



Image: Wikipedia

## **PRAYER SERVICE FOR ST. JOSEPHINE BAKHITA**

**PATRON OF THOSE WHO  
HAVE BEEN TRAFFICKED  
OR ENSLAVED.**

**FEAST DAY IS FEBRUARY 8TH**

St Josephine Bakhita knew slavery. She was a Sudanese woman who was sold and resold five times in the markets of El Obeid and of Khartoum. Her experience of slavery was both physical and moral. As slavery had been outlawed in Sudan before her birth, an Italian court claimed that she could never have been sold as

a slave originally. This left her free to become a Daughter of Charity at the Canossian Convent in Rome. Her name Bakhita, which means “fortunate”, was the name given to her by her kidnappers.

For this reason St. Bakhita has been named the patron saint of all those who have been trafficked and are held in captivity or slavery. On this her feast day we pray for those who have been enslaved and those in danger of becoming victims of slavery. We also pray for those who are working to rescue, protect, raise awareness about the evil of human trafficking; and those pledged to eradicating the crime of human trafficking.

Pope Francis used his message for the World Day of Peace this year to highlight the issue of human trafficking. You can access the document, quotations from which are found in the intercessions in this liturgy, at

[http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco\\_20141208\\_messaggio-xlviijornata-mondiale-pace-2015.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20141208_messaggio-xlviijornata-mondiale-pace-2015.html)

## GREETING AND DOXOLOGY

Let our prayer rise before you,  
God of all peoples and nations.  
May your grace fill the world.  
Sanctify the work of our hands.  
Bring forth the reign of your justice and mercy.

Glory to you, three in one.  
Your mercy endures forever. Amen.

## SUGGESTED MUSIC/REFLECTIONS

“We are one” *Susanne Toolan rsm*,  
available from <http://www.mercyworld.org/spirituality/view-reflection.cfm?uuid=F5AB5BA4-95C1-ADEE-B20D5BBA07B4973B>

“Women speaking justice.” *Helen Kearins rsm*  
available from <http://www.mercyworld.org/spirituality/view-reflection.cfm?uuid=F5AB5BA4-95C1-ADEE-B20D5BBA07B4973B>

Voices that Challenge. *Music & Text by David Haas. 1990, GIA Publications, Inc.*

Who will speak if you don't? *Music and Text by Marty Haugen. 1993. GIA Publications Inc.*

Video reflection: Not forgotten <http://youtu.be/cikJKvdIblg>

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Note that the NT Greek word for Lord is Kyrios, a term which was also used for an owner of slaves. This is problematic if the term is used to legitimate slave-owners in our contemporary context. While copyright restrictions do not allow editing of versions, what words are used when a psalm is prayed are at the discretion of the one who prays.

## PSALM 143

Lord, hear my prayer;  
in your faithfulness  
listen to my pleading;  
answer me in your righteousness.

Do not enter into judgment  
with your servant;  
before you no one can be just.

The enemy has pursued my soul;  
he has crushed my life to the ground.  
He has made me dwell in darkness  
like those long dead.

My spirit is faint within me;  
my heart despairs.

I remember the days of old;  
I ponder all your deeds;  
the works of your hands I recall.

I stretch out my hands toward you,  
my soul to you like a parched land.

Hasten to answer me, Lord;  
for my spirit fails me.  
Do not hide your face from me,  
lest I become like those  
descending to the pit.

In the morning let me hear of your mercy,  
for in you I trust.  
Show me the path I should walk,  
for I entrust my life to you.

Rescue me, Lord, from my foes,  
for I seek refuge in you.

Teach me to do your will,  
for you are my God.  
May your kind spirit guide me  
on ground that is level.

For your name's sake, Lord,  
give me life;  
in your righteousness lead my soul  
out of distress.

In your mercy put an end to my foes;  
all those who are oppressing my  
soul, for I am your servant.



## READING

*Luke 4:16-21*

Jesus came to Nazareth, where he was brought up, and entered the synagogue on the Sabbath day, according to his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

“God’s Spirit is upon me,  
because God has anointed me to bring good news to the destitute.  
God has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to send forth the shattered in release,  
to proclaim a year of God’s acceptance.”

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

*This Scripture passage has been translated by Elizabeth Dowling rsm*



Image: 'missy & the universe' Flickr Creative Commons

## CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH/CANTICLE OF MARY

*Speak as your mind directs and always act with more courage when the  
“mammon of unrighteousness” is in question (Catherine McAuley)*

## INTERCESSIONS

We remember today, loving God, those who are victims of slavery and all those who work to restore their dignity and we pray:

“As brothers and sisters, therefore, all people are in relation with others, from whom they differ, but with whom they share the same origin, nature and dignity.”

~ *We pray that the dignity of all humanity may be respected.*

“Slavery is rooted in a notion of the human person which allows him or her to be treated as an object... Whether by coercion or deception, or by physical or psychological duress, human persons created in the image and likeness of God are deprived of their freedom, sold and reduced to being the property of others. They are treated as means to an end.”

