

Priest Issues Powerful Response After Being Hospitalized Following Violent Church Attack: 'Pray for That Man'

A violent attack inside a Massachusetts church could have ended with anger, fear and calls for vengeance. Instead, the priest who was allegedly beaten delivered a radically different message from his hospital bed: Forgive him. Pray for him.

Father Chris Peschel was recovering after authorities said a man attacked him at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in New Bedford, Massachusetts, WCVB-TV reported.

Investigators said the confrontation began after 59-year-old Jose Nascimento entered the church chapel and began knocking items over on the altar, according to WCVB. Paschal reportedly attempted to speak with the man before bringing him outside, where the situation turned violent.

Authorities allege Nascimento punched the priest and struck him with a beer can. During the confrontation, investigators say he also threatened Peschel, shouting, "You're dead! You're a dead man."

The suspect reportedly claimed he had a bullet in his backpack, although investigators did not find any ammunition.

A neighbor identified as Joao Debrito saw the altercation unfolding and rushed to Peschel's aid.



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"The way I see the guy start swinging ... I have to do something," Debrito told WCVB.

Nascimento later appeared in court on several charges, but his hearing was delayed following a profanity-laced outburst, WCVB reported.

Yet perhaps the most powerful moment in this story did not happen inside the chapel, on the sidewalk or in the courtroom.

It came afterward.

Bruised and recovering in the hospital, Peschel turned the attention away from himself and toward the man accused of attacking him.

"I forgive him," Peschel wrote on Facebook, according to WCVB. "I'm just glad nobody else was hurt. Pray for that man. Pray for peace."

Those words carry weight.

Jesus' command to forgive our enemies sounds beautiful from the safety of a church pew. It becomes something altogether different when spoken by a man bearing the bruises of an attack.

Peschel's powerful response is a striking reminder that biblical forgiveness is not passive weakness. It is spiritual warfare against the temptation to allow hatred, bitterness and vengeance to have the final word. Ultimately, violence may leave bruises, but it does not have to produce bitterness.

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