



A message to the faithful of the archdiocese from Archbishop Michael Jackels

27 February 2018, 10:50 AM

Weighing in on the student-led movement against gun violence

In our country, there is a growing student-led movement against gun violence and for more reasonable gun control laws, sometimes involving a walk-out and a march.

If students from our archdiocesan Catholic schools were to lead such a march, and if my schedule would permit, I would join them; yes, I would.

It's the height of sadness when students can't feel safe at school. And that sadness is higher yet because legislators still haven't done diddly-squat about reasonable gun control, except to make the proposal to arm teachers, which is not reasonable!

As Christians we are guided by the teachings of Jesus, for example, telling Peter to sheathe his sword, because those who live by the sword will die by the sword (Matthew 26:52).

We are also guided by the Catechism, which teaches that the commandment to love oneself morally justifies self-defense against an unjust aggressor, but within moral limits, such as using violence only as a last resort (paragraphs 2263-2267).

Moreover, we are taught that public safety is the responsibility of police and armed forces; we give them weapons so that we don't need a militia of private citizens, and so that individuals won't take matters into their own hands, like vigilantes, or "stand your ground" advocates.

I understand guns for hunting or recreation, I do; in high school I was a member of the Rod and Gun Club. I suppose a disturbed person could do harm to others with a .22 or a shotgun. But we could control how easy it is for that to happen, and maybe lessen how many get hurt.

People opposed to any gun control get their way by pressuring legislators, or paying them off. We have to do the same; maybe we can't line the pocket of a politician, but we can deprive him/her of office, and so denying them of payoffs from those who can and will make them.

Legislators only have the authority that we give to them by our vote. We have a moral duty to exercise the right to vote, and to vote conscientiously, and to

advocate for greater access to mental health care, and for greater control over who can buy what sort of gun.

So, march, yes. If you have the right to vote, fulfill your duty in a conscientious way. And pray, for as Jesus taught, some demons are only dealt with by prayer and fasting (Matthew17:21).

God, come to our assistance. Lord, make haste to help us.

Archbishop Michael Jackels

Archbishop of Dubuque