Opinion
Guest Voices



An ICE agent stands outside a warehouse as federal officials tour the facility to consider repurposing it as an ICE detention facility, Jan. 15, 2026, in Kansas City, Missouri. (AP photo/Charlie Riedel)



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For Kansas City Catholics, Visitation Parish in Brookside has always been the place where power went to pray. I used to pray there, too, though I belong to a different parish now.

There's nothing wrong with having resources; it's notably harder to feed the hungry and clothe the naked without them.

But it's what Jesus says about welcoming the stranger that's put Visitation, and really all of Catholic KC, at the uncomfortable center of righteous pushback against the plan to put an ICE detention center that could hold as many as 10,000 people in a warehouse in south Kansas City.

That's because Terry and Ryan Anderson, the brothers who are selling that property to the government, are not just Visi parishioners but major donors there. And Terry and his wife Lindsey are heading the Visitation School's current capital campaign.

The Andersons' company Platform Ventures got $80 million in bonds and tax breaks through the Port Authority of Kansas City to build the warehouse they're now selling. The Andersons are on the city's bad list because they got the breaks based on an agreement that the property would be part of an industrial park, not a regional hub for human misery. As soon as the city council heard about the deal, they voted 12-1 to try and block it through zoning. It's unclear whether that will delay the project long enough to effectively kill it, but the protests against ICE and this facility in particular haven't stopped.

Just because the Department of Homeland Security is absurdly overfunded — are ICE agents going to the Olympics because we fear our athletes may defect, or what? — doesn't mean they have to spend it on mistreating people here or anywhere.

Kansas City needs all of this like Minneapolis needs thousands of ICE agents pulling brown people out of cars and surrounding a Catholic church. But I believe that it's the local Catholic schools and church where the Andersons are major donors that could make a difference if they chose to.

This horror would be in Councilman Johnathan Duncan's district, at the former Richards-Gebaur Air Force Base. He routinely refers to the proposed project as a "mass concentration camp" that should bar the Andersons from ever doing business with the city again. Never is a while, and that doesn't usually happen to boys who manage real estate assets worth billions.

But he also wants to use shame to stop this thing. "May they never so much as get a coffee or go to the grocery store without whispers and glares," he wrote on X. "Let's force them to save face and make a different choice." And we know who does shame better than anyone, don't we?

For weeks, the big question has been whether this is a done deal. "No," KC Port spokesman Patrick Pierce told me on Monday (Feb. 2). "We still haven't received any communication on that. We're still waiting for answers." The Andersons, he said, have "gone radio silent on their side, which is highly unusual, even on working with them on past projects."

That means it would not be too late for them to back out if they chose to do the right thing.

They are laying so low that they didn't show up at a Visitation School auction on Friday night, despite being major underwriters of the event. They are laying so low that they've scrubbed themselves from their own website.

I don't know if that's because they're reconsidering, which they should be, or embarrassed, which would also be a good sign. Maybe they think they're above having to say anything to anybody. But the longer they're quiet, the more it seems even they think this is too shady to defend.

So how do their fellow Visitation parishioners feel about what they are doing?

"It's not in keeping with the vision of the parish or the pope," one longtime member told me. "It's directly against yesterday's Gospel" — the "blessed are the merciful" Beatitudes. In the petitions at Sunday Mass, the parishioner said, "We're praying every week for the people in Minneapolis. But it's a wealthier parish and we have plenty of people on all sides. They're getting ready to do a $12-15 million spend on the school, and they're both involved."

If other donors chose to make an issue of the ICE facility, they could.

Neither the Andersons nor their pastor at Visitation, Fr. Greg Haskamp, answered my messages.

But in a town this size, the brothers can't slouch around undercover for long.

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And Catholic Kansas City is even smaller: Terry Anderson, who is 42, is on the board of trustees at Rockhurst High School, where both brothers graduated. "I wish I knew the Andersons" personally, said someone who is active at the school, "so I could ask them *why*" other than for money, which they already have a lot of. Platform Ventures reportedly manages assets worth $3.6 billion.

A Rockhurst High School alum who went there in the 1960s said students often protested against the government back then, and yes they got detention, "but walking right alongside us were the Jesuits and the teachers, and I don't know if many have that energy anymore."

Both Terry and Ryan, who is 43, also went to Rockhurst University, where at least in the past they have taught a course on business ethics. Yes, you heard me.

Do they really want to sully these institutions with ties to such a filthy and fraught transaction?

Here's all they've said, in a bloodless statement about a decision that will hurt so many: "Platform Ventures (PV) was approached in October 2025 with an unsolicited offer to purchase a vacant, industrial warehouse currently owned by an investment vehicle managed by PV at the former Richards-Gebaur Air Force Base. PV has a fiduciary duty to evaluate every sale or lease proposal involving this facility, as we do for all properties in our portfolio. In this case, all negotiations are complete. PV does not question prospective buyers on their intent after close, and we will not engage in public conversations involving speculation over future uses."

Does PV question prospective buyers on their intent *before* close? And when is close, anyway? Kansas City had a year to close on the property that they had agreed to buy from Jackson County for a municipal jail, and though negotiations were complete in that case, too, right before that year was up, the city pulled back and the deal didn't happen.

Shouldn't there be public conversations about matters that impact the public, especially after public funds have been pocketed? Those who are defending this flagrant violation of public trust — mostly as nobody's business but those doing business — would never do that unless it was in the service of Trump's agenda.

Supporters of his inhumane roundup, which every day involves racial profiling and needlessly violent arrests, are calling the Anderson brothers heroes. But is that the kind of heroes they want to be?

Because this is not just another business deal, another sale to the highest bidder. This is selling something they will never, no matter how celebrated they are by MAGA, be able to get back.

They have given a lot to local Catholic institutions, but unless they change course, they will take a lot from them, too. It's true that it's donors who normally tell institutions what to do rather than the other way around, and maybe I'm naive to think it could ever be otherwise.

But these institutions cannot stand both with Jesus and with the ICE that we see shooting people, ramming the cars and smashing the windows of U.S. citizens, stopping even off-duty police officers of color, and shouting threats like, "You raise your voice, I erase your voice."

Related: Sisters of Charity object to plans for new ICE detention center in Kansas

Among Visitation's earliest worshipers after the church was founded in 1909 was the strongman Tom Pendergast, who a century ago ran this town with the corrupt cooperation of the business community, the muscle of the mob and for far too long the only occasional inference of reporters.

Pendergast money paid for both the church's main altar and its communion rail in 1920. According to my husband, Bill Turque, who is writing about the rise and fall of the Pendergast machine for the University of Kansas Press imprint Plainspoken Books, Visitation's founding priest, Fr. Thomas B. McDonald, was among those who agreed to write a letter to Franklin D. Roosevelt supporting clemency for Pendergast after he was sent to Leavenworth for tax evasion.

At this tyrant's funeral in 1945, which was attended by Harry Truman, McDonald said he'd been at Mass there every morning for 30 years – in spirit, maybe – and

described him as a man with "a noble heart." He also kept killers on the payroll and demanded perfect loyalty plus as much as 50% of the salary of city workers. "He had his faults, as all of us," McDonald said in his eulogy. "Regarding his life, it would be well to recall the injunction, 'Let him who is without sin cast the first stone.' "

Please, Visitation, do not look away from this very different but equally immoral situation as Fr. McDonald once did in deciding that his big donor was of noble heart. Find a way to avert this disaster of a decision for our community and this affront to our faith.

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