

From the Office of His Holiness, the Legate
Holy Catholic Church of the Gospels
Legate Brandon, Leg. Max.

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Issued: March 2, 2026

Media: Admin@saintlonginus.org

Subject: PRESS – Whipple Address

Virtual Basilica of Saint Longinus, Minn:

Public Address (Written)

On the Enforcement Action taken at Whipple

A Request for Public Accounting and Clarification of State Cooperation with ICE

In the near decade that I have been in ministry, and the near three decades of life lived, I have never seen in those years a sight like the one yesterday. I awoke yesterday to news out of the Twin Cities, that protests would take place at the Bishop Henry Benjamin Whipple Federal Building. Of the journalists that were present, more than one made it clear that there would likely be arrests; predicted at being a dozen. For over 3 hours, I watched live videos as Minnesota State Troopers, Conservation Officers, and Hennepin County Sheriffs participated in assisting DHS's Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agents, through manning perimeters and then arrests; in some cases while ICE helped. From Independent Journalists on scene, and protesters after the fact, ICE agents were on the roof of the Whipple Building with long range weapons. According to officers, rocks, ice, and water bottles were thrown at them, and property was being destroyed; this being the justification for declaring the assembly unlawful under MN. Stat. 609.705, for violations under 609.72 (breach of the peace/disorderly conduct). Where the officers stood, holding the line, was federal property; they were within the property, well past the signs marking the boundaries.

For over 3 hours, watching those videos, I saw horrifying scenes; scenes that do not belong in a civilized and free society. I watched as a fellow Minnesotan appeared to be struck in the head by an officer. For what reason, I have no idea. As his hat flew off, he stumbled but refused to release his makeshift shield being yanked on by other officers; the initial officer, at least twice, violently shoved the protester's head into the pavement and held it there. I watched as State Troopers, dressed in riot gear, rushed at peaceful protesters; using way more force than the situation called for. The protesters had makeshift shields, which appear to have been used to protect themselves from projectiles; especially considering that tear gas cannisters were routinely hurled at protesters by ICE during previous encounters. I watched as an officer unleash pepper spray into the face of a protester. Native Americans were arrested in what was, as one independent video-journalist said, a violation of federal treaties. The videos of these violent arrests, the likes of which I have only ever seen televised in politically

unstable regimes governed by tyrannical laws, was taking place here in Minnesota; the chaos was that of a warzone. At least one independent video-journalist, who was clearly marked as press, was threatened with arrest and at times refused access to his first amendment press rights. Equally problematic is the designation of free speech zones, and arrests taking place inside them. I call upon Police Departments, as well as State and Federal government officials, to answer where those zones were, who closed those zones when the order was given, under whose authority and orders, and whether the dispersal order itself was meant to extend into that space or if it was supposed to be a protected space.

The aftermath, as recorded by video, showed anti-ICE signs and other personal effects strewn on the ground; their owners having left in terrified screams of panic when the officers surged forward. I watched officers, during the initial surge into the crowd, rush past people closer to them to arrest people further from them; potentially having pre-set detainees in mind. I am appalled and disgusted by the behavior I saw exhibited by our State and County law enforcement. It calls into question whether these same tactics are used against everyday citizens. I call for a full and independent investigation into these actions, and for the body camera footage of these officers to be released. I ask that the Minnesota State Legislature summon those in charge to publicly answer for the actions of their officers.

Multiple independent video-journalists were present, and watching video after video of the events, I made an extraordinarily solemn and heartbreaking decision to declare that the State and County's law enforcement were excommunicated from this denomination. Under the Solemn Bull of Excommunication and a previous Bull against ICE, duly signed by me and under the authority of my office established by the bylaws of this denomination, I made it clear that all those who participate in the machinery of cruelty have put themselves at odd with the commands of Christ and are thus out of communion with this denomination; excommunicated, barred from worship and eucharist within the HCCoG tradition. Never, when I signed those documents, did I think I would have to extend the excommunication to fellow Minnesotans; it broke my heart to do it, but the language was clear. It is my most ardent wish that those officers present at Whipple yesterday, will disavow helping the Federal Government any further and will make such repudiation public; every officer who commits to such public disavowal will be welcomed back within this denomination, as if they were the prodigal son of the Gospels. I ask the faithful to pray for those officers, that they may have a change of heart. According to a member of Haven Watch, the volunteers stationed at Whipple to give phones, food, blankets, and more to those being released from ICE custody, some of their tech, blankets, and food were confiscated by unknown agency officers. Evil is the only word I can muster for such an act. Those released from ICE custody often have scant clothing, no phone, hungry, and have no ride home. Haven Watch makes sure that every released detainee receives basic human decency and safety. The confiscation of supplies, donated to Haven Watch or purchased by them, is a grave moral evil; of which I have no words. I urge the faithful to pray that those officers will have a change of heart too.

