



## **International Day of Prayer and Awareness On Human trafficking**

*February 8<sup>th</sup>*

### *Feast of Saint Josephine Bakhita*

#### **Background**

Josephine Bakhita was born in the south of Sudan in 1869. As a young child she was kidnapped, sold into slavery and suffered much cruelty and abuse. In 1883 she was bought by an Italian diplomat and moved with his family to Italy. She later became a religious and for 50 years led a life of prayer and service as Canossian Sister.

For more information on Josephine Bakhita click on the link :

<http://www.snjm.org/en/our-news/more-news/731-the-snjm-invites-you-to-celebrate-the-first-international-day-of-prayer-and-awareness-against-human-trafficking>

(February 2015)



#### **Preparing for prayer**

*Decorate the place where you will gather with a picture of Josephine Bakhita, a candle for each person present as well as flowers or a plant and any other symbols you may wish to add.*

Voice 1: On February 8, 1947 Josephine Bakhita died an agonizing death. In her delirium she re-lived her days as a slave and often murmured “*Take away my chains, they hurt me.*”

➤ Question for sharing:

Have you ever had a difficult experience that left its mark on your life?

#### **Let us pray:**

*Eternal God, we know that you have a preferential love for the poor and the little ones. We know that you defend those whose rights are disrespected. We remember the children, youth, women and men who are bought and sold as merchandise. You are a God of tenderness and mercy and will not forget their names, as they are written in the palm of your hand. (Light one or more candles.)*

Voice 2: Reflecting on her experience as a child, trafficked at 9 years of age, Bakhita said, “*I only thought of my family. I called out for my Mom and Dad with anguish in my heart that is impossible to describe. But no one listened to me.*”

- Question for sharing: Have you ever felt abandoned or far away from your family?

### **Let us pray:**

*God of tenderness and mercy give us the courage to speak out against injustice and abuse, to denounce the violation of human rights of trafficked persons, to be on the side of the little ones, to speak out for those whose voices are silenced. You are a God of tenderness and mercy and will not forget their names, as they are written in the palm of your hand.*

(Light a few more candles.)

Voice 3: When she was 24 years old Bakhita asked to become a member of the congregation of sisters with whom she had lived for several years. The sister who was the superior at the time said to her, “*Neither the colour of one’s skin nor her social status are obstacles to becoming a sister.*” Bakhita began her novitiate in December, 1893.

- Question for sharing: How would I react if a woman who had been trafficked asked to be part of our congregation as a vowed member, associate, lay consecrated or volunteer?

### **Let us pray:**

*O God, we ask you to give all those who work against Human Trafficking understanding and determination, compassion and wisdom, courage and perseverance. May we all remain faithful to our commitment to work individually and collectively in the defense of those caught up in the trap of Human Trafficking. You are a God of tenderness and mercy and will not forget our names, as they are written in the palm of your hand.* (Light the rest of the candles.)

(Remain in silence for a few moments. Background music could be used here or follow the time of silence with a song and joining hands as a sign of renewed commitment.)

### **Closing prayer:**

Give us, o God, the wisdom and the courage to be near all those who have been wounded in body, heart and spirit. Together with them may we proclaim your promise of life in abundance, tenderness and infinite love for all who are exploited. Touch the hearts of those who are responsible for the spreading of Human Trafficking. Give us strength to carry out our commitment to freedom, your gift to all your sons and daughters. AMEN.

### **Possible actions:**

- Share this prayer with other people
- Keep up-to-date on HT, especially positive news
- Work to promote legislation that will curb HT
- Pray daily for victims of trafficking and for an end to HT
- Form a group to act against HT