



## Day of prayer and reflection against Human Trafficking

8 February 2024

Saint Josephine Bakhita

In 1869, Josephine was born in the village of Olgossa in Darfur (Sudan). The nickname Bakhita, by which she is known, means lucky, and was imposed, oh irony of destiny!, by the same slave traders she was abducted at the age of seven. She was sold several times on the slave market. In 1882 she was bought in Kartum by the Italian consul Calisto Legnani, who entrusted her to the family of Augusto Michieli and she became his daughter's nanny.

When the Michieli family moved to the Red Sea, Bakhita stayed with her daughter at the house of the Canossian Sisters in Venice. Here she had the opportunity to become acquainted with the Christian faith and, on 9 January 1890, she asked to be baptised, taking the name Giuseppina. In 1893, after an intense journey, she decided to become a Canossian nun to serve God, who had given her so many proofs of his love. She was canonised by John Paul II in 2000, during the Jubilee, as a way of honouring the African people and all Christians, men and women who suffered slavery.

In her biography she writes: "If I were to meet again those slave traders who abducted and tortured me, I would kneel down to kiss their hands, because, if this had not happened, I would not be a Christian and a religious woman now".

Today we pray with her and we pray for so many women, men, and children who in our reality are still victims of human trafficking.

**Hymn:** St. Josephine Bakhita (Jeséd)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EIWSv6rZ7fi>

When you were a child you never  
imagined  
that many would talk about you  
calling you lucky  
universal sister  
in these days how much you suffered

alone and without freedom  
for you did not know what  
God was going to do in your life.

**Blessed are you, Saint Bakhita  
because Jesus chose you**

**to be among us  
reflection of his love.**

All humility, all patience,  
transparency and goodness:  
with joy always ready,  
serving others,  
you served Christ in your brothers  
as a daughter of charity,  
for you we give Him thanks.

universal Sister.

**Happy are you Saint Bakhita  
because Jesus chose you  
to be among us  
reflection of his love.**

Blessed are you, Saint Bakhita  
Universal Sister.

**Space for silence<sup>1</sup>:** Bring to your "mind and heart" the reality of so many people who, in our reality, are living a situation of trafficking; you don't know them, or you are indifferent to this situation. I invite you to "put yourself in their shoes" and think: What thought generates this suffering in you? Does it affect you? What emotion or thought does it provoke in you? What does your heart feel?.



**You can open a space to share briefly with a word.**

**Listen to the suffering:** *"Trafficking is violence" and a deep wound in the body of humanity, I encourage women and men to fight "all forms of slavery and exploitation"<sup>2</sup>. As it is:*

**GLOBAL SUFFERING:** Human trafficking permeates every aspect of our society and our world. It is woven into our clothes, lights up our electronics and seasons our food. At its core, human trafficking is a manifestation of extreme inequality. The powerful exploit the vulnerable for profit. These problems affect everyone in the world regardless of nationality or geographic location. They disproportionately hit those who suffer from poverty and other vulnerabilities, especially women and girls..

**MIGRANT SUFFERING:** During 2023 our world has witnessed immense suffering of people due to the rise of conflicts and wars, violence, criminality, erosion of women's rights, and the economic and social impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Many are forced to migrate in an unplanned manner, exposing them to an increased risk of exploitation through the loss of their homes, livelihoods due to widespread environmental degradation or threats of gang violence.

<sup>1</sup> En este momento antes del espacio de silencio, si el lugar o circunstancias de la oración lo permiten se puede proyectar uno de estos videos, para tomar conciencia:

- Bertha, víctima de trata (Cadenas invisibles): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOZlPuriffU&t=72s>
- Alika, víctima de trata (Cadenas invisibles): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IjtThfTDA94&t=8s>
- ¿Qué es la trata de personas? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bAlD1wwl3Ws&t=54s>

<sup>2</sup> Papa Francisco, Mensaje de la Jornada Mundial de la Trata 2022.

During their journey, migrants suffer physical or sexual abuse, despair and hopelessness. Too often they arrive at a destination only to suffer further under the oppression of their employers or the constant fear of arrest and deportation.

**CLIMATE CHANGE:** has aggravated human trafficking, forcing millions of people to migrate. Increasingly intense weather events displace the communities and raise the risk of trafficking. High-risk areas for forced labour include mining, logging, and textile and garment manufacturing; these industries further contribute to climate degradation. Even renewable industries, vital to the transition to clean energy, depend on forced labour.



### Silence to pray what has been heard

**Hymn:** I'm not for sale (Abel Pedraza and Casa Refugio)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0dNXQkaErR0>

**In the face of this reality the Word of God reminds us:**

"Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or terrified because of them,  
for the Lord your God goes with you.  
He will never leave you nor forsake." (Dt. 31, 6)

**And our Founders Maria Antonia París and Antony Mary Claret:**

- 🌍 *"Learn to hope in God against all hope"<sup>3</sup>.*
- 🌍 *"Be confident, child, wait a little while and you will see what I do. ..."<sup>4</sup>.*
- 🌍 *"The reason is that, as I have said, I am so tenderhearted and compassionate that I cannot see a misfortune, a misery without doing something to help..<sup>5</sup>*

<sup>3</sup> M<sup>a</sup> Antoina París, *Relación Primera*, N<sup>o</sup> 218

<sup>4</sup> M<sup>a</sup> Antonia París, *Diario*, n<sup>o</sup> 109.

<sup>5</sup> P. Claret, *Autobiografía*, cap. II, n<sup>o</sup> 10, Ed Claret.

## *Together we commit ourselves to ...*

- 🌍 Caring for our dignity and that of all human beings, which is a gift of God;
- 🌍 With hope and joy, spread the light of dignity, inform and raise awareness about human trafficking;
- 🌍 Plan initiatives aimed at changing the conditions that force millions of people to live in similar conditions of slavery, using our creativity and drawing inspiration from art, dance and music;
- 🌍 Pray for an end to trafficking and other forms of exploitation.
- 🌍 **... we can add any personal or community commitment.**

## *Concluding prayer*

Saint Josephine Bakhita, as a child you were sold into slavery and faced untold hardship and suffering. Once freed from your physical slavery, you found true redemption in the encounter with Christ and his Church.

Saint Josephine Bakhita, help all those who are trapped in slavery. In their name, intercede with God of Mercy, so that the chains of their captivity may be broken. May God himself deliver all those who have been threatened, injured or abused by human trafficking and smuggling. Bring comfort to those who survive this slavery and teach them to look to Jesus as a model of faith and hope, so that they may heal their own wounds.

We beseech you to pray and intercede for all of us, that we may not fall into indifference, that we may open our eyes and look at the miseries and wounds of so many brothers and sisters deprived of their dignity and freedom and listen to their cry for help. Amen.



*Statue of St. Josephine Bakhita by Canadian artist Timothy Schmalz in the Vatican*