“This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad.”

Homily by Most Reverend John T. Folda, Bishop of Fargo

May 8, 2019

St. John’s Academy groundbreaking
St. John’s Academy, Jamestown

Thank you to all who are here for this great event in the life of the Church. It’s an honor and a joy to be with all of you for this occasion. Of course, we’re still in the Easter Season, and the Church continues to celebrate the Lord’s resurrection, the new life which he now offers to us, his followers. As the Easter antiphon says, “This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad.”

This is indeed the day the Lord has made. This historic day has been long anticipated, and we are filled with joy to see it finally arrive. Today we break ground for the first new addition to St. John’s Academy in many years. So this is unquestionably an important moment for Catholic education in our diocese, and in our whole community. But we are also beginning a new chapter in the life of St. James parish and the whole community of Jamestown. This groundbreaking is a vivid sign of God’s plan for the growth of his Church and for the care of his children, and I thank all of you for being a part of this holy endeavor.

The day after his election as Pope, Pope Francis spoke to a group of assembled cardinals and bishops. He urged them in all things to walk with Christ, to build with Christ, and to proclaim Christ. As I reflect on what we’re doing here today, it seems to me that the Pope’s exhortation is taking shape before us.

First, we are walking with Christ. Before all else, we must be in the presence of Christ and walk along with him, in the direction that he sets for us. Much time has been spent in preparation for this moment, time for study, time for consultation, and most importantly, time for prayer. All through the planning that has brought us to this day, the priests and many faithful lay people of this parish and community have striven to walk with Christ, to travel on the path that he has laid out before us. Our prayer and discernment have helped us to stay grounded in the One whose work this is. And that walk with Christ must continue as we move forward. At every moment, we must be sure to walk with Him and to listen to Him, so that His voice will be heard by all who pass through the doors of St. John’s Academy.

And, we must build with Christ. As the psalmist says, “If the Lord does not build the house, in vain do its builders labor.” What better way to build with Christ than to provide a place where our young people will learn our faith and grow in their knowledge and love of God, who is both Love and Truth incarnate. As St. Paul says, “Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.” What we build here, we build not on our own, but with and in our Lord Jesus Christ. If we build with him, then we build on a firm foundation, and this edifice will truly give glory to God.

And finally, we must proclaim Christ. The entire mission of St. John’s Academy will hinge on this one essential act: the proclamation of Christ to every person who will walk through its doors, whether students, faculty, staff, family members, or visitors. For well over a hundred years, St. John’s has carried out this mission, and this new addition will give that mission even more energy and vigor. In a very real way, St. John’s is a herald of the Gospel, a living expression of the presence of Christ among us. And, of course, this is the mission of your parish as well. The Church exists to make Christ known to the world, and this school will continue to carry out this mission as it has done for so many years. Pope Francis has called upon all of us to renew our commitment to evangelization, to the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus, and with God’s grace our presence here today and into the future will allow that Good News to reach many hearts.

So, on this day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice. I am very grateful to all of you who have made this great project possible, and I encourage you to spread the word about all the good that is
happening here. Let us resolve as we go forward to always walk with Christ, to build with Christ, and to proclaim Christ in all things. Whatever we do, let us do in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.