

More Information about

St. Josephine Bakhita

In the convent, Bakhita became a sister, and was known for her simplicity, humility and kindness. She was much loved by the people around her who relied on her deep trust in God no matter the hardship, asking for her prayers over and over. Since she abandoned herself completely to God, a great sense of peace surrounded her. For example, few Italians had never seen a woman of color. She handled any misunderstanding with kindness and grace. She was a true peacemaker. Even after her death in 1947, many continued to ask for her prayers. She was beatified on May 17, 1992 and canonized on October 1, 2000.

Biography: *Bakhita: From Slave to Saint* by Roberto Italo Zanini. Translated by Andrew Matt. Ignatius Press. 2013.

With gratitude to Mary O'Herron who wrote and compiled the stories of Jesus and Bakhita and Sister Maria Faina, SNJM who formatted the copy.

Way of the Cross

**Reflecting on the suffering of Jesus
and St. Josephine Bakhita
and all who suffer slavery today
as victims of human trafficking**

**Offered by Mid-Atlantic Coalition
Against Modern Slavery**

**St. Camillus Church
Silver Spring, MD**

Prayer for an End to Human Trafficking

O God, we didn't see them.
But You did.

The hundreds and thousands of human beings trafficked each year to join the millions who are trapped in modern-day slavery. Under terrible conditions, they work in factories, plow fields, harvest crops, work quarries, fill brothels, clean homes, and haul water. Many are children with tiny fingers for weaving rugs and small shoulders for bearing rifles. Their labor is forced, their bodies beaten, their faces hidden from those who don't really want to see them. But you see them all, God of the poor. You hear their cry and you answer by opening our eyes, and breaking our hearts and loosening our tongues to insist:

No mas. No more. Amen

- Catholic Relief Services

15. I live.

All: *Jesus, we thank you for the example of your life and death. They show us redeeming paths for our lives.*

Jesus: Thank you for being faithful to me, and trying to live as I have lived. Keep praying, listening, and following me. And remember, in three days, I will be alive again!

Bakhita: The final time Bakhita was sold was to a kindly Italian Consul, living in Sudan, who took her to Italy where she was freed from slavery. Most importantly for her, in Italy when sent to a Canossian convent with a little girl she was caring for, she learned about the existence of God, and Jesus who lived and suffered death to show God's tremendous love. She became grateful for her slavery because, without it, she would not have learned about this wonderful God. She felt, "My entire life had been a gift of God".

All: As we follow Jesus and Bakhita, may our hearts grow in compassion for victims of human trafficking.

We believe we will one day live with Christ.

We believe we will one day live with Christ.

Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

We believe we will one day live with Christ.

Time for quiet reflection

14. I am buried.

*All: Jesus, we thank you for the example of your life and death.
They show us redeeming paths for our lives.*

Jesus: Some kind folks clean my body, wrap it in linens, and put it in a grave. They walk away sad and numb from the events of the day wondering if they can endure their loss and why someone so good had to die in such shame and pain. My mother holds all these events in her heart and trusts that God's goodness will prevail.

Bakhita: Millions of people over the ages have suffered like Bakhita: their stories buried in anonymity - like Bakhita's older sister who likely endured treatment akin to Bakhita's. Also, their family no doubt grieved deeply at the loss of at least two daughters and sisters and maybe more since raiders and kidnappers swept through villages far too often in that area of Sudan. However, Bakhita's story is being told and enlightens us about the fate of countless people who were enslaved in the past and still are today.

All: As we follow Jesus and Bakhita, may our hearts grow in compassion for victims of human trafficking.

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

The Stations of the Cross

1. I am condemned to death.

*All: Jesus, we thank you for the example of your life and death.
They show us redeeming paths for our lives.*

Jesus: The moment is here. I knew it was coming, and I have been full of fear. Grace and healing will come from this. I am condemned because people cannot or will not absorb my message — God's tremendous love for them. I am afraid of the physical pain and terribly grieved because people don't understand. The ache in my heart is tremendous — I have so much to give, and I am largely misunderstood and rejected.

Bakhita: Like Jesus beginning his final earthly walk, a little eight-year-old girl begins hers when she was kidnapped and taken away. Her older sister had been captured previously and never was seen again by her family. The same fate fell to the little girl.

All: As we follow Jesus and Bakhita, may our hearts grow in compassion for victims of human trafficking.

Were you there when they sentenced Him to die?

Were you there when they sentenced Him to die?

Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they sentenced Him to die?

2. I carry my cross.

All: Jesus, we thank you for the example of your life and death. They show us redeeming paths for our lives.

Jesus: I am given this tremendously heavy cross to carry. My heart goes out to countless others who have been condemned to die — many because they have hurt other members of society and many who have, like me, believed so strongly in something better for their fellow humans that those in powerful positions, thinking their well-being is threatened, have tried to stamp out our ideals by killing us. Violence has never worked and never will. I love everyone. No one is denied my love. What I have could heal all hearts, souls, minds, and bodies. Knowing this and seeing it rejected is the heaviest part of my burden.

