News



U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents stand guard, as ICE and federal agents secure the entrance to the Delaney Hall detention center while demonstrators gathered outside in Newark, New Jersey, May 29, 2026. (OSV News/Reuters/Eduardo Munoz)

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Archbishop Charles Thompson of Indianapolis has granted a temporary dispensation from Sunday Mass and holy days of obligation for those fearing immigration detention.

The move follows similar dispensations and guidance issued in several other U.S. dioceses amid the Trump administration's overall crackdown on immigration to the U.S.

Thompson said his Sept. 4 decree, written in Spanish and posted to the Archdiocese of Indianapolis' website, applies to "those who have reasonable grounds to fear being detained, separated from their families, or subjected to intimidation due to the tightening of immigration enforcement measures."

The decree also covers "those who possess the appropriate legal documentation," he added.

The dispensation, issued in accord with canon law, remains in effect until Sept. 30 "unless extended by decree," said Thompson.

He directed those "who find it necessary to avail themselves of this dispensation" to watch livestreamed or televised Mass, to contemplate the Scripture readings for Sunday and to pray the rosary "to supplement their Sunday and holy day spiritual practices."

The archbishop urged pastors and "all those who minister to the faithful" within the Indianapolis Archdiocese "to attend to the spiritual needs of those who must avail themselves of this dispensation — to the extent possible — especially regarding the sacraments of Penance and the Anointing of the Sick, or the distribution of holy Communion to the homebound."

In his decree, Thompson cited "an increase in immigration enforcement measures in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis" that have caused "a significant increase in fear and anxiety among our immigrant communities."

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In a bilingual statement accompanying the decree, Thompson specifically noted a "recent surge in immigration enforcement activity in Indiana" that "has caused fear and uncertainty for many families, particularly when detention results in the sudden separation of parents and children."

"While recognizing the need for law enforcement to protect and defend, it is gravely concerning to witness families being torn apart," the archbishop said. "The family, the fabric of stability in our society, must be cherished and defended."

He added, "The inherent dignity of being created in the image of God demands that every person be treated with dignity, compassion, and respect."

Immigration detentions have soared in recent months, with data from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement showing that over 43,000 individuals were apprehended in June — the highest monthly total since the start of the second Trump administration, according to CBS News.

Citing agency sources, the outlet reported that the spike in detentions comes as ICE is under pressure to ensure 2,000 arrests per day. At the same time, CBS News was told by a spokesperson for the Department of Homeland Security that ICE has not been assigned arrest quotas.

Following a brief pause in high-profile detention operations — which followed fatal shootings of Minneapolis protestors Alex Pretti and Renee Good — ICE has resumed its sweeps with an eye to reducing media attention.

CBS News reported that DHS Secretary Markwayne Mullin, speaking to reporters on July 20, described the approach as a way to "turn down the temperature" with media while "turning up the heat on the streets."

That same month, two Texas bishops — Bishop Daniel Garcia of Austin and Bishop Brendan Cahill of Victoria — issued a joint statement lamenting deadly immigration enforcement encounters, following three separate deaths recorded days apart in July amid ICE operations.

In an August pastoral letter, fellow Texas prelate Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller of San Antonio said that during visits to the three immigration detention centers within the archdiocese — including a family detention center in Dilley, Texas — he had "witnessed, firsthand, violations of human dignity within their walls."

He also cited data from an investigation led by Democratic Sen. Jon Ossoff of Georgia, which found "more than 1,000 credible reports of human-rights abuses in immigration detention since January 2025, including medical neglect, denial of food and water, overcrowding, sleep deprivation, and the separation of breastfeeding mothers from their infants."

A Guardian investigation published Sept. 5 also revealed Immigration and Customs Enforcement has engaged in "involuntary medical procedures" to force-feed 19 hunger strikers in detention, and obtained a federal judge's permission to surgically insert a feeding tube directly into a Cuban man's stomach against his will.

Gustavo-Siller noted the overwhelming majority of those in immigration detention have no criminal convictions. As of July 11, 70.6% of the 65,765 held in detention lacked any criminal conviction, according to Syracuse University's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse.

U.S. immigration detention policies have also drawn international condemnation, with United Nations human rights chief Volker Türk renewing his call Sept. 7 for accountability over rising deaths in ICE facilities.

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