

People gather during a vigil for 37-year-old Alex Pretti, who was fatally shot by a U.S. Border Patrol officer earlier in the day, Saturday, Jan. 24, 2026, in Minneapolis. (AP/Adam Gray)



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Catholic leaders at the national and local levels are calling for calm, prayer and renewed respect for human life following the Jan. 24 killing of Alex Jeffrey Pretti in Minneapolis, as protests and political disputes intensified over federal immigration enforcement and the circumstances surrounding the shooting.

Thirty-seven-year-old Pretti, an intensive care unit nurse at a Minneapolis Veterans Affairs hospital was fatally shot by a U.S. Border Patrol agent in Minneapolis, becoming the second person to die at the hands of federal officers in the city this month. The killing has fueled anger after weeks of demonstrations against the Trump administration's immigration crackdown.

Federal officials have declined to provide detailed explanations for their assertion that the agent acted in self-defense. Video analysis by CNN shows an agent removing a handgun from Pretti shortly before he was shot; the reviewed footage does not show Pretti holding the weapon.

Police have said he was believed to be a lawful gun owner with a permit to carry a weapon. Minnesota leaders have publicly rejected the federal government's account of events and are suing for access to conduct an independent investigation.

Hundreds of people attended vigils for Pretti throughout the Twin Cities during the evening of Jan. 24, including near the site of the shooting.

Archbishop Paul Coakley of Oklahoma City, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, issued a Jan. 25 statement urging restraint and dialogue. He referenced remarks delivered by Pope Leo XIV earlier that day at St. Peter's Square.

"Today, Pope Leo XIV reminds us that 'the Gospel must be proclaimed and lived in every setting, serving as a leaven of fraternity and peace among all individuals, cultures, religions and peoples,'" Coakley said.

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"It is with this in mind that I prayerfully urge calm, restraint, and respect for human life in Minneapolis, and all those places where peace is threatened. Public authorities especially have a responsibility to safeguard the well-being of people in service to the common good.

"As a nation we must come together in dialogue, turning away from dehumanizing rhetoric and acts which threaten human life. In this spirit, in unity with Pope Leo, it is important to proclaim, 'Peace is built on respect for people!'"

Meanwhile, protests have expanded across the Twin Cities and beyond. About 100 clergy members were arrested Jan. 23 at Minnesota's largest airport during a demonstration against deportation flights, while several thousand people gathered in downtown Minneapolis in subzero temperatures to protest the administration's enforcement campaign.

Labor unions, progressive organizations and faith groups have urged residents to stay away from work, school, and shops as part of a broader movement opposing the crackdown.

Archbishop Bernard Hebda of Minneapolis-St. Paul addressed Pretti's killing directly, asking Catholics and others to pray for him and to reflect on the deeper tensions facing the community.

"Following Saturday's tragic shooting in Minneapolis, I ask all people of good will to join me today in prayer for Alex Jeffrey Pretti, for his parents, and for his loved ones," Hebda said.

"The loss of another life amidst the tensions that have gripped Minnesota should prompt all of us to ask what we can do to restore the Lord's peace. While we rightly thirst for God's justice and hunger for his peace, this will not be achieved until we are able to rid our hearts of the hatreds and prejudices that prevent us from seeing each other as brothers and sisters created in the image and likeness of God."

"That is as true for our undocumented neighbors as it is for our elected officials and for the men and women who have the unenviable responsibility of enforcing our laws. They all need our humble prayers," he said.

Hebda also announced several prayer opportunities in the Twin Cities. He said the Cathedral of St. Paul will remain open throughout the afternoon of Jan. 25 for

extended Eucharistic Adoration, followed by the Divine Mercy Chaplet at 4 p.m., Benediction at 4:30 p.m., and a Votive Mass for the Preservation of Peace at 5 p.m.

At the Basilica of Saint Mary in Minneapolis, the 5:30 p.m. Sunday Mass will be offered for Pretti, his family, and the broader community.

"Wherever you find yourself this afternoon, I hope you will take a few moments to join us in prayer," Hebda said.

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