

The Wisdom of *St. Josephine Bakhita*

“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...”

“I received the Sacrament of Baptism with such joy that only angels could describe...”

“I have given everything to my Master: He will take care of me...The best thing for us is not what we consider best, but what the Lord wants of us!”

“O Lord, if I could fly to my people and tell them of your Goodness at the top of my voice: oh, how many souls would be won!”

“The Lord has loved me so much: we must love everyone...we must be compassionate.”

“I can truly say that it was a miracle I did not die, because the Lord has destined me for greater things...”

“Mary protected me even before I knew her!”

“When a person loves another dearly, he desires strongly to be close to the other: therefore, why be afraid to die? Death brings us to God!”

“...the liberation that (Bakhita) had received through her encounter with the God of Jesus Christ, she felt she had to extend, it had to be handed on to others, to the greatest possible number of people. The hope born in her which had ‘redeemed’ her she could not keep to herself; this hope had to reach many, to reach everybody.”

Pope Benedict XVI, “Spe Salvi”

Resources for this Pamphlet:

www.americancatholic.org

www.nbccongress.org

www.fides.org

www.solidgroundministry.com

www.vatican.va



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St. Josephine Bakhita
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St. Josephine Bakhita

The region of Darfur in southern Sudan has been etched in the hearts and minds of millions of people since 2003, when political conflict erupted which has resulted in the slaughter and death from disease of 450,000 people. Also since that time, as many as 2.5 million people have been displaced from their villages and homes.

Although she came into the world over 100 years earlier, St. Josephine Bakhita knew the horror of losing her family and home. Born in 1868 in the village of Olgossa in Darfur, Josephine was a small child out walking one day when she was kidnapped by slave traders. Never to see her family again, she was so traumatized by the event that she forgot even her name. The slave traders then gave her the name, "Bakhita", which means "Fortunate One". Though the tiny child did not realize it then, her name would prove to be prophetic.

At first Bakhita was traded from one owner to another. Some were kind, others cruel. One master, a Turkish general, had her "branded" with over 100 razor cuts on her body. She accepted all these trials with quiet dignity. Finally, however, she was traded to the family of Augusto Michielli, who treated her well. She became the nanny for their little daughter, and so accompanied her to catechism classes given by the Canossian Sisters. There Bakhita learned about Christianity and felt at home for the first time in many years. "These holy Mothers - she said in

1910 - with heroic patience instructed me and led me to know God whom I had sensed in my heart since a child without knowing who He was."

Bakhita was then baptized and confirmed, taking the name Josephine. Three years later she entered the novitiate of the Canossian Daughters of Charity. She served her community as a doorkeeper, also doing cooking and sewing. Her gentle nature and great humility were recognized by all who knew her.

- St. Josephine Bakhita, when asked about the state of her health or how she was feeling, always answered with a smile: "As the Master desires." She accepted that every area of her life was controlled by God. Can we incorporate this aspect of her spirituality into our own lives, by a joyful acceptance of God's will in all circumstances? Let us ask this quiet saint to help us when we struggle with issues in our lives which we don't understand.



- Bakhita surely became a "fortunate one" when she accepted Christ as her savior and master. She exemplified a truly hopeful spirit as she endured humiliation and suffering. As Pope Benedict XVI writes in his encyclical, "Spe Salvi": "*Now she had hope - no longer simply the modest hope of finding masters who would be less cruel, but the great hope: 'I am definitely loved and whatever happens*

to me - I am awaited by this Love. And so my life is good.' Through the knowledge of this hope she was 'redeemed', no longer a slave, but a child of God." On her feast day of February 8th, make a prayer card available to parishioners with scripture passages related to hope. Include her image and prayer: *Loving God, rewarder of the humble, you blessed St. Josephine Bakhita with charity and patience. May her prayers help us, and her example inspire us to carry our cross and to love you always. Pour upon us the spirit of wisdom, hope and love with which you filled St. Josephine Bakhita. By serving you as she did, may we please you by our faith and our actions. Amen!*

- St. Josephine's understanding of her faith allowed her to forgive even those who mistreated her: "If I were to meet the slave-traders who kidnapped me and even those who tortured me, I would kneel and kiss their hands, for if that did not happen I would not be a Christian and Religious today..." Surely forgiveness is a cornerstone of our faith. When we forgive others, or ask for forgiveness, healing takes place within our own soul. It's a "win-win" situation! Let us resolve to be more merciful to those around us, remembering that God is merciful to us each day.

The life of St. Josephine Bakhita inspires us to an acceptance of circumstances beyond our control, hope for the future, and forgiveness of others. May we live our lives as she did, always dependent upon God for his love, mercy and guidance.