~ *We pray that the dignity of all humanity may be respected.*

For “the many men and women labourers, including minors, subjugated in different sectors, whether formally or informally, in domestic or agricultural workplaces, or in the manufacturing or mining industry; whether in countries where labour regulations fail to comply with international norms and minimum standards, or, equally illegally, in countries which lack legal protection for workers’ rights.”

~ *We pray that the dignity of all humanity may be respected.*

For “persons forced into prostitution, many of whom are minors, as well as male and female sex slaves. I think of women forced into marriage, those sold for arranged marriages and those bequeathed to relatives of their deceased husbands, without any right to give or withhold their consent.”

~ *We pray that the dignity of all humanity may be respected.*

For “all those persons, minors and adults alike, who are made objects of trafficking for the sale of organs, for recruitment as soldiers, for begging, for illegal activities such as the production and sale of narcotics, or for disguised forms of cross-border adoption.”

~ *We pray that the dignity of all humanity may be respected.*

For “all those kidnapped and held captive by terrorist groups, subjected to their purposes as combatants, or, above all in the case of young girls and women, to be used as sex slaves. Many of these disappear, while others are sold several times over, tortured, mutilated or killed.”

~ *We pray that the dignity of all humanity may be respected.*

For “the living conditions of many migrants who, in their dramatic odyssey, experience hunger, are deprived of freedom, robbed of their possessions, or undergo physical and sexual abuse. In a particular way, I think of those among them who, upon arriving at their destination after a grueling journey marked by fear and insecurity, are detained in at times inhumane conditions.”

~ *We pray that the dignity of all humanity may be respected.*

## **OUR FATHER**

### **PRAYER**

God, rich in mercy, Catherine McAuley reminded us that “If we love You, we will undoubtedly love our neighbor also; they are as cause and effect.” We pray that our love for You will give us the fortitude to work for an end to slavery for all our sisters and brothers. Give us the courage to touch the suffering flesh of Christ, revealed in the faces of those enslaved in our world today, so that like St Josephine, all may be called fortunate. This we ask in your name. Amen.

### **BLESSING**

May the God of mercy bless and protect us always. Amen.

## WORDS OF REFLECTION FROM ST JOSEPHINE

“In God’s will, there is great peace.”

“It is an act of justice for the rich  
to help the poor.”

“If we had no hope in God,  
what would we do in this world?”

“If I were to keep kneeling the  
whole of my life, it would not be  
enough to express my gratitude  
to the Good God.”

Source: <http://www.canossiansisters.org/images/StBakhita.pdf>



Image: Ira Gelb, Creative Commons

## STATEMENT FROM MERCY GLOBAL ACTION ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Mercy International Associational\* (MIA) is fully committed to working with the global network of all those dedicated to eradicating the heinous crime of Human Trafficking (HT). MIA has a membership 7,500 Sisters, 5,000 Associates and over 250,000 partners in ministry, in 44 countries. Our commitment to working with victims of HT is fired by the inspiration of the Gospel and Catherine McAuley, our foundress. We applaud the tremendous contribution Pope Francis and world religious leaders are making, to raise awareness about trafficking and to work towards its eradication.

There are around 30 million children, women and men caught in the vicious grip of modern day slavery throughout the world. Every country serves as a source, transit or destination for this crime, defined by the United Nations as control of a person through fraud or coercion and physical or psychological means, to exploit them. This occurs under the general headings of sexual and or labour exploitation; and or organ removal.

In March 2014 Pope Francis with leaders of the Anglican and Muslim world and Andrew Forrest, launched the Global Freedom Network\* (GFN) in Rome. On December 2nd this group invited representatives from all major world religions, to sign their 'Declaration' stating that trafficking is a crime against humanity and pledging to eradicate it by 2020!

What could I do to raise awareness and to eradicate Human Trafficking?

1. Keep informed about HT locally and nationally. Call the dedicated number of your local police or law enforcement, if you think a person is being exploited.
2. Check where your groceries, clothes, household items come from. Avoid buying products, which may be produced by exploited and trafficked workers. Wherever possible buy 'Fair Trade' and locally produced products.
3. Challenge your government to address root causes of poverty; and discrimination against women and girls. Insist on human rights based policies to address global finance, trade, land and development; to ensure fair employment for everyone.
4. Befriend asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers in your local church or community. Their story may well reflect exploitation of some form.
5. Pray for groups involved in supporting trafficked victims e.g. Non Governmental Organisations (NGO). Offer to volunteer and or to support them financially.
6. Celebrate the feast of St. Josephine Bakita - a former slave - on February 8th, designated as the International Day of Prayer and Awareness against HT.
7. Follow the 'social media feeds' of organisations like MIA\* and NGOs working to end HT, to keep updated and to get involved whenever possible.

Please share this statement widely, so we eradicate human trafficking in our lifetime!

MIA Global Action Team

January 11th 2015

\* [www.mercyworld.org](http://www.mercyworld.org) especially Global Action – Opposing Human Trafficking

\* <http://www.globalfreedomnetwork.org> and <http://www.walkfreefoundation.org/>

\* <http://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/hrc/> UN Special Rapporteur on Human Trafficking