (OSV News/Evan Lirette, Courtesy Archdiocese of Los Angeles)

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When Antonio Luna was 9 years old in the 1970s, his mother, out of desperation, sent him along with two brothers and two sisters from Mexico to the United States after his father had died.

Five years later, as a teenager coming home from junior high, he returned to an empty apartment. Suddenly, there was a knock at the door, and having already known the fear of immigration authorities, he peeked through the window to see the apartment manager.

She had sad news: His brothers and sisters had been deported.

"As soon as I closed the door, my stomach started just rumbling, and I had that fear," said Luna, who afterward had to live on the streets. "And the questions came to my mind: What am I going to do? Where am I going to go? Who is going to pick me up? Am I going to see my mom again? I have brothers, sisters. I belong to a family."

Luna, now a deacon for the Diocese of Orange, California, shared his story at this year's Mass in Recognition of All Immigrants, held Sept. 21 at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels. Luna's tale echoed what many immigrants in Los Angeles and around the U.S. are facing today: Fears of deportation, fears of going outside, fears of what may happen to their children and loved ones if they were sent back to their home countries.

Many at the Sunday afternoon Mass told Angelus, the news outlet of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, that they felt helpless, hoping that God would intervene in the situation. But being at the cathedral on Sunday, they also felt united in prayer.

Boni Lara and his wife, Celia Zamora, parishioners at Ascension Church in South LA, have come to the annual Mass for the last three years, but said they felt called in a special way to come this year.

"There are a lot of us who are scared, who don't want to leave our homes," said Lara, an immigrant from Michoacán, Mexico. "We hope that something good comes out of this Mass, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary."

"There are many children now without their fathers, and the father is the pillar of the home," Zamora said. "I feel very sad for the situation, but God gives me happiness and strength for the immigrants through this Mass."

Luna believes Catholics, especially young people, need to take action to help those immigrants in need.

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"We can do so much," he said. "Our communities, they trust us. They see the Lord in us. We can open our hearts and listen to their voices and listen to what they need. Because, after all, us as Catholics, we are here to lift the dignity of human beings.

"To those who are undocumented, let me tell you one thing: Do not be afraid. Don't lose faith, trust the Lord, and pray. Pray, because this will have an end."

In his homily, Archbishop José Gomez called on immigrants to tell their own stories in appealing to government leaders to remedy the country's broken immigration system.

"It's the story that's been told since the beginning of this country," Gomez said. "It's the story of good, hardworking men and women, people of faith.
"Let's make that true again. Let's tell our story to our leaders especially, and urge them to do what is right. To make it easier to come to this country, to create a path forward for those who have been here for many years," he said.

Isaac Cuevas, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles' director of immigration and public affairs, said that archdiocesan parishes and groups have been working tirelessly to support immigrants, including food banks, "know your rights" workshops, and helping them create legal plans in case of emergencies or deportation. Leaders from One LA-IAF, a network of diverse religious and non-profit institutions across LA County, spoke before the Mass about their Freedom Schools strategy, which teaches people how to confront assaults on their civil rights and liberties.

But while larger groups do their part, Cuevas said it was important to show that members of the church are standing up for them and are helping in their own way. The Mass for Immigrants was a way to do that.

"I hope people understand and recognize how important it is to just stand in solidarity with one another, to recognize those who are vulnerable right now, people who've been impacted by the raids and the enforcement that's happening," Cuevas said. "It's inflicting harm, and it's inflicting emotional stress. And doing that knowingly is sinful. We hope that as a church, we can do our part to support people in a time of need."

"Every single one of us has an opportunity to take action in some small way," he added.

Benton DiPasquale, who attended the Mass with a group of fellow Loyola Marymount University students, said he was inspired by seeing so many different people at the Mass and was confident the church would keep pushing for a peaceful solution.

"There are so many people in the nation right now, not just in Los Angeles, that are afraid to leave their houses," he said. "It's important for us to stand together, to speak up, to have a loud voice to show them that they're not alone. To offer our prayers to God and to the Virgin Mary Guadalupe that peace is something that we're all striving for, and it's something that we have to work for together."

"Catholic means universal, and to see everyone from all ages, all backgrounds come out, really just shows what our faith is about," he said.

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