

Wed 01/28/2026

Page: A1

Advertisement

Archbishop calls for defunding 'lawless' ICE

Tobin delivered his message during online prayer service

Deena Yellin

NorthJersey.com | USA TODAY NETWORK –
NEW JERSEY

Cardinal Joseph Tobin, leader of New Jersey's largest Catholic diocese, condemned the Trump administration's immigration crackdown and urged Americans to protest against the current political climate during a video stream with more than a dozen other national faith leaders on Jan. 25.

"If we are serious about putting our faith in action, we need to say 'no,'" a somber-looking Tobin said during the call.

Tobin, one of the highest-ranking figures in the American Catholic Church, delivered his message during an online, interfaith prayer service a day after a U.S. Border Patrol officer fatally shot a protester in Minneapolis, Alex Pretti, amid increasing tensions and violence surrounding the deportation push by the Department of Homeland Security.

Federal officials alleged Pretti was carrying a gun he intended to use to "kill law enforcement." But videos from bystanders – and a witness account

in court filings – do not show Pretti brandishing a weapon when he approached agents, USA Today reported. The shooting came just days after an Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent in Minneapolis fatally shot Renee Nicole Good and prompted further outrage from opponents of ICE’s tactics.

“One way that we say ‘no’ is that we mourn, we do not celebrate death, and, what is probably worse, we do not pretend it doesn’t happen,” Tobin said in comments that lasted about 6 minutes. “We say names.

We pray for the dead. We mourn for a world, a country, that allows 5-year-olds to be legally kidnapped and protesters to be slaughtered.”

The prayer service was sponsored by Faith in Action, a Washington-based organization that says its mission is to “dismantle systems of injustice.”

Tobin encouraged his fellow Catholics to urge their lawmakers to oppose funding for “such a lawless organization.” Congress is debating funding for ICE this week.

The Newark Archdiocese serves about 1.3 million Catholic across Bergen, Essex, Hudson and Union counties. Tobin, a close ally of the late Pope Francis, has led it since 2017.

Noting that he was speaking within several miles of two federal immigration detention centers, Tobin said that every day, people from many faiths “go to Delaney [Hall] here in Newark and to the Elizabeth Detention Center, and they say ‘no’ by standing at the gates, by talking with the ICE personnel, by insisting on the rights of the

detainees within.

“They bring them human comfort. They console the families of those who aren’t always admitted to see their loved ones,” he said. Tobin challenged listeners: “How will you say ‘no?’ How will you say no to violence?”

A spokeswoman with the Department of Homeland Security, which oversees ICE and the Border Patrol, did not immediately respond to a message seeking comment.

Other speakers on the call included Bishop Mariann Budde, a North Jersey native who now leads the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, DC; Rabbi Jill Jacobs, executive director of T’ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights, a nonprofit in New York; the Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, president of the United Church of Christ; and Bishop Francine Brookins of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

The 15 speakers represented a broad swath of traditions, including Christian, Jewish, Buddhist and Muslim denominations. They condemned ICE’s actions and urged their followers to speak out against injustice. Some 10,000 people logged into the event, organizers said.

“The goal was to bring together national religious leaders,” said Bishop Dwayne Royster, the executive director of Faith in Action. “Everyone was saying that what we are fighting against is not in line with our faith values and traditions.”

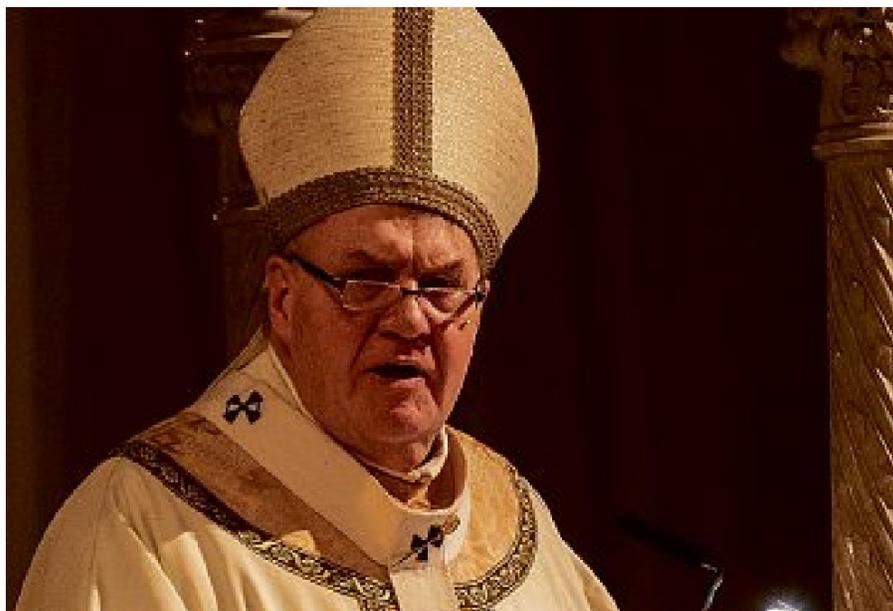
A vocal Trump critic

Tobin has been a vocal critic of the Trump administration in recent months. On Jan. 19, he issued a statement with Catholic cardinals from Chicago and Washington, DC, questioning the

direction of U.S. foreign policy and the president's actions on Venezuela, Greenland and Ukraine.

In November, Tobin, Paterson Bishop Kevin J. Sweeney and David O'Connell of the Trenton Diocese issued a stern rebuke of the administration's immigration plan, joining a Special Pastoral Message adopted by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

That statement criticized the administration's "mass deportation" policies and said the church was "concerned about the conditions in detention centers and lack of access to pastoral care."



**Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, pictured in 2025,
condemned the Trump's immigration crackdown.**
JULIAN LESHAY GUADALUPE/NORTHJERSEY.COM