

Faith, action both needed to keep schools safe

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The Catholic Education Resource Center defines “sanctity of life” as “human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end.” This doctrine of the Catholic Church is constantly challenged in modern society through abortion, the death penalty, euthanasia and is now extending into gun violence.

I did research on gun control from the perspective of the NRA, the survivors of shootings and the Catholic Church. The Church is very consistent on issues concerning life. A common statement is “womb to tomb” and they are still steadfast on issues that threaten lives.

The Church understands that the right to bear arms is a part of the Second Amendment, which states “a well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed,” but guns should not be readily available for everyone who wants one. The goal is to protect our communities while respecting the Second Amendment. We have seen what happens when the wrong people have guns — it causes major death tolls and terrified civilians.

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The Church supports more restrictions on gun sales but does not think taking away guns altogether will solve the problem. In a letter to the United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops asked for required universal background checks for all gun purchases, limited civilian access to high-capacity weapons and ammunition magazines, make gun trafficking a federal crime and improved access to mental health care for those who may be prone to violence. Hopefully these requests can create a society of peace.

The recent mass shootings have made history as the deadliest shootings in the United States. This includes the shooting in Las Vegas into a crowd of 22,000 concertgoers, the Pulse nightclub shooting, Sandy Hook Elementary and most recently the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla.

As a high school student, it is unsettling to know that mass shootings are beginning to take place in more schools. Schools are meant to be places where youth go to learn and grow, not to be afraid.

When I think of school shootings as a student, I cannot understand, only imagine how the students at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School felt as they realized they were in the middle of a school shooting. The report says that the shooter pulled the fire alarm to create chaos and force students into the halls. He entered through the freshman building which sadly explains why nine of the 17 victims were 15 years old or younger.

Whenever I put myself into the shoes of the students I feel terrified as I can hear the sound of the gun going off and students crying while huddled into a classroom. I would be confused, worried and angry toward whoever came into my school to kill innocent teens.

These teens will forever be changed after this experience and our society must repay them by doing our best to ensure that this does not happen again.

The days following the recent shooting in Parkland, Fla., were filled with discussions about guns, prayers for the victims and survivors and anger towards the shooter who caused the tragedy.

A huge topic that worried a lot of my classmates was the concern of our school's current safety procedures. People wanted action to be taken to ensure that nothing like this could happen here. Honestly, I was one of those people who wanted our administration to have a concrete plan and educate us on their ideas to increase security.

Another topic that was discussed was action should be taken regarding guns. Most people wanted stricter rules and background checks when trying to purchase a gun and the sale of assault rifles to be banned. However, there were also students who don't think making it harder to get a gun will solve the problem. They believe we must help those with mental issues and make sure they do not acquire a gun. I overheard someone say that "guns don't kill people, people kill people" which is true, but why should we give people the resources to kill?

My teachers were very open to discussing about gun issues and the shooting but encouraged prayers as well. The survivors and families of the victims usually say "we don't need your thoughts and prayers," but what they really mean is they need action. Faith without action is dead, so we must combine our desire for action with our faith. I have wondered what my position is on the issue to somehow reduce or stop mass shootings.

I have come to the conclusion that I will agree with the Church on their ideas of reformed gun laws and improved mental health and continue to pray for peace in our country.

Olivia Parker is a senior at Mount St. Mary Academy in Little Rock. She attends Immaculate Conception Church in North Little Rock.