

Blessed are the Meek
Responding to Killings in Minn
All Saints', Detroit
February 1, 2026
The Rt. Rev. Dr. Bonnie A. Perry

Come holy spirit and enkindle within us the fire of your burning love. In your most blessed name, we pray. Amen.

Good morning.

It's time for a confession. I've never really been much of a fan of the Beatitudes. Don't get me wrong, I thought that they were laudable and inspiring, I also had a deep abiding sense that they were otherworldly. A bit fantastical, with little chance of being applicable in real-time pragmatic activities.

The meek inheriting the earth? Mostly it seems that the meek get their rear ends kicked. The grieving, those of us who are mourning, well eventually after enough time passes, I can think about my amazing mom and not be utterly overwhelmed with pain at her passing. But it's been almost nine years and still her physical absence in our world leaves me a bit bereft. So yes, eventually the searing pain of a loved one's death can be reduced to a dull ache, but I'm not sure that's a comfort.

My spouse Susan on more than one occasion has pointed out to me that I tend to be rather literal sometimes, and a lot of scripture is metaphor, but still, I like where the Beatitudes point us a people of belief, but I've never embraced them. Until last week.

I, like many of you watched with horror as Rene Good and Andrew Pretti were murdered. Mr. Pretti's murder looked to me from the videos I watched like an execution, much along the lines of George Floyd's asphyxiation. One was fast, the other was slow, in my mind each is reprehensible. I desperately wish that ICU nurse Pretti, had not been carrying a holstered gun, mostly because I believe that the presence of guns always needlessly escalate all confrontations. But the first amendment of our constitution in the Bill of Rights of our country grants Mr. Pretti both the right to stand by the side and protest and film law enforcement procedures, and the second amendment gives Mr. Pretti the right to have a permit and carry a gun. He was within his constitutional rights.

Some may argue that according to the videos of the incident I watched, when he stepped in and tried to help the woman who was shoved by Immigration Enforcement Officials to the ground and pepper sprayed, he may have been interfering with their intent to neutralize her, but I would argue that his call as a moral human being, outweighed in that moment the letter of the law.

People of Good Will may disagree on his call and right to assist the woman. What is not up for dispute is the image from multiple videos that Mr. Pretti, was tackled, held on the ground, with his arms pinned above his head. A law enforcement officer, discovered his

holstered weapon, pulled it out, “yelled gun”. And then another federal law enforcement agent took his own gun, placed it against Mr. Pretti’s back and shot him. Those shots then triggered, (yes, that is the verb) nine more shots from other officers. Mr. Pretti was dead.

Was he meek? Was he a peacemaker? People disagree. What is indisputable is that he is dead, murdered by federal law enforcement agents, while he was pinned to the ground, unable to use his hands or protect himself in any way.

I grieve for his family, for Rene Good’s family, for George Floyd’s family. I grieve also for the law enforcement agents that took actions that caused three people to die. I can only imagine that knowing that their actions caused someone to die, would be a near debilitating moment in their lives, forever scaring them. So I pray for all involved.

What I have been most taken with are the responses that my colleague Bishop Craig Loya, Episcopal Bishop of Minnesota has offered to these events.

Bishop Loya says,

“And what the forces of evil and meanness in the world want is for us to stay there. The forces of evil we promise to resist in our baptismal covenant want us to meet anger with anger, they want us to meet hatred with hatred, they want us to meet scorn with scorn. The forces of evil are always fed by [mimetic] anger and hatred. Those forces are out there tonight, as ever, daring us to become its food. ... [Instead] We are going to disrupt with Jesus’ hope. We are going agitate with Jesus’ love. Not because we are weak, or we have given up. And for God’s sake not out of some naive wish that that everything will be just fine when it is so obviously not. We are going to choose to turn the world upside down with love because we know, we know, the cross of Jesus Christ settles forever that love is the most powerful force for healing in the universe. ...

Bishop Loya continues, “So tonight we lament, we grieve, and we pray. We hold each other in our heartbreak. We give voice to our anger. And then tomorrow, Episcopal Church. Tomorrow, my beloved Minnesota, we get on with the business of turning the world upside down. We get on with the business of resisting with love, of disrupting with hope, of agitating with joy because we know that love has already won. Our work is to show up, every day, in every place, using all we are to show the world its victory, until God’s love is fully and gloriously done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

When I read Bishop Loya’s words, when I heard him preach these words, it became completely and utterly clear to me that responding to the outrageous overreaches of our government as they unleash roving bands of enforcement officers, not unlike the anti-bellum slave catchers, if I or if you respond to these human beings undertaking egregious actions with vitriol, hate and profane language, I am only meeting them where their actions have taken them. Instead, I am more and more and more convinced that we must meet them, with care and prayer and love.

They throw us to the ground, we say, Love is patient, Love is kind. They scream at us to go away, we stand steadfast and respond, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."

When they attempt to separate families at bus stops in Ypsilanti, we stand firm and pray, "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy"

When they throw tear gas and shoot rubber bullets we say, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called Children of God."

We will stand, we will pray, we will not hate. We will meet evil with love. Perhaps, even if it kills us.

Amen.