

# **A Strong Soul**

Friday of the 6<sup>th</sup> Week of Easter

May 30, 2025

Fr. Tony Davis

Welcome family and friends of our 8<sup>th</sup> grade class of 2025. We appropriately begin this important day of celebration for the accomplishments of our graduating students by giving all glory to God. We are also thankful for the presence of the rest of our school, who love our eighth graders and support them as they graduate and move on, even though they still have 3 more days of school.

This year's 2025 graduating class has the distinct honor of being the first class under our new name, St. Josephine Bakhita School. Since our merger last year of Saint Anthony, Saint Elizabeth, and Saint Matthias, Saint Josephine Bakhita Parish & School is now the Catholic presence of the Northland Area Community. Our Parish Church is located off of 161 and our school, of course, off of Morse Rd. Like 2 outstretched hands, we embrace all the people in our community as well as those who come into our community for worship, service, or school.

We are so inspired by our new patron saint, St. Josephine Bakhita, the saint from Sudan, as we continue to learn more about her life of heroic virtue. One of the major highlights of her life was

that she had a very, very strong soul. From a young age up through her teenage years, she suffered tremendously at the hands of those who did not respect human dignity. In spite of the way people treated her, she always remained strong in spirit. Looking back at all the challenging parts of her life, she said "I never despaired; I felt a mysterious strength within me that sustained me." The words from Jesus were true for her: "do not be afraid of one who can destroy the body, but cannot destroy the soul. Rather, fear the one who can destroy both." She was never afraid because she knew no suffering inflicted upon her could destroy her God-given soul. Overtime, a strong soul even heals the scars of the body. Her soul was so strong that she went so far as to forgive all those who offended her and pray for their well-being. Didn't Jesus also say, "love your enemies and pray for those who hurt you?"

At a graduation, it is customary to give some advice to the graduating class. Drawing on the life of Saint Josephine Bakhita and our scripture readings for this daily mass for Friday of the sixth week of Easter, I would simply like to repeat the words of a vision of Jesus that Saint Paul had one night. The Lord said to him and I say to you today, the 8th grade class of Saint Josephine Bakhita School, "do not be afraid. Go on and do not be silent for I am with you."

8<sup>th</sup> graders, you are going out into a world that is full of anger, exclusion, and violence. It is extremely important for us to have more voices speaking out on behalf of God. Instead of anger, we need you to be a voice for justice. Instead of exclusion, we need you to be a voice for all people, including those who are suffering the most. Instead of violence, we need you to be a voice for peace. It takes a lot of courage to speak out on these things. Do not be afraid.

St. Josephine Bakhita School Class of 2025, we are proud of you, your accomplishments, the growth we have seen in you, and the future that God has in store for you. After Jesus spoke in the vision to St. Paul, he ended by saying that he was not to be afraid because God had many people in that city who would support him. Know that you, too, have many friends and supporters in this community who support you. "Do not be afraid. Go on speaking, and do not be silent for I am with you."