Bakhita: Like Jesus, this little girl is forced to walk with the intense pain of being completely and suddenly cut away from family and familiar surroundings. It is an arduous walk for the rest of the day and all night, legs and feet bleeding, sobbing at her losses, with practically nothing to eat or drink. One of the slave drivers asked what her name was. In her fear, she couldn't answer and was told that from then on it was Bakhita, ironically meaning "lucky".

All: As we follow Jesus and Bakhita, may our hearts grow in compassion for victims of human trafficking.

Were you there when they laid the cross on him?

Were you there when they laid the cross on Him?

Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they laid the cross on him?

13. My body is taken off the cross.

All: Jesus, we thank you for the example of your life and death. They show us redeeming paths for our lives.

Jesus: My mother is given my lifeless body. Her grief is overwhelming. Losing me, especially this way, sickens her soul. She weeps. Then she stops. Realizing my torture is over, she softly smiles that I no longer suffer. Then she weeps again.

Bakhita: Over and over in her slave life, Bakhita was left alone in her suffering with little or no human help. Her story is an example of countless others who suffered similar or worse treatments and often died due to harsh treatment. And still do.

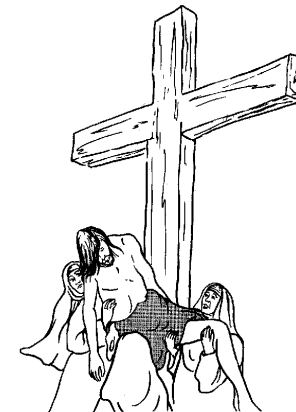
All: As we follow Jesus and Bakhita, may our hearts grow in compassion for victims of human trafficking.

Were you there when they took Him from the cross?

Were you there when they took Him from the cross?

Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they took Him from the cross?



12. I die.

All: *Jesus, we thank you for the example of your life and death. They show us redeeming paths for our lives.*

Jesus: Alone and in agony, I pray, “My God, My God, why did you abandon me?” My mother, John, and a few others are still with me, and I want them to sustain each other. I want my mother to be mother to all who follow me, so to her I say, “He is your son.” To John, I say, “She is your mother.” Dying, I call out, “Into your hands I place my spirit.” All I have to give is given.

Bakhita: Several times in Bakhita’s life, she was beaten, mutilated, severely cut, and then left alone to die.

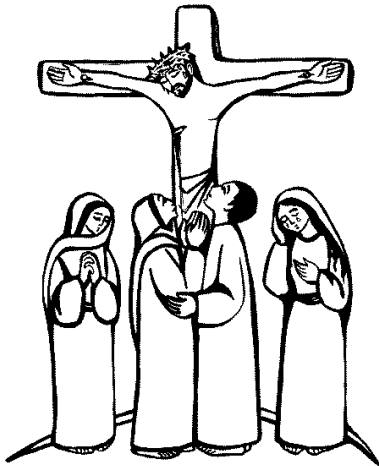
All: As we follow Jesus and Bakhita, may our hearts grow in compassion for victims of human trafficking.

Were you there when He bowed His head and died?

Were you there when He bowed His head and died?

Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when He bowed His head and died?



3. I fall.

All: *Jesus, we thank you for the example of your life and death. They show us redeeming paths for our lives.*

Jesus: I feel myself stumble. I try desperately to keep from going down but can’t control myself. I am numb with fear, anguish, and humiliation. I can go no lower. Perhaps I will die here. No, I am pulled up, and I am on my way again. I marvel that so many other courageous people have endured tremendous pain. I have so many brothers and sisters who hurt — now I am feeling myself what they go through when their bodies are torn apart from wounds or disease. I marvel at the courage of so many.

Bakhita: Eventually the little one was put in a shed with a dirt floor where she remained alone over a month. A hole in the ceiling acted as a window; the door was quickly opened only to give her a bit of food. Each day she cried until she fell exhausted to the floor to sleep.

All: As we follow Jesus and Bakhita, may our hearts grow in compassion for victims of human trafficking.

Were you there when he stumbled to the ground?

Were you there when he stumbled to the ground?

Oh! Sometimes it cause me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when he stumbled to the ground?

4. I meet my mother.

All: *Jesus, we thank you for the example of your life and death. They show us redeeming paths for our lives*

Jesus: I see my mother in the crowd. She manages to push closer to me. Our eyes meet, and we feel mutual anguish. I see the pain and confusion in her face at what I am going through and I am sad. Her face tells me of her great love for me, and I wish I could spare her this agony. So many parents have lost sons or daughters to the violent actions of others. Hoping that what I am doing will bring the possibility of healing for all of humanity. I find new strength to endure. My mother believes in me. She knows I wouldn't be doing this if it wasn't important.

