News



Federal agents stand by a damaged civilian's car hit by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents in Minneapolis Jan.12, 2026, during ongoing demonstrations against ICE. (OSV News/Reuters/Tim Evans)



by Michael J. O'Loughlin

NCR CEO & executive editor

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January 26, 2026

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A high-ranking Catholic leader is ratcheting up criticism of the Trump administration's immigration crackdown and urging people of faith to be more vocal in calling out injustice.

Responding to a sense of helplessness many people are feeling in the wake of violence at the hands of federal immigration officials, Cardinal Joseph Tobin of Newark, New Jersey, urged people of faith not to shy away from the news and to use their voices to say, "No."

In a reflection delivered Jan. 26 during an online interfaith prayer service hosted by Faith in Action, Tobin employed some of the strongest language yet by a U.S. cardinal to condemn the Trump administration's immigration crackdown, describing Immigration and Customs Enforcement "lawless" and urging Catholics to tell their lawmakers to vote against additional funding.

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Recounting a story from *Bread and Wine*, a 1936 novel by Ignazio Silone, Tobin described a character lamenting the incursion of fascist forces who asks a priest, "Father, what can we do?" With "the machinery of death" set in motion, as Tobin put it, the priest tells the young woman that what worries dictators and authoritarian regimes is the person who scrawls on the piazza wall, "No."

"I think if we are serious about putting our faith in action, we need to say 'no,' each one of us," Tobin said. What saying "no" looks like today, he continued, is by telling the truth about what is happening and honoring those whose lives are upended.

Over the weekend, immigration enforcement agents killed Alex Pretti, a 37-year-old Minneapolis resident and intensive care nurse who was filming at the protest. Federal authorities say that Pretti was armed and a threat to law enforcement, but video analysis by The New York Times and other media outlets dispute that account. According to reports, Pretti's gun had already been secured by officers before two agents shot him at least 10 times.

"One way that we say 'no' is that we mourn, we do not celebrate death, and, what is probably worse, we do not pretend it doesn't happen. We say names. We pray for the dead," Tobin said. "We mourn for a world, a country, that allows 5-year-olds to be legally kidnapped and protesters to be slaughtered."



Cardinal Joseph Tobin of Newark, N.J., in St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican May 7, 2025 (CNS/Lola Gomez)

One of three U.S. cardinals who recently signed a statement condemning President Donald Trump's foreign policy aims and calling for the White House to focus on peace, Tobin noted that he was speaking within a few miles from two detention centers.

"Everyday people from many faith communities go to Delaney Street here in Newark, and to the Elizabeth Detention Center, and they say 'no' by standing at the gates, by talking with the ICE personnel, by insisting on the rights of the detainees within," he said. "They bring them human comfort, they console the families of those who aren't always admitted to see their loved ones. How will you say 'no?' How?"

Citing the Gospel story of the Good Samaritan, and invoking the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Tobin asked how people will say "no" to what's happening today.

"How will you say 'no?' How will you say 'no' to violence?" he said. "How will you say 'no' this week when an appropriations bill is going to be considered in Congress? Will

you contact your congressional representatives, the senators and representatives from your district? Will you ask them, for the love of God and the love of human beings, which can't be separated, to vote against renewing funding for such a lawless organization?"

Tobin concluded his remarks with a challenge to people of faith disturbed by what they see: "How will you scrawl your answer on the wall? How will you help restore a culture of life in the midst of death?"

This story appears in the **Immigration Protests in Minneapolis** and **Immigration and the Church** feature series.