News



Ronaldo Salgado Araujo, 29, son of Lorenzo Salgado Araujo, who died following an encounter with federal immigration agents in Houston July 7, 2026, speaks during a July 25 prayer vigil procession. (OSV News/Texas Catholic Herald/James Ramos)

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The death of Lorenzo Salgado Araujo following an encounter with federal immigration agents has shaken one of Houston's most deeply rooted immigrant communities.

Since his death on July 7, family members, community advocates and church leaders have questioned the circumstances surrounding his death and called for accountability and a full investigation.

The place where it happened sits in the heart of Magnolia Park, a neighborhood built by generations of Mexican American and immigrant families.

Along Canal Street, taquerias, *refresquerías* and meat markets share blocks with modest homes, aging storefronts and family-owned businesses that have anchored the East End for decades.

Just a block away, Canal Street intersects South Sgt. Macario García Drive, named for the Mexican immigrant and World War II hero who became the first Mexican-born recipient of the Medal of Honor. History doesn't feel distant in Magnolia Park. It's woven into the street signs.

On July 25, more than 300 Catholics, clergy, relatives and community supporters gathered in Magnolia Park for a vigil Mass to honor Salgado Araujo, with hundreds more joining the 1.5-mile prayer procession and a candlelight vigil.

Just before dusk settled over Canal Street, where the procession ended, and hundreds of vigil candles began to glow against the East End's fading light, Ronaldo Salgado Araujo slipped away from the crowd.

He didn't say anything. He simply walked to a patch of pavement on the 6800 block of Canal Street, bent down and touched the ground where his father died 18 days earlier.

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The moment lasted mere seconds, reflecting the somber tone of a day marked by prayer and calls for answers.

The afternoon began at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, a cornerstone of Magnolia Park, where worshippers filled the pews as Archbishop Joe Vásquez of Galveston-Houston celebrated Mass and called for both compassion and reform.

"Human dignity and national security are not in conflict," Vásquez told the congregation in Spanish. "Both are possible when people of goodwill work together."

At the Mass, Vásquez acknowledged the pain surrounding Salgado Araujo's death while placing it within a broader moral framework.

"As Catholics who believe that all people are created in the image and likeness of God, we mourn every situation in which human life comes to an unnatural end," he said.

But Vásquez also used the occasion to revisit a larger issue.

Vásquez echoed what he said July 15 after Salgado Araujo's death, calling for meaningful immigration reform and an end to indiscriminate deportations.

"The U.S. Catholic bishops have repeatedly called for enforcement efforts that are targeted, proportional and humane," Vásquez said, adding that lasting reform requires "peaceful dialogue, mutual respect and a commitment to charity."

"Only with Christ's help and by working together will we have a nation under God with liberty and justice for all," he said.

Among Salgado Araujo's family members attending the Mass was his 29-year-old son, Ronaldo, who with his girlfriend carried forward the gifts during the offertory procession.

After Mass, the congregation stepped into the thick Houston heat and gathered outside the church.

Galveston-Houston Auxiliary Bishop Italo Dell'Oro, who concelebrated the Mass with several other local priests, offered a blessing before the walk began.

Soon, the procession stretched across several blocks before it ended at the place where Salgado Araujo died.

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Clergy walked alongside parishioners. Religious sisters moved through the crowd carrying candles, signs and rosaries. Faith leaders from multiple traditions joined the procession, which was organized by an interfaith coalition with support from the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word.

As they walked, participants prayed the rosary and Divine Mercy chaplet in English and Spanish. Hymns floated between prayers. Responses echoed off warehouses, storefronts and passing traffic.

Drivers honked in support. Some waved from open windows. Others raised fists.

For most of the journey, Ronaldo Salgado Araujo carried a large wooden cross adorned with roses that towered over the procession, often casting a long shadow down Navigation Boulevard as the clouds dodged the setting sun.

At times he pressed it tightly against his face. At other times he leaned on it as prayers and chants continued around him.

Lázaro Contreras, director of Hispanic ministry for the Galveston-Houston Archdiocese, said the church's presence was intended to show accompaniment for both the family and the broader community.

"The church is always with us in every dimension of our lives, and this is one of them," Contreras said. "The presence of our bishops, our shepherds, attending their flock is very important for the family and for the community."

Contreras said Salgado Araujo's story resonates because it feels familiar. He described him as a hardworking father who spent years building a life and helping his children succeed.

"In different ways, many of us feel that he represents our fathers and our families," Contreras said.

Concerns about immigration enforcement continue to surface throughout the archdiocese, he said.

"Some people called me and said, 'This has happened in our community. Some of our members have been detained and taken,' " Contreras said. "It's something that is active and happening."

Many Catholics, he said, are searching for guidance amid uncertainty.

"They are looking for guidance and for refuge," Contreras said. "In these moments, they want to know the church is standing with them and defending their dignity."

Once the faithful arrived at Canal Street, Ronaldo Salgado Araujo carried the cross to a house near where his father died and set it down.

He addressed the vigil, thanking those "who are supporting us and calling for justice for my father."

But he urged attendees not to focus solely on his family's loss and referenced Johan Sebastián Durán Guerrero, a 25-year-old Colombian immigrant and father who was fatally shot during a July 13 U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement operation in Biddeford, Maine. Federal officials later said Durán Guerrero was not the intended target.

"Please do not forget that justice is still needed for Johan," Ronaldo Salgado Araujo said. "Justice is needed for everyone, for all who have been victims."

He then invoked the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s words from the 1963 "Letter from Birmingham Jail," saying: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

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