News

Bishop Daniel Garcia

Bishop Daniel Garcia of Austin, Texas, chair of the U.S. bishops' Subcommittee for the Promotion of Racial Justice and Reconciliation, is pictured in a file photo. In a statement Dec. 5, Garcia praised "the rich gifts that neighbors from diverse cultures bring to our communities." (OSV News/Bob Roller)

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The chair of the U.S. bishops' Subcommittee for the Promotion of Racial Justice and Reconciliation Dec. 5 praised "the rich gifts that neighbors from diverse cultures bring to our communities."

While the short statement from Bishop Daniel Garcia of Austin, Texas, did not name President Donald Trump, it came after Trump took aim at Somali immigrants during comments at a Cabinet meeting at the White House on Dec. 2, calling them "garbage."

"These are people that do nothing but complain," Trump said. "When they come from hell and they complain and do nothing but bitch, we don’t want them in our country. Let them go back to where they came from and fix it."

Trump's comments sparked controversy and were met with criticism by those who argued the language was dehumanizing or that his use of a vulgar term was unbecoming for a president, but were met with praise by some of his allies who support his hardline immigration policies.

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In his statement, Garcia said, "As Catholics, we believe that every person is beloved by God and created in his image. Each child of God has value and dignity."

"Language that denigrates a person or community based on his or her ethnicity or country of origin is incompatible with this truth," he continued. "I call on all — public officials, community leaders and individuals — to refrain from denigrating and dehumanizing language. May we recognize the rich gifts that neighbors from diverse cultures bring to our communities. The Body of Christ is beautiful in its diversity and each part, while different, is valued and needed. I pray that together, we can be people of welcome, respect, and understanding."

Trump's comments came as his administration launched an immigration enforcement operation in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, which will target Somali immigrants without legal status.

Garcia is the first-ever chairman of the now-permanent Subcommittee for the Promotion of Racial Justice and Reconciliation, the USCCB announced in November.

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