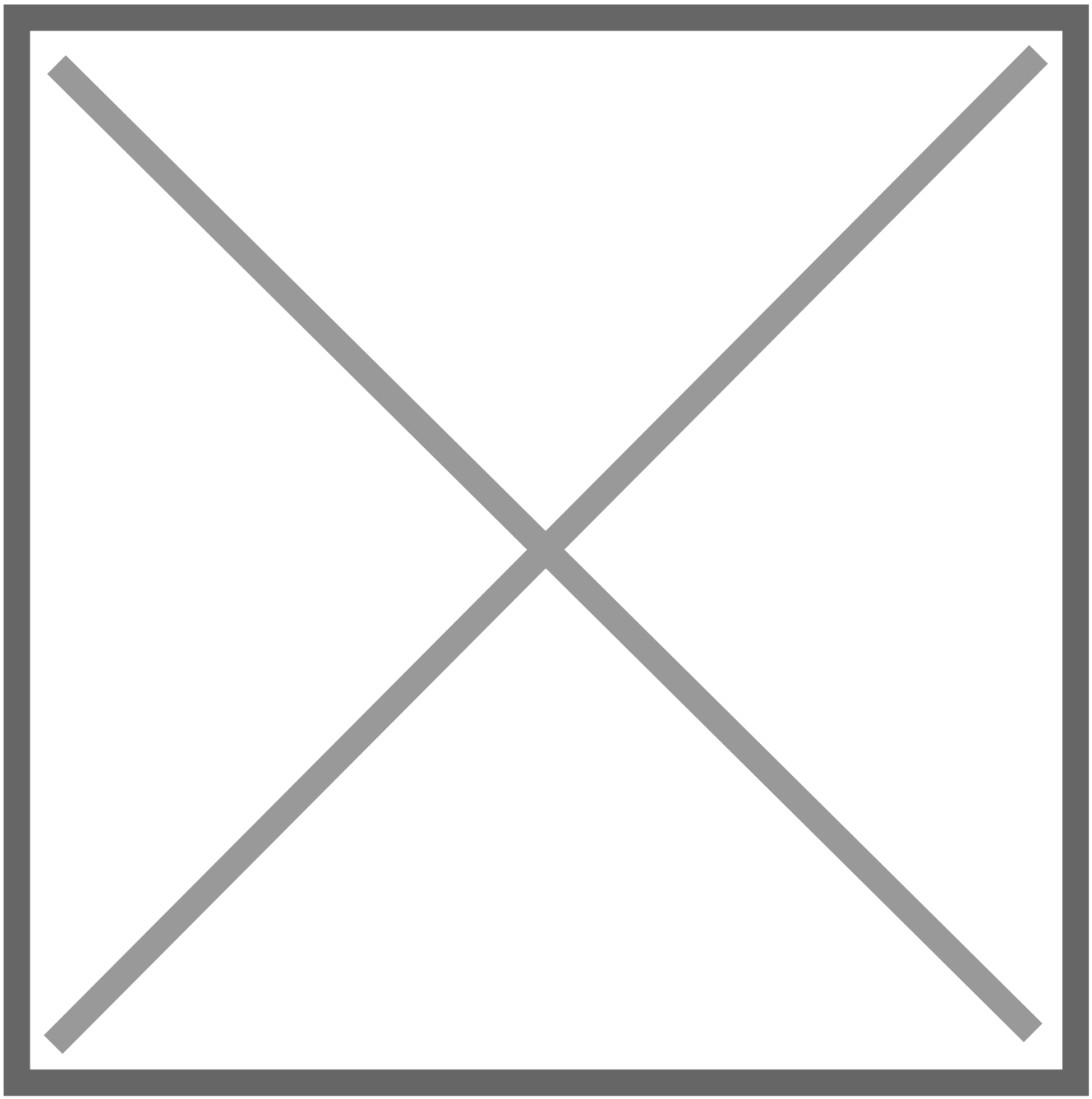
News



Auxiliary Bishop Kevin Kenney of St. Paul and Minneapolis, wearing a poncho with the colors of the Mexican flag, sings "Sancta Maria" during an impromptu prayer service Dec. 12, 2025, outside the B.H. Whipple Federal Building at Fort Snelling in the Twin Cities after a member of the local Catholic community was detained by officers with Immigration and Customers Enforcement. (OSV News photo/The Catholic Spirit/Josh McGovern)

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Minneapolis — December 15, 2025
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Across the street from the B.H. Whipple Federal Building at Fort Snelling along the Mississippi River in Minneapolis, people gathered with paintings of Our Lady of Guadalupe on her feast day, Dec. 12, for a special prayer service for those detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Auxiliary Bishop Kevin Kenney of St. Paul and Minneapolis and Fr. Christopher Collins from the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul led the prayer service, which was held as federal officials conducted an immigration enforcement effort in the Twin Cities.

A parent of a local Catholic school student was apprehended by ICE the same day. A monthly prayer service is common at the Whipple Federal Building, but Dec. 12 many prayer members were surprised to find they were barred from entering. Security staff asked them to move off the building's grounds. The request for a permit had been denied.

About a block from their usual spot for prayer, a tall evergreen tree protected about 40 people from below-zero windchill. Members of parishes such as the Basilica of St. Mary and Ascension, both in Minneapolis, huddled together and prayed a decade of the rosary — led by Bishop Kenney — sang hymns, and offered each other words of encouragement.

After the rosary, Kenney asked the group, "What's the best way to get rid of ice on your sidewalks?" The answer was salt.

"In the Old Testament, you sprinkle that salt, you rid the area of evil and bad happenings," Kenney said. "I would recommend you bring salt to church with you and have it blessed and share it with your neighbors to sprinkle around homes, parishes, cars. It does offer protection. … Maybe if we put salt on the sidewalk, the ice will disappear."

Evangeline Dhawan-Maloney, an associate attorney at a local law firm, and the attorney representing the person apprehended by ICE, stopped by the prayer service to thank everyone for their support. She said the individual was being detained in Brainerd.

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"I know her family really appreciates it," Dhawan-Maloney said. "They're pretty torn up right now. … I don't know if there's going to be a lot of options for her, to be honest."

Collins told those gathered that the opposite of chaos is not order, but community, such as the one gathered in the cold outside the federal building.

Marking the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Kenney joined Archbishop Bernard Hebda and Bishop Michael Izen of St. Paul and Minneapolis in releasing a video Dec.12 reminding immigrants and their families that the Catholic Church stands beside them.

"Our Catholic faith teaches that every person is made in the image of God," Hebda said in the video. "And deserves respect, dignity and care."

"In this beautiful celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe, we remember that she walks with us, especially with those who left their homeland in search of a better future," Kenney said in the video.

During the prayer service, Kenney reminded those gathered of what Our Lady of Guadalupe said to St. Juan Diego. "Am I not here, I who am your mother?"

People lit candles and sang "Sancta Maria." Several cried and embraced each other. After the prayers and hymns Kenney blessed the images of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

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