Bakhita: Still in the shed, the little one dreams of her mother, father, brothers and sisters but continually awakes to the reality of her horrible solitude and weeps some more. One morning the door opened, and a slave trader bought her and put her with his other slaves—three men, three women, and another girl a little older than Bakhita. They were made to walk eight days over all kinds of terrain. The adults wore chains around their necks and were chained to each other causing deep wounds around their necks. The two girls walked with the owners and were fettered only at night.

All: As we follow Jesus and Bakhita, may our hearts grow in compassion for victims of human trafficking.

Were you there when His mother looked on Him?

Were you there when His mother looked on Him?

Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble , tremble, tremble.

Were you there when His mother looked on Him?

11. I am nailed to the cross.

All: *Jesus, we thank you for the example of your life and death. They show us redeeming paths for our lives.*

Jesus: As I am nailed to the cross and lifted up, I scream in agony, and so do my companions. My heart breaks that such things as this go on in the world. How I wish people had heard and understood what I was about. I ask God to forgive those who do this to me; they do not understand what they are doing. The two men crucified along side of me speak to one another and to me. They know my reputation as a healer. They had heard how Lazarus was alive again after dying. One wants me to do something about our plight. The other says he and the other are simply paying the price for what they had done. He sees I have done nothing wrong, and asks me to remember him, and I assure him that "Today, you will be with me in paradise." I am troubled that deaths such as this are routine. My soul as well as my body thirsts. I thirst to heal this world. There is such goodness and bounty in the heart of God. No one should suffer like this. If they would/could only hear....I call out, "I thirst!"

Bakhita: After all three girls were cut and salted, they were carried to mats where they lay recovering for over a month. Bakhita noted that, compared to her, her companions suffered far worse cutting.

All: As we follow Jesus and Bakhita, may our hearts grow in compassion for victims of human trafficking.

Were you there when they nailed Him to the Cross?

Were you there when they nailed Him to the Cross?

Oh, sometimes , it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they nailed him to the Cross?

10. I am stripped.

All: Jesus, we thank you for the example of your life and death. They show us redeeming paths for our lives.

Jesus: Searing pain accompanies the reopening of the wounds from my beating. I am naked. What more can I give: Even my clothes are gone. My shame is complete. I wear only this crown made especially for me. Still, I trust God's goodness.

Bakhita: It was customary for slave owners to brand the bodies of slaves with deep incisions on various places on their bodies. One day, three girls were selected for this, Bakhita among them. She watched as the first girl was marked and cut with a razor as she was being held in place by two very strong slaves. Then salt was vigorously rubbed into all the wounds. Bakhita was next. Her face was spared cutting, but she was cut on her breasts, stomach, and right arm - over 100 times and then salt rubbed into each cut.

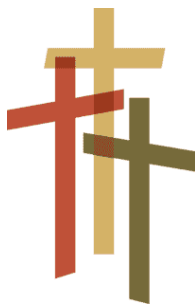
All: As we follow Jesus and Bakhita, may our hearts grow in compassion for victims of human trafficking.

Were you there when they stripped Him of His clothes?

Were you there when they stripped Him of His clothes?

Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they stripped Him of His clothes.?



5. Simon helps me.

All: Jesus, we thank you for the example of your life and death. They show us redeeming paths for our lives.

Jesus: Someone grabs a Cyrenean named Simon who is forced to help me. My pain is tremendous, but to others it is just another day with work to be done: children to be fed, etc. There is much pushing and shoving as people try to get past on their way to take care of daily needs. Just another criminal or insurrectionist being killed. Another execution means nothing; it goes on all the time. This saddens me. I know that if people would only hear my message, they wouldn't kill each other. They would begin to trust and love one another. I grieve that they don't grasp what I have been about. I am struck by the irony of my helper's name - my great friend Simon Peter is nowhere around. This other Simon is forced to help and is naturally angry and scared. He is strong, and I feel relief for a while. I tell him I am grateful. He seems surprised, pleased, and softened by my gratitude.

Bakhita: As they continued the trek with the slave trader, one evening, he went off for a while, absent-mindedly leaving Bakhita and her companion unchained, and they ran off as fast as they could go, not knowing where they were going but running all night hoping they would find their families. During the night, Bakhita saw a luminous being that gave her strength and courage to go on, who guided them safely until dawn, so they were not hurt by any wild beasts. However, they were re-enslaved when a man seemed to befriend them and offer help. Instead, he sold them to a new slave trader who made them walk two and a half weeks and then sold them to a very rich man.

All: As we follow Jesus and Bakhita, may our hearts grown in compassion for victims of human trafficking.

Were you there when the Cyrene came to help?

Were you there when the Cyrene came to help?

Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when the Cyrene came