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Wood

ST. JOSEPHINE BAKHITA

PATRON SAINT OF MODERN SUDAN AND
HUMAN TRAFFICKING SURVIVORS

1869 – 1947

*“Even though you meant harm to me,
God meant it for good, to achieve this
present end, the survival of many people.”*

GENESIS 50:20

In each patient encounter or opportunity to serve our Catholic health ministry, we are called to promote and defend human dignity. As we do, our lives are changed. Even the most tragic human experiences summon us to serve in powerful ways, bringing about good in the world. Such was the life of St. Josephine.

From years of slavery and abuse in Sudan, St. Josephine Margaret Bakhita discovered a call to serve human trafficking survivors. She was enslaved around the age of seven and was sold three times over the course of 12 years. The impact of trauma was so fierce it caused her to forget her own name, and kidnappers named her Bakhita, meaning “fortunate one.”

She was sold to an Italian Consul where she found kindness and love until her care was transferred to the graces of the Canossian Sisters of Charity. As they guided her to recovery, the horrific days of slavery haunted her, and more than once she begged her nursemaid, “Please, loosen the chains ... they are heavy!”

The Sisters were a refuge to her, and eventually, she became a novice, taking her vows and serving the order as a cook, seamstress and doorkeeper for 42 years. It was said of her: “When she was on duty at the door, she would gently lay her hands on the heads of the children who daily attended the Canossian schools and caress them. Her amiable voice, which had the inflection and rhythm of the music of her country, was pleasing to the little ones, comforting to the poor and suffering and encouraging for those who knocked at the door of the Institute.”¹



St. Josephine became known by many as “our Black Mother” — a living advocate for human dignity.

- ✦ Think for a moment about the last week:
Where have you had the opportunity to promote or defend human dignity?
- ✦ How have you seen a power “for good” even in the darkest circumstances with patients or co-workers?
- ✦ How might you be called to loosen the chains for others?

1. https://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/saints/ns_lit_doc_20001001_giuseppina-bakhita_en.html

O HOLY MYSTERY OF LOVE,

*You beckoned St. Josephine to be a witness for good despite evil's toil.
Strengthen our vision to see your healing power at work in those you call us to serve,
And grant us tenacious spirits to rise up and cry out for those in need.*

*Recommit us today to serve you earnestly
With our hands, our eyes, our thoughts, and our hearts.*

All you Holy Men and Women: pray for us.

AMEN.