



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF KALAMAZOO

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Bishop Bradley's full statement on the tragic shooting in Parkland, Florida on February 14, 2018:

"Our hearts are heavy with sadness, even as our minds still cannot comprehend the senselessness of the horrendous act of violence which claimed the lives of 17 innocent people, injured many more and traumatized an entire community at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., which should be a safe haven where young people can grow and learn without fear for their lives. Yesterday, on a day devoted to the love we have for those special people in our lives (Valentine's Day), and a day calling all people of faith in Jesus as our Lord to a conversion of mind and heart as we begin the penitential season of Lent (Ash Wednesday), we were yet again confronted with the tragic reality of another senseless act of violence. We pray for those whose lives were ended in this world, and we commend them to our Merciful God to receive them into His Loving Arms. We pray for the families of those who were killed and ask God to cover them with His comfort and consolation. We pray for all those young students, teachers and administrators who were injured, and the entire community and so many in our nation who have been traumatized by this brutal and purposeless act.

"Lent is a time for special prayer, fasting and acts of charity for the purpose of turning us away from sin--that which divides and separates us from God and one another---so that we can be healed of what divides us, and live in the unity with God and neighbor as we have been designed to do. Yesterday's violence was horrific and deeply troubling as we realize that it marked the 18th school shooting in the first six weeks of 2018. That statistic is beyond distressing and should be a cause for great concern for all. While the endless arguments about gun control and tighter security will continue, as people of faith, we know that the only solution is for people to change their hearts, and to turn away from violence. Let us pray, fast, give alms and do whatever it takes to change hearts, beginning with our own, and to root out violence from our choices when dealing with conflict.

"I call on all Catholics, Christians, people of faith, and all people of good will to pray, fast and give alms for the purpose of ending violence. I ask all Catholics to make the seven Fridays of Lent days of special prayer, and to offer up our sacrifice of abstinence from meat on those same days, beginning with this Friday, February 16th, for the intention of an end to violence in our own lives and in the lives of all people, with the hope, which is also God's Hope, that we will live together in peace."