

# Pregnant mom with no record is detained

Yurgen Cayax walked into the Robert A. Young Federal Building in downtown St. Louis last week knowing she likely would not leave of her own free will.

The 30-year-old single mother was headed to a check-in meeting with the Immigration & Customs Enforcement office on the first floor. The office is small. It's often packed with 15 to 20 people — standing room only — as they wait for an ICE employee to appear at a window or through the door that heads to a back room.

Cayax was joined by a group of supporters. Her attorney, Kris Walentik of Catholic Legal Assistance Ministry, was there. So was the Rev. Mitch Doyen, pastor of St. Josephine Bakhita Catholic parish in north St. Louis. Andrea Veras and Jim Baum of the nonprofit Immigrant and Refugee Ministry were there.

The five of them clasped hands in a circle outside the ICE office and prayed for Cayax while they waited to see what would happen.

Cayax came here in 2019, fleeing gang violence in her home country of Guatemala. A single mother, Cayax brought her child with her; she has since had two more children, who are both American citizens. She has a job cleaning offices. She's four months pregnant and has

an active asylum case in the backed-up immigration court system.

When President Donald Trump's administration began mass deportations of immigrants last year, officials promised to prioritize criminals — the “worst of the worst.” But increasingly, people like Cayax, who are awaiting immigration court hearings and have no criminal records, are caught in the net. They are deposited in jails without hearings, held until they are sent back to the places from which they fled to protect themselves and family members.

“They don't know what I suffered in my country, and what I have to go back to,” Cayax told me as we talked outside the ICE office, with Walentik serving as an interpreter. “I'm going to live the same life I had to flee from.”

Her sister was prepared to watch the children if Cayax was detained. This has become a reality today: families ripped apart; parents sent back to countries where their children have never lived.

It's inhumane, Father Doyen said.

“The dignity of the human person is such a profound tenet at the center of the church's teaching,” he told me. “St. Louis needs immigrants. These folks risked everything to be here.”

Doyen's message highlights the increasingly vocal role Catholic leaders — and clerics from other faiths — have taken in calling out the administration, pointing out how Christian values are being violated. Pope Leo has railed



Yurgen Cayax, second from right, prays with supporters outside the ICE office in St. Louis on March 10, 2026. Cayax was later detained. Pictured with Cayax are the Rev. Mitch Doyen, left, Jim Baum, center, and Andrea Veras.

TONY MESSENGER, POST-DISPATCH

against the “inhumane treatment of immigrants” taking place in the U.S. Last year, St. Louis Archbishop Mitchell T. Rozanski joined a “special message” issued by Catholic bishops in the U.S. urging their flock to stand up against the “indiscriminate mass deportation of people.”

That's why Baum, Veras and Doyen showed up to support Cayax on Tuesday. They wanted to see first-hand what America's mass deportation system looks like and serve as witnesses in their communities. And the new reality is that people waiting for their asylum cases to be adjudicated are no longer being shown grace — no chance to keep living and working, as they have for years, and as the law requires, and no chance to see how their cases play out.

In the tiny ICE waiting room on Tuesday, the door at one point opened. A woman named Angie was summoned to the back. She walked in with her son. Cayax was in the hallway on a bench, munching on a chicken wrap Doyen bought out of a machine, when Angie and her son walked back out. Angie had an ankle monitor on, a sign that she had agreed to voluntary deportation. She was crying as she called her family to tell them.

Tears lined Cayax's cheeks as she watched the scene unfold. She knew she could suffer the same fate, though she planned to fight her deportation. She believes in her asylum case and wants to stay in St. Louis with her family. But that meant, if she got called through the door at ICE, she was likely to be

detained and sent to the St. Genevieve County Detention Center. She would then have to wait for a hearing before an immigration judge, with no idea how quickly that could happen.

The call came a little after noon. Cayax was taken through the door, and then she was detained. Her lawyer and supporters could do nothing but say goodbye and hope their prayers are eventually answered. She'll be separated from her children. And she faces a possible return to the violence she escaped seven years ago.

“Right now, the way our immigration process is working is dehumanizing,” Doyen said. “There's no excuse.”

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# Sunday's forecast calls for drastic change

BY JACK SUNTRUP  
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

ST. LOUIS — Saturday's sunny conditions and highs in the 60s for St. Louis are unlikely to be repeated on Sunday.

The National Weather Service forecasts likely rain and thunderstorms Sunday, with strong winds and plummeting temperatures Sunday night, to a low of 21 degrees. There is a chance of snow after 10 p.m.

The expected high temperature Monday is 29 degrees with wind gusts up to 41 mph.

Chris Kimble, meteorologist for the National Weather Service in St. Louis, said a strong cold front is going to come through the St. Louis metro Sunday.

“We're gonna be dropping 40 to 50 degrees Sunday into Sunday night,” Kimble said.

He said warm temperatures ahead of the front will give way

to “downright wintry” conditions behind it, “in terms of temperatures at least.”

He said a band of snowfall is expected.

“I'm expecting probably a band of 1 to 3 inches, but I think that's most likely going to be north of St. Louis, more towards Quincy, Illinois,” Kimble said.

