Photo of Schio, Italy - Marco Adriani and Photo of St. Josephine Bakhita - Seek First the Kingdom

February 2023

Children of the Immaculate Heart

Dear Friends in Christ,

On February 8th, the Church celebrated the feast of St. Josephine Margaret Bakhita, one of our beloved patronesses, for which reason we desire to share her story with you.

She was born around 1869 in what is now Sudan and kidnapped by Arab slave traders in about 1877. Over the next 12 years she was treated so cruelly, suffering beatings and even ritual scarification, that she forgot her name. Her masters granted her the Arabic name “Bakhita”, meaning fortunate. When she was sold and brought to Italy the cruelty finally lessened, and she was given to Augusto Michieli to become the family nanny. She was given kindness and, most crucially, knowledge of Jesus Christ.

This began when Michieli sent Bakhita and his daughter to a Canossian convent while he did business in Sudan until they could join him there. Bakhita was deeply moved by what she learned from the sisters about the Master who became a Slave, and she heard the call to consecrated life. When the time came to move to Sudan, Bakhita refused, and the issue went to court. Because slavery was outlawed in Sudan before Bakhita’s birth and Italy did not recognize slavery, Bakhita won and was given the liberty to follow God's call.

Bakhita remained with the sisters and was received into the Church as Josephine Margaret and Fortunata (Latin for Bakhita) by Cardinal Giuseppe Sarto, the future Pope Saint Pius X. She took her final vows as a Canossian sister in 1896 and was relocated to Schio in 1902. She spent 42 years there and was affectionately called Sor Moretta (little brown sister) or Madre Moretta (little black mother). After a life of gentleness and fortitude in the face of trial, she died on February 8, 1947. She was canonized on October 1, 2000, and is the patroness of Sudan and human trafficking victims.

Children of the Immaculate Heart has chosen St. Josephine Bakhita to guide us and the women and children under our care, that they may find true liberty as she did through the Cross of Christ. May she always intercede for us.

In Corde Mariae,

Irene Van Dosbree
Interdepartmental Assistant

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Blessed Fra' Gerard,
Founder

The season of Lent is upon us! As we prepare to enter this holy season of penance, let us remember the words of Saint Raphael from Tobit 12:8-10:

"Prayer, fasting, and alms, said he, here is better treasure to lay up than any store of gold. Almsgiving is death's avoiding, is guilt's atoning, is the winning of mercy and of life eternal; the sinners, the wrong-doers, are enemies to their own souls."

We at CIH earnestly pray that by heeding the angel's advice, your Lent will be fruitful and joyous!

Thank you to our moving volunteers! We wouldn't be here without you!

We appreciate your support to help our survivors heal from their trauma!

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