For me, the initial presence of Law Enforcement agents raises grave concerns, especially past the signs marking the start of federal property. The fact they already had vans and buses showing up as early as just before 10 AM, also unnerves me. It is unnerving still that in order to operate on property owned by the Federal Government, State and County officers have to be called and agree to respond; they have to be given permission to enter. I call now upon Governor Timothy Walz to give a full and public account to the people of this State as to what extent our State and County law enforcement played in yesterday's activities. Beyond the arrests, I want to know why they were there in the first place, who authorized it, and what mission they were pursuing. It is the understanding of our citizenry, and myself, that the State of Minnesota would not aid or assist ICE; that the State would be fully exercising its tenth amendment rights under the United States Constitution, as well as our

rights under the anti-commandeering clause of that selfsame Constitution. The citizens of this State, whose tax dollars pay the salaries and wages of the officers who appear to have assisted ICE yesterday, have an inherent right to know. We also have the right to hear from Federal, State, and Department leaders regarding the events themselves.

We have a right to an independent report prepared by neutral third parties, addressing, at minimum, the following. Whether any laws were broken by any party. Whether there is sufficient evidence that the assembly was unlawful in fact and in law, including the factual predicate relied upon for the declaration. Whether officer conduct was reasonable and proportionate at each stage of escalation. How specific detainees were selected for arrest, whether selection criteria existed, and who authorized those criteria. Why transport assets, detainment measures, and the start of kettling appear to have begun around 9:40 AM, well before the stated commencement of enforcement actions. Why the LRAD was used, whether it was used only for announcements or also as a compliance tool, and under what policy. What threat officers claimed to perceive from the presence of shields and other defensive items, and how that threat assessment was documented. What policy or command decision authorized the sudden escalation of force. Whether protesters and organizers were told that “free speech zones” existed, what the terms were, whether enforcement occurred within those zones, and whether any representations made about those zones were misleading, including whether any such misleading was intentional. We deserve accountability with transparency for the preservation of history. We don’t want lies, or to be told we don’t understand. We want the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

As Christians, we are called to model Christ and follow his commands. He advocated for justice, but also for truth and mercy. The words “blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called Children of God” are often slapped onto Law Enforcement gifts. What I saw yesterday doesn’t deserve the words “blessed”, or a title of “peacemakers”. A good portion of early Christian communities forbade their members from taking any job where they carried weapons or could be asked to use lethal force. This was because of Christ’s words to Peter to “Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword”. As the Early Church Father Tertullian said, “Christ, in disarming Peter, disarmed every soldier.”. Origen and Hippolytus, both Early Church Fathers, said that military service was incompatible with the Christian ethic; this being as early as the late second century. Justin Martyr, in his defense to the Roman Emperor, wrote of Christians as being the fulfillment of Isaiah’s words about beating swords into plowshares. It was not until Constantine, in the fourth century, that Christian views on nonviolence softened. Yet those who lived closest to Christ’s time, and who understood his message most, refused to participate in acts of violence; and so notoriously that the satirist Celsus wrote that Christian nonviolence would bring about the end of the Roman Empire. The *cohortes urbanae*, in the Roman Empire, was the ancient equivalent of our modern police force. They were paramilitary in structure, considered legionaries (soldiers), paid higher than legionaries, and could be called upon to go to battle. Hippolytus’ writings state the following, as it regards any position where the sword can be used:

“A soldier, being inferior in rank to God, must not kill anyone. If ordered to, he must not carry out the order, nor may he take an oath to do so. If he does not accept this, let him be dismissed from the church.