“I think St. Louis could see some flakes,” but accumulation in St. Louis is a lot less likely, he said.

He said warm temperatures and somewhat humid conditions ahead of the cold front, along with strong winds, present the possibility of storms Sunday.

“There is the potential for a few strong or severe thunderstorms right along the front, but I think the bigger story will be just strong winds, especially behind the front Sunday night,” Kimble said.

“We're looking at gusts to 50 miles per hour behind the front

Sunday night,” he said, adding a thunderstorm might bring a localized area of more significant winds.

On Monday night, temperatures are forecast to fall to 15 degrees before a high of 38 degrees on Tuesday.

By Wednesday, mostly sunny skies are anticipated, with a high near 66 degrees.

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# Pope appoints new bishop for Belleville diocese

MIKE KOZIATEK  
Belleville News-Democrat

The pope has appointed a new bishop for the Belleville diocese.

The Rev. Godfrey Mullen, a Benedictine monk who has been serving as the “diocesan administrator” for the Belleville Diocese and as rector of the Cathedral of St. Peter in Belleville, will be installed as the new bishop for the diocese on May 1.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops announced Pope Leo XIV's choice on Friday.

Mullen held a news conference Friday morning. He will be the 10th bishop to lead the diocese.

After his ordination on May 1, Mullen said he would prefer to be known as “Bishop Godfrey” instead of the common practice of priests using their last name when they are appointed a bishop.

Mullen, 60, grew up in Salem, Illinois in the diocese. It has 127,000 Catholics and 99 parishes.

Mullen received the news of Pope Leo's decision last Saturday from Cardinal Christophe Pierre, the apostolic nuncio to the United States.

Mullen said he told Pierre, “I have accepted many assignments from abbots and bishops under whom I have served and have

nearly always grown to love those assignments, I trust that pattern will continue,” Mullen said in a statement.

Mullen has been the Belleville diocesan administrator since May 9, after then-Bishop Michael McGovern became the sixth archbishop of the Archdiocese of Omaha, Nebraska.

Mullen's family moved to Salem when he was 9 months old. “As a son of this diocese since I was 9 months old, I have always been fascinated by the way Christ is present in his wonderful people in Southern Illinois,” Mullen said in his opening statement. “With my

parents being intimately involved in the work of Saint Theresa of Avila Parish in Salem, I grew up knowing Diocesan Priests and Precious Blood and Felician Sisters.”

Mullen said it is “uncommon” that a diocesan administrator is appointed bishop of the same diocese and he accepts his new assignment as “God's plan.”

“In the immigrant, the stranger, the incarcerated, the mentally ill, the alienated, the hungry, the homeless, the elderly and the young, and from East St. Louis to Mount Carmel, from Kimmunity to Cairo, in every place here, we can

find Christ if we look for him with faith and hope, with the genuine charity that is rightly always our way of life,” he said.

Mullen, who was born on Jan. 22, 1966, studied at St. Meinrad College in Indiana where he received a bachelor's degree in history in 1988, a master's degree in theology in 1991 and a master of divinity in 1994, according to a news release from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. He has a Ph.D. in liturgical studies from The Catholic University of America, and became a monk with the Order of St. Benedict in August 1992, and a priest in June 1994.

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IDENTIFICATION: The St. Louis Post Dispatch (USPS: 476580), a Lee Enterprises Newspaper, is published Daily except: Monday, New Year's Day, Independence Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving

and Christmas at 901 N 10TH ST, SAINT LOUIS, MO 63101. Periodicals Postage Paid at Saint Louis, MO. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to ST. LOUIS POST DISPATCH 901 N 10TH ST, SAINT LOUIS, MO 63101.

PRICING: The St. Louis Post Dispatch is published online daily, and in print Tuesday - Sunday, except for those holidays listed above when it is only published online. Suggested average weekly retail prices for home delivery with full digital access are: Tuesday-Sunday \$38.24, Sunday, Tuesday-Friday \$23.99, Tuesday-Friday \$21.24, Thursday-Sunday \$18.99, Fri-Sun \$17.49, Sat-Sun Only \$12.24, Sunday Only \$9.99.

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## CELEBRITY BIRTHDAYS

Actor **Judd Hirsch** is 91. Jazz saxophonist **Charles Lloyd** is 88. Singer **Mike Love** of the Beach Boys is 85. Guitarist **Howard Scott** (War) is 80. Rock guitarist **Ry Cooder** is 79. Actor **Frances Conroy** (“American Horror Story,” “Six Feet Under”) is 73. Actor **Craig Wasson** (“Body Double”) is 72. Singer **Dee Snider** of Twisted Sister is 71. Actor **Joaquim de Almeida** (film’s “Clear and Present Danger,” TV’s “24”) is 69. Actor **Park Overall** (“Empty Nest”) is 69. Model **Fabio** is 65. Singer **Sananda Maitreya** (Terence Trent D’Arby) is 64. Singer **Bret Michaels** of Poison is 63. Singer **Rockwell** is 62. Actor **Chris Bruno** (“The Fosters”) is 60.

— Associated Press

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