



Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America

A Province of the Congregation of Christian Brothers

February 26, 2018

Dear School Leaders,

Each year, the Lenten season offers us a unique opportunity to reflect on the life, passion, death and Resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ in light of our lived present day realities. This year is no different. The recent school shooting in Parkland, FL has once again given us pause to step back and wonder how our society has gotten to the point of allowing senseless killings in schools across the United States to go unchallenged.

The 2014 Christian Brothers Congregation Chapter in Nairobi, Kenya calls upon us *“to engage in advocacy with the voiceless, the marginalized and all that are oppressed.”* In recent days, young people have taken up the task of speaking out against gun violence and the deaf ears of our President, members of Congress and the NRA who seemingly ignore the cries of our children to curb the gun violence that mars our society and threatens their pursuit of an education without fear of being attacked in what should be a sacred and safe environment for them.

The mass shooting in Florida has ignited calls for action by young people aimed at encouraging lawmakers to pass tougher gun laws that can serve to deter such violence. At this time, I am aware of three such calls to action. The organizers behind the recent Women’s March have called for a 17-minute walkout on March 14th to protest Congress’ inaction concerning the gun violence plaguing our schools. A *National Student Walkout* is being planned for March 24th so that students can participate in *A March for Our Lives* on that day in Washington, DC. And finally, the Network for Public Education announced a national day of action, saying: “on Friday, April 20th, we want students to attend school and then promptly WALK-OUT at 10:00 am. Sit outside your schools and peacefully protest. Make some noise. Voice your thoughts - We are students, we are victims, we are change.”

As Province Leader of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America Province, I am encouraging our school leaders to allow the students in our Edmund Rice Schools to participate responsibly in the planned events for these dates. I call on our schools to take advantage of this opportunity in allowing our children to be heard. With proper guidance, these days can be a great teaching moment for our students in understanding how our democracy works and in allowing their voices to join in with their peers across the United States. By doing so as a Consortium of Edmund Rice Schools, we speak as one voice in advocating for our greatest asset – the young people in our care.

Lenten blessings,

Bro. Kevin M. Griffith, CFC
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