Opinion
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A rosary hangs from a cross at a makeshift memorial in Minneapolis Jan. 25, 2026, at the site where Alex Pretti, a 37-year-old intensive care nurse, was fatally shot by federal agents Jan. 24. (OSV News/Reuters/Tim Evans)



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In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus famously proclaimed, "No one can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other."

As the country continues to reel from the fallout over the shooting of Alex Pretti, Catholics are making it clear who they are choosing to serve. It isn't always Jesus.

After Pretti, an intensive care unit nurse at a Veterans Affairs hospital, was killed by a federal law enforcement officer in front of multiple eyewitnesses in Minneapolis Jan. 24, the Trump administration was quick to politicize his death.

Vice President JD Vance reposted Stephen Miller, who on X called Pretti an "assassin" who "tried to murder federal agents" — a statement that is not supported by any evidence. Vance then shared President Donald Trump's lengthy and borderline incomprehensible justification of the shooting.

Once again, Vance had the opportunity to call for peace and unity — to lower the temperature of the situation and express empathy with those suffering and mourning. Vance, fresh off a speech at the March for Life, could have leaned into his supposed pro-life beliefs and called for respect for human life at every stage. In fact, that would have been the Catholic response — that's how the bishops themselves responded in their statement.

As a Catholic, Vance could have chosen to share the Gospel message of healing and human dignity. Instead, he chose to offer the MAGA message of division and blame.

"This level of engineered chaos is unique to Minneapolis. It is the direct consequence of far left agitators, working with local authorities," he wrote on Jan. 24.

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Yesterday, he doubled down, sharing an apocryphal story of immigration agents being doxed and thrown out of a restaurant in Minneapolis before offering his analysis.

"This is just a taste of what's happening in Minneapolis because state and local officials refuse to cooperate with immigration enforcement. They have created the chaos so they can have moments like yesterday, where someone tragically dies and politicians get to grandstand about the evils of enforcing the border.

"The solution is staring everyone in the face. I hope authorities in Minneapolis stop this madness," Vance offered, ominously.

Vance's comments are once again a moral stain on our collective witness of Catholicism — but they are no longer surprising. Given its scandal, the vice president's cafeteria Catholicism must continue to be repudiated by people of faith.

Unfortunately, Vance is not the only Catholic who has chosen MAGA over Jesus.

Political agitator and Catholic Matt Walsh posted a barrage of profanity-laced comments to his X account, blaming Pretti's killing on "leftists" and calling for the protesters to be treated as "violent insurrectionists."

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Fr. James Altman, a prominent MAGA priest who is no longer allowed to preach publicly, demanded that "everyone who interferes with Law Enforcement should be crushed in the arrest and thrown in the Gulag. They are criminals and it is time to start treating them as such," while repeating, "NO MORE MERCY."

A Catholic priest online advocating against mercy. Jesus wept.

Those Catholics have made their choice — they serve Trump. But as bleak and horrifying as the situation might be, my social media feed was full of Catholics unequivocally condemning the administration's brutality. Those reluctant to speak out became empowered. Those who had already been speaking out became emboldened.

Chris Damian, a Catholic writer on the ground in Minneapolis, has been posting hopeful and helpful messages detailing recent happenings in the Twin Cities and amplifying voices of protest and prayer.

Jesuit Fr. James Martin shared a simple but prophetic message on his social media honoring Pretti and Renee Good — killed by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer Jan. 7 — as "Children of God."

Meg Hunter-Kilmer, also a writer and Catholic speaker, has been powerfully outspoken in her condemnation of ICE actions with her thoughtful commentary and prayerful spirit.

Dawn Eden Goldstein posted a video reflecting on Pretti's life, calling him a "martyr of charity" and shedding light on his Catholic background.

These Catholics, and so many others, chose Jesus.

In the days and weeks ahead, we will learn more about Pretti's shooting. We will hear from celebrities, athletes, content creators and average Joes as they weigh in one way or another. Some will choose human dignity, mercy, empathy and respect for human life. Others will choose retribution, punishment, hatred and death.

It is time for Catholics to choose who our master is. Do we serve Donald Trump? Or do we serve Jesus? Only one of them leads to salvation. We should choose wisely.

This story appears in the **Immigration Protests in Minneapolis** and **Immigration and the Church** feature series.