Anyone bearing the power of the sword, or any city magistrate, who wears purple, let him cease from wearing it at once or be dismissed from the church.

Any catechumen or believer who wishes to become a soldier must be dismissed from the church because they have despised God.”

Notice the words “anyone bearing the power of the sword”. Christinas, until the late fourth century, didn’t engage in self-defense either; understanding Christ to have forbidden it. Therefore, all police, other officers, and military personnel, who carry lethal weapons do so in violation of the early Church’s teachings; that the Gospel of Jesus forbids all Christians from taking part in acts of violence. Being they were closer in time to Jesus; we ignore their teachings at our own risk. While the time and place have changed, the words of Christ in context have not. If he meant to forbid violence by those who follow him, then those who carry instruments of violence violate his teachings; and thus, must acknowledge that they do so.

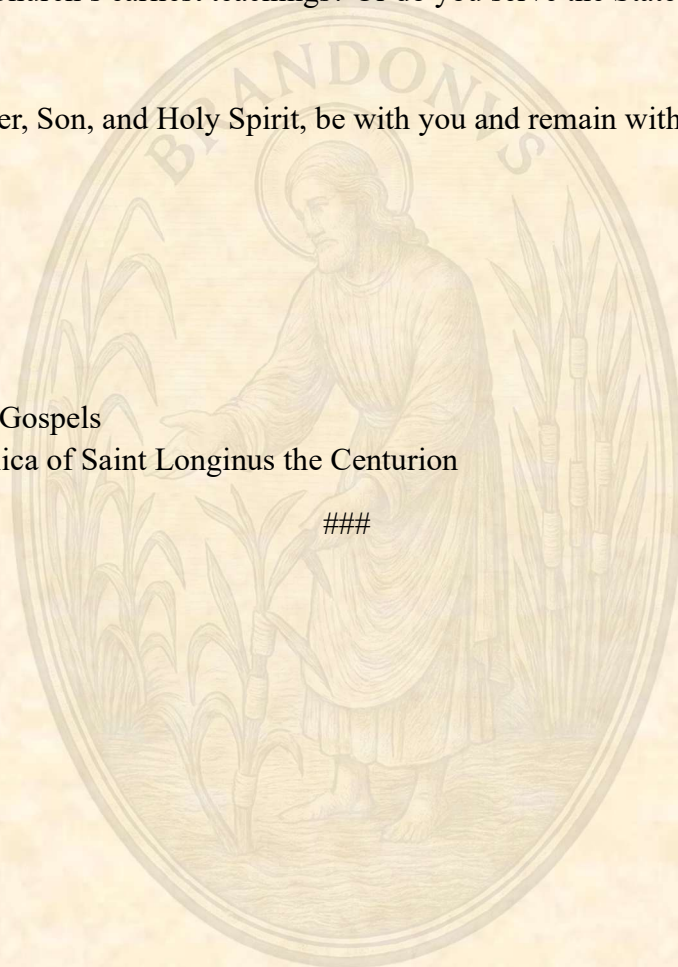
I would like to thank the independent journalists and members of the press who documented what happened yesterday, this State and Nation owe you a debt of gratitude. To the law enforcement who took part in yesterday’s actions, especially if you identify as a Christian, I sincerely ask that you examine your conscience. Do you obey Christ and the Church’s earliest teachings? Or do you serve the State and what it tells you?

May Almighty God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be with you and remain with you, always. Amen.

+Legate Brandon Leg. Max.

His Holiness, the Legate
Holy Catholic Church of the Gospels
Bishop Ecclesiae of the Basilica of Saint Longinus the Centurion

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Template: C:\Users\gamor\Documents\Custom Office Templates\PR &
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Title:
Subject:
Author: brandon corcoran
Keywords:
Comments:
Creation Date: 3/2/2026 5:52:00 AM
Change Number: 5
Last Saved On: 3/2/2026 6:27:00 PM
Last Saved By: brandon corcoran
Total Editing Time: 747 Minutes
Last Printed On: 3/2/2026 6:27:00 PM
As of Last Complete Printing
Number of Pages: 4
Number of Words: 1,909 (approx.)
Number of Characters: 10,886 (approx.)