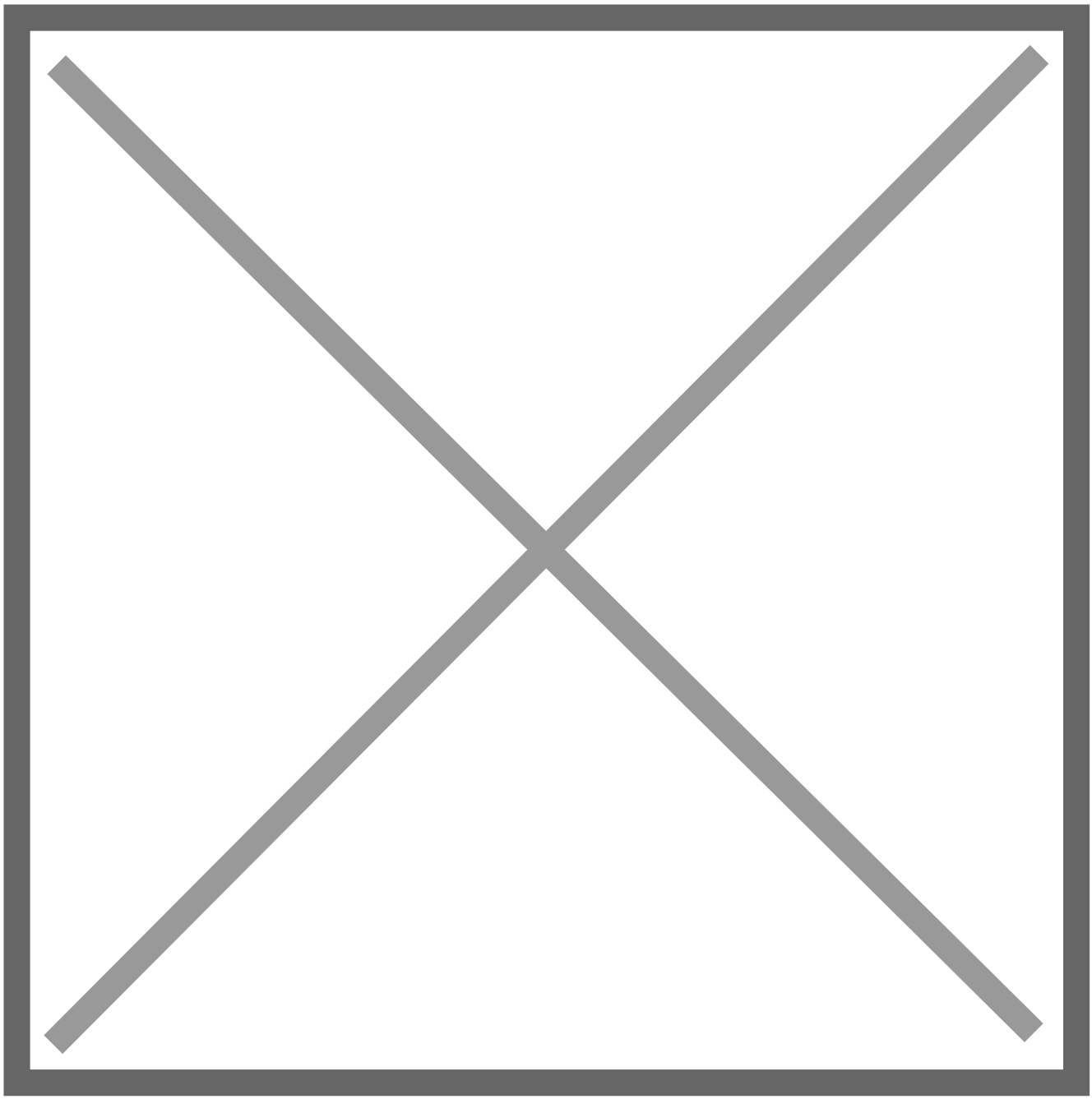
News



Archbishop Paul Coakley of Oklahoma City, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, is pictured in a file photo. In a Jan. 28, 2026, statement, Coakley calls for a Holy Hour for peace as a step toward national healing following a trio of recent killings by immigration enforcement personnel. (OSV News/Gregory A. Shemitz)

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Amid soaring domestic and global tensions, the head of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has called for a Holy Hour for peace as "a moment of renewal for our hearts and for our nation."

