



Prayer Service in Honor of St. Josephine Bakhita

Music suggestions:

I Remember, I Believe – No More Auction Block – Would You Harbor Me (Sweet Honey in the Rock, Sacred Ground album), *We Are Mountain Moving Women*.

Ambiance suggestions:

Place a cloth on the table with crucifix, candle, chains/broken chains.



Introduction/opening prayer:

Leader: St. Josephine Bakhita was kidnapped as a child and sold into slavery in Sudan and later in Italy. Once Josephine was freed, she dedicated her life to sharing her testament of deliverance from slavery and comforting the poor and suffering.

All: St. Josephine, help all who are trapped in the tragedy of modern slavery. Give comfort and healing to the victims and perpetrators of human trafficking. Give wisdom and courage to us and all of God's people who work to free people from the chains of human bondage. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Readings:

1st Reading: Josephine Bakhita was born in 1869 in Darfur, Sudan. When she was seven, she was kidnapped by Arab slave traders and over the next eight years was re-sold five times. She was so traumatized by the brutality of her captors, she could not remember her birth name. Her kidnappers gave her the name "Bakhita" which means "Fortunate."

Her final owner, the Italian consul, brought her to Italy to be a nanny for his daughter. When the family had to go away on business, they left Bakhita and the child in the care of the Canossian Sisters of the Institute of Catechumens in Venice. It was there that she came to know and experience God's love.

In 1890 Bakhita asked to be baptized and received the name Josephine. When the family returned to reclaim their daughter and Bakhita, Josephine resisted and her case went to court, which upheld her freedom since slavery was not recognized in Italian law.

In 1896 she took her vows as a Canossian Sister and for the next 50 years she led a life of simplicity, prayer and service (especially as the doorkeeper in the convent), always showing kindness to everyone, especially the children in the street.

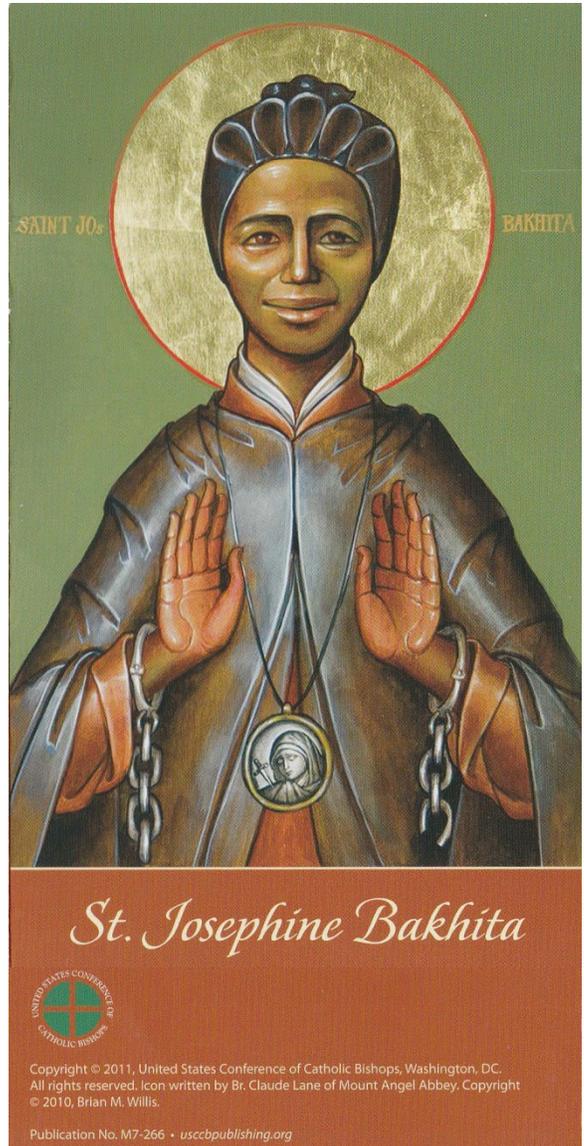
In her final years she suffered from sickness and the haunting memories of the flogging and beatings she received whilst in slavery. Josephine Bakhita died in 1947 and in 2000 she was canonized – the first Sudanese ever to be proclaimed a saint. (Source: www.catholicnews.org.uk)

Music could separate these two readings.

2nd Reading: “I urgently appeal to all men and women of good will, and all those near or far, including the highest levels of civil institutions, who witness the scourge of contemporary slavery, not to become accomplices to this evil, not to turn away from the sufferings of our brothers and sisters, our fellow human beings, who are deprived of their freedom and dignity. Instead, may we have the courage to touch the suffering flesh of Christ, revealed in the faces of those countless persons whom he calls ‘the least of these my brethren.’”
(Mt. 25:40, 45) Pope Francis, 2015 World Day of Peace

Reflection questions:

- What encounter/experience/image has spoken to my heart from these readings?
- What have I done to open myself to the tragedy of modern slavery?
- What were some actions we were involved in against human trafficking?
- What support is needed to engage in education, advocacy and prayer relative to modern day slavery?



Time for reflection/sharing

Intercessory prayers:

Leader invites intercessory prayers. **R:** Josephine, give us courage.

Closing prayer:

All: Since we tread along the same way, let us lend a hand to one another to help surmount the difficulties that present themselves.

Mother Marie Rose, SNJM



Prayer service created by: Carroll Ann Kemp, SNJM

The Spiritual Ministries Network of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary (SNJM) provides a variety of prayer services for personal and group spiritual nourishment. May your prayer life draw you closer to the Divine.

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