



NATIONAL CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK
January 29 – February 4, 2017

Pope Francis' Prayer Intentions

Christian Unity

That all Christians may be faithful to the Lord's teaching by striving with prayer and fraternal charity to restore ecclesial communion and by collaborating to meet the challenges facing humanity.

Comfort for the Afflicted

That all those who are afflicted, especially the poor, refugees, and marginalized, may find welcome and comfort in our communities.

My Experience with Catholic Education

by Elaine McDowell

Catholic Education for me began in my home. My father was Catholic and my mother was Lutheran but she took the papers that she signed promising to raise her children Catholic quite seriously. So for as long as I can remember, my mom and dad initiated grace at meals and bedtime prayers. It was my parents who listened to my Religion questions and practiced the prayers we needed to learn.

I attended Sr. Veronica School in North Philadelphia which was one block away from where I lived. I was educated by the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart and spent a lot of my time helping the sisters. My high school years were spent at Little Flower High School also located in North Philadelphia. My undergraduate Catholic work was a combination of Immaculata University and LaSalle University. Even my graduate studies were done through a Catholic university - St. Joe's.

I became a Catholic school teacher many years ago and since then have taught or been a principal at nine different schools. Every school had its own traditions and activities but each school had one thing in common - the instruction and practice of the Catholic faith. I married a Catholic school teacher who became a Catholic school principal also and we raised four children and put them through Catholic school, both grade school and high school.

It was at a Catholic school where I learned to really be of service to others, where I understood that others came before myself. It was my Catholic education that gave me a much broader view of the world and a realization that people came from all walks of life and varied experiences. Catholic school has also surrounded my life with good people. I have been blessed to have made some lifelong friends through my experience in Catholic schools from my grade school days through to my days as principal. These relationships are what mean the most in life and the older I get, the more important they are. Through my life, I have certainly faced some trials. I don't think you can live as long as I have or raised a family of four children and not undergone trials. No matter what the circumstance, no matter the issue, no matter what the outcome, my faith is always what pulls me through. My wish for each child in this school is that they too will develop a faith so strong that nothing can shake it and that no matter what they encounter, it will be their faith that pulls them through. For me, that began in my home. For each of these children that begins in their home. A family who sees their faith as a priority has another dimension to that family. A home inclusive of a faith element has a depth that others do not.

I am most grateful to the parents who see a Catholic education as a priority. Our school is a good one with a strong and dedicated staff but most of all we are Catholic.

Fast Facts of the Faith

What's special about First Fridays???

Holy Trinity students and Catholics around the world attend Mass on first Fridays of each month for a special reason – devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Christians have always had devotion to the Sacred Heart, but devotion spread when St. Margaret Mary Alcoque (1647-1690) had a vision of Jesus asking for people to make amends for a lack of reverence to God. Jesus said that if people would receive Holy Communion in a state of grace for nine consecutive first Fridays with the intention of making reparation for the sins and ingratitude of humanity, He would be their refuge in death. So HTS family, remember how much Jesus loves us, even the people who anger you or the worst sinners. Bring these people to God in prayer when you attend a first Friday Mass!



SAINT OF THE MONTH: JOSEPHINE BAKHITA

JOSEPHINE BAKHITA is one of our newer saints canonized in 2000. She was born around 1869 in Darfur in the Sudan in Africa. She had a happy childhood as her uncle was the village chief.

When she was about 8 or 9 she was kidnapped by Arab slave traders. She was forced to walk barefoot for over 600 miles and was sold three times and finally given away. Traumatized, she forgot her own name and was called Bakhita, Arabic for “Lucky”. Her fourth owner was a Turkish general who mistreated her so badly at times she could barely walk. She was cruelly scarred and tattooed to identify her.

At 14 she was sold to the Italian Vice Consul who treated her in a loving way. She was “given” to an Italian friend of the Vice Consul, Augusto Michielo. When she was about 16 they left for Italy. There she was employed as a Nanny. In 1886 the Michielo family returned to Sudan. Josephine and her charge were left in the care of the Canossian Sisters in Venice. Since Italian law did not recognize slavery it was declared Bakhita had never

been a slave. She chose to remain with the Canossians and in 1890 she was baptized with the name of Josephine Margaret. In 1893 she entered the novitiate of the Canossian Sisters and on Dec. 8, 1896 she took her vows. She was assigned to the convent in Vicenza where she spent the rest of her life. A strong missionary drive stayed with her throughout her life – “her mind was always on God, and her heart in Africa”. During her 43 years spent in Vicenza she served as the cook, sacristan and door keeper. She was lovingly called “Sor Moretta”, little brown sister.

Her last years were marked by pain and sickness. She died on the 8th of February in 1947 and her last words were “Our Lady...Our Lady”. She was canonized on October 1, 2000 and her feast day is February 8th. She has been adopted as the only patron saint of Sudan.

Pope Benedict XVI in the beginning of his second encyclical letter *Spe Salvi* (In Hope We Were Saved) relates her entire life story as an outstanding example of the Christian hope. *Contributed by Joan, HTS Advisory Council*

"Seeing the sun, the moon, and the stars, I said to myself: 'Who could be the Master of these beautiful things?' And I felt a great desire to see Him, to know Him, and to pay Him homage".

--St. Josephine Bakhita

While a slave, this holy young girl did not yet know Christ. She did not know anything about the Church or the Christian faith. Yet she instinctively knew that there was Someone who set all the world in motion and her soul longed to know Him. What things in nature draw your attention to God?