In a Jan. 28 statement, Archbishop Paul Coakley of Oklahoma City, president of the USCCB, said that "the current climate of fear and polarization, which thrives when human dignity is disregarded, does not meet the standard set by Christ in the Gospel."

He pointed to "the recent killing of two people by immigration enforcement officers in Minneapolis and that of a detained man in Texas," referencing the deaths of Renee Nicole Good and Alex Pretti, respectively slain by federal agents Jan. 7 and 24 as they protested immigration enforcement actions in Minneapolis.

Coakley appeared to reference the death of Cuban immigrant Geraldo Lunas Campos, whose Jan. 3 death in a Texas immigration detention facility has been ruled a homicide.

Campos, the third detainee to die at the facility, had pleaded for medication before apparently being slammed to the ground by guards, according to sworn court testimony by several fellow detainees. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

officials at the facility claimed Campos had died while attempting suicide and that guards had tried to save him. A federal judge on Jan. 27 blocked the federal government from deporting the witnesses until they could provide depositions.

The three deaths "are just a few of the tragic examples of the violence that represent failures in our society to respect the dignity of every human life," said Coakley. "We mourn this loss of life and deplore the indifference and injustice it represents."

Coakley's message comes amid a growing chorus of outcry from the nation's Catholic bishops over the increasingly frayed domestic and international order.

During their annual plenary meeting in November, the USCCB issued a special pastoral message on immigration, which condemned "the indiscriminate mass deportation of people" and prayed for "an end to dehumanizing rhetoric and violence, whether directed at immigrants or at law enforcement."

In his Jan. 28 message, Coakley acknowledged that "many people today feel powerless in the face of violence, injustice and social unrest.

"To those who feel this way, I wish to say clearly: your faithfulness matters. Your prayers matter. Your acts of love and works of justice matter," he said.

Coakley said he was "deeply grateful for the countless ways Catholics and all people of good will continue to serve one another and work for peace and justice.

"Whether feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, caring for the sick, accompanying the lonely, visiting the imprisoned, or striving daily to love their neighbors, no work of mercy or act of justice is ever wasted in the eyes of God," said Coakley.

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"While proper laws must be respected, works of mercy, peacefully assembling and caring for those in your community are signs of hope, and they build peace more surely than anger or despair ever could," he said.

Referencing Matthew 10:42, he added, "Christ reminds us that even 'a single cup of cold water' given in his name will not go unrewarded."

The archbishop invited "my brother bishops and priests across the United States to offer a Holy Hour for Peace in the days ahead," providing a link to a USCCB webpage with instructions, Scripture readings and a "Litany of Peace."

The instructions also included a passage from St. John Paul II's 1987 encyclical Sollicitudo Rei Socialis ("The Concern of the Church for the Social Order"), which in turn marked the 20th anniversary of St. Paul VI's 1967 encyclical Populorum Progressio ("On the Development of Peoples").

The quoted passage from St. John Paul II's encyclical — which stressed the centrality of the Eucharist — affirmed that while "no temporal achievement is to be identified" with the awaited glory of God's kingdom, "that expectation can never be an excuse for lack of concern for people in their concrete personal situations and in their social, national and international life, since the former is conditioned by the latter, especially today."

"Let us pray for reconciliation where there is division, for justice where there are violations of fundamental rights and for consolation for all who feel overwhelmed by fear or loss," said Coakley.

"I encourage Catholics everywhere to participate, whether in parishes, chapels or before the Lord present in the quiet of their hearts for healing in our nation and communities," he said.

"May this Holy Hour be a moment of renewal for our hearts and for our nation," he added. "Entrusting our fears and hopes to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, let us ask the Lord to make us instruments of his peace and witnesses to the inherent dignity of every person."

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