

Saint Josephine Bakhita

- Feastday: February 8
- Patron Saint of: Sudan
- Birth: 1869
- Death: February 8, 1947
- Canonized: October 1, 2000 by Pope John Paul II



"In God's will, there is great peace."

"The whole of my life has been God's gift."

Saint Josephine Margaret Bakhita was born around 1869 in the village of Olgossa, Sudan. Historians believe that sometime in February 1877, Josephine was kidnapped by Arab slave traders. Although she was just a child, she was forced to walk barefoot over 600 miles to a slave market in El Obeid. She was bought and sold at least twice during the grueling journey.

For the next 12 years, she would be bought, sold, and given away over a dozen times. She spent so much time in captivity that she forgot her original name.

In 1883, she was sold to the Italian Vice Consul, Callisto Legani. He was a much kinder master and he did not beat her. When it was time for him to return to Italy, she begged to be taken with him, and he agreed. When her mistress was traveling, Josephine was placed in the custody of the Canossian Sisters in Venice, where she came to learn about God. Deeply moved, she discerned a call to follow Christ.

When her mistress returned, Josephine refused to leave the Sisters, and this caused the superior of the institute for baptismal candidates among the sisters to complain to Italian authorities on Josephine's behalf. The case went to court, and the court found that slavery had been outlawed in Sudan before Josephine was born, so she could not be lawfully

made a slave. Finally free, she chose to remain with the Canossian Sisters.

For the next 42 years of her life, she worked as a cook and a doorkeeper at the convent. She also traveled and visited other convents telling her story to other sisters and preparing them for work in Africa.

She was known for her gentle voice and smile. When speaking of her enslavement, she often professed she would thank her kidnappers. Had she not been kidnapped, she felt that she might never have come to know Jesus Christ and entered His Church. In her later years, she began to suffer physical pain and was forced to use a wheelchair, but she always remained cheerful. If anyone asked her how she was, she would reply, "As the master desires."