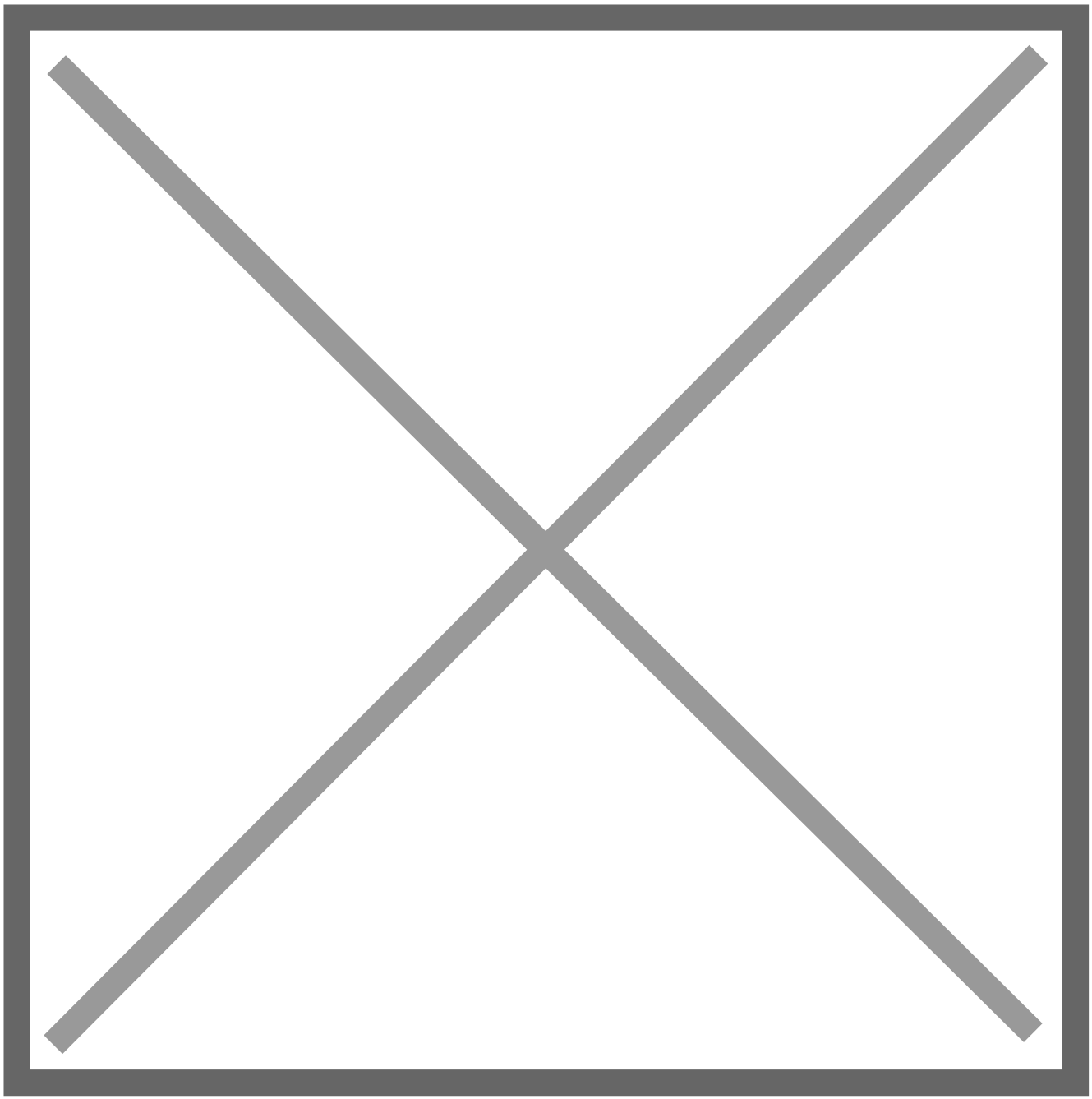
News



Cardinal Joseph Tobin of Newark, N.J., second from front right, joins others for a rosary service outside Delaney Hall, an immigration detention center, in Newark, N.J., May 31. The mayor of Newark imposed a curfew early that morning around the center after a series of intense clashes between protesters and police. (OSV News/Courtesy of the Archdiocese of Newark/Fr. Anthony Palombo)

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Newark, N.J. — June 3, 2026
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In response to rising tensions at the Delaney Hall immigrant detention facility in Newark, the Archdiocese of Newark held a prayer service about half a mile from its entrance.

Cardinal Joseph Tobin attended the May 31 service, which included a bilingual rosary and testimony from a family whose loved one has been detained inside the facility for the past two months.

"As we saw the violence escalate at Delaney Hall since Memorial Day, the archdiocese wanted to have a prayerful, peaceful presence there," Fr. Timothy Graff, archdiocesan secretary of parish mission and vitality, told Jersey Catholic, the news site of the Archdiocese of Newark.

He was among those participating in the service, along with Fr. Alex Gaitan*, immigration ministry coordinator, and Fr. Anthony Palombo, priest secretary to the cardinal.

Representatives from various parish migration teams also attended the service, along with members of Pax Christi, an organization dedicated to promoting peace and justice. Family members of detainees and protesters were also present; many of them joined in the prayer service.

Tobin addressed all those gathered "with great humility," acknowledging those who "give such a clear witness to the dignity of our brothers and sisters and the injustices that are being done to them."

He encouraged people to "move forward in hope" and to follow the example of Christ.

"The greatness of Jesus is that terrible injustice and violence were done to him, yet he refused to pass it on, saying 'The injustice will die with me,'" the cardinal said. "That is the example I want to follow, and I hope you do, too, so that we don't multiply the injustices in our anger and frustration, and, yes, even despair."

During the rosary, participants prayed for detainees and their families, for peace, and for those who work at the facility, that they might recognize the humanity of those held there.

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Delaney Hall, a privately run, 1,000-bed facility, opened in May 2025. It is the largest immigrant detention facility on the East Coast and is operated by the GEO Group under contract for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Anti-ICE protests outside the facility have taken place since May 22 over alleged mistreatment of detainees, poor conditions and bad food, while Geo Group has denied the allegations of poor conditions. A smaller group of pro-ICE demonstrators has also gathered.

NBC 4 New York reported that Newark Mayor Ras Baraka ordered a 9 p.m.-6 a.m. curfew late Saturday night, May 30, "following back-to-back nights of clashes" between anti-ICE protesters and New Jersey State Police, recently assigned to the facility by Gov. Mikie Sherrill. Multiple people were arrested over the May 30-31 weekend for breaching the curfew.

While saying she wants to protect the community from a "surge" by ICE agents into the community, Sherrill in a statement issued early May 31 called out "masked individuals" outside Delaney Hall for attacking the barrier in the protected protest area and "aggressive and dangerous actions against Newark and New Jersey State Police, including throwing projectiles, utilizing the barriers as weapons, and lighting tires on fire in the street.

Gaitan and volunteers from the Newark* archdiocesan immigration ministry visit the facility regularly to administer sacraments, lead prayer services, and offer hope to those cut off from their families and the outside world.

In an interview after the rosary with Radio Jornalera NJ, Tobin encouraged detainees and their families to have hope.

"Human dignity is not a concession granted by any government; it is the will of God, who created us according to his own image and nature," he said. "And for that reason, no government can take away our dignity. Remain strong and hold your heads high, because you are daughters and sons of God, and you do not walk alone."

**This story has been updated to correct the spelling of Fr. Alex Gaitan's name, and to note that only priests and volunteers from the Archdiocese of Newark's immigration ministry visit Delaney Hall.*

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