

Statement from Bishop Briner on the Recent ICE Shooting in Austin

I join Bishop Daniel Garcia of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Austin and others across our community in praying for Wilber Rafael Garces Perez, who was shot by an ICE officer in North Austin on Sunday, September 20, and for his family and for all affected by this incident.

I am also grateful for Bishop Garcia's call for authorities to be "transparent and honest about what occurred." This call is especially important now, as differing accounts of this shooting continue to emerge.

Earlier this summer, following the shooting death of Lorenzo Salgado Araujo, I stood with other interfaith leaders at the Texas Capitol and called for truth, transparency and accountability. At that time, we said something that bears repeating today: In matters of life and death, the truth belongs to the public.

We do not yet know everything that happened in North Austin. That is precisely why a thorough, independent, and transparent investigation matters. Government has a legitimate responsibility to uphold the law. But the authority entrusted to government—particularly the authority to detain people and to use force—also carries an extraordinary responsibility for accountability.

This is not a call to pre-judge the actions of any individual officer. It is a call to ensure that the facts are known, evidence is preserved and shared, and those exercising governmental power are accountable to the public they serve.

And for those of us who are people of faith: we continue to hold to the conviction that immigration status does not determine human worth. Every person bears the image of God and possesses a dignity that must be honored and protected.

Bishop Garcia reminds us during National Migrant Week that "we are all brothers and sisters." I am grateful for his witness and join him in praying for healing, wisdom and peace.

But prayer must not become a substitute for truth.

Once again, I call upon federal, state and local authorities to ensure a full and transparent accounting of what happened in Austin. Public trust cannot be demanded. It must be earned. And transparency and accountability are essential to earning it.

May God give us the courage to seek the truth, the humility to follow wherever it leads, and the resolve to protect the dignity and humanity of every one of our neighbors.

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