



March 13, 2018

Dear Academy of St. Elizabeth families,

The recent school shooting in Parkland, Florida, has caused the issue of school violence and school safety to be prominent in our minds and hearts. As you know, students have raised their voices in solidarity across this country; those voices have been effective in beginning important conversations about keeping our children safe at school. Students across the country plan to participate in a nationwide walkout from schools tomorrow, Wednesday, March 14, from 10:00 until 10:17, in honor of the seventeen victims from Parkland.

Recently, we met as a faculty and staff to discuss the issues and concerns regarding school safety and how we best guide students in their observance of the ***Enough! National School Walkout***. In support of our mission, we want to empower our young women, give them a voice in this important conversation, and provide direction and guidance for them as well. We have insisted that our observance of the seventeen minutes will be thoughtful, respectful, meaningful, and in keeping with our Catholic identity, traditions, and values. We have decided that the girls will have the freedom to choose how they would like to observe the seventeen minutes. They may "walkout" to the garden area of our school and participate in a planned program of prayer and remembrance; they may attend a prayer service in the chapel; or, they may remain in class. After the seventeen minute observance, we will return to our daily routine.

In the wake of the tragedy in Parkland, I have consulted with law enforcement officials, numerous school leaders, as well as organizations we are affiliated with, such as the New Jersey Association of Independent Schools, the National Catholic Education Association, and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, for insight and support. Our discussions will be ongoing with one common goal in mind: *"there can be no more compelling issue for bipartisan cooperation than the safety of America's children."* We remain committed to providing a safe, secure learning environment for our girls each and every day. Should you have questions, concerns, or comments, please don't hesitate to contact me. We are confident that tomorrow's observance will remain positive and productive and unify our community in our quest to live in peace.

Sincerely,

*Lynn A. Burch, Principal*