



Most Rev. Edward J. Weisenburger, Bishop of Tucson
Statement regarding mass shooting in Florida

The mass school shooting in Parkland, Florida again calls us to action against the random and senseless destruction of human life. As with many of us, I too ask myself how many times will we need to hear the shocking, even unbelievable statistics that follow each incident without taking any meaningful action.

The Catholic Church discerned long ago that the faithful cannot condone abortion and *also* be followers of Christ. The Church also has come to recognize that other life issues such as slavery, racism, and usury also compromise our discipleship. I join with Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago in asserting that we cannot stand by and shrug our shoulders. We must make clear to our elected officials that the weapons and ammunition that facilitate this carnage have no place in our culture. We owe it to our children to protect the cherished freedoms so many have fought and died for: to worship, learn and work in safety. That is true patriotism. I also join with Archbishop Charles Chaput of Philadelphia who likewise asserts that while we must pray for victims and promote healing, we also need to get angry: angry at our lawmakers for doing so little to prevent these catastrophes; angry at the media coverage that feeds off these tragedies as well as fuels them with a steady stream of sensationalism; and angry at ourselves for perversely tolerating these things and then forgetting them until the next round of violence.

One research group identified that between 2013 and 2015 there were 160 school shootings across 38 states. Nearly 53 percent of the identified shootings took place at K-12 schools, and 47 percent took place on college or university campuses. Here in Arizona, in January of 2011, when Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords and others were shot with multiple deaths resulting, there were calls for restrictions on assault weapons and better protection for all of us. In December 2012 in Newtown Connecticut, 20 children and six adults were murdered. More calls for limited gun control, especially assault weapons, but no action by our elected leaders. Then the 2017 shooting in Las Vegas with 58 deaths and 891 injuries. I would add that some call this recitation of facts “the normalization of shootings,” in other words, the new normal.

Enough. We all are called to protect life. We must address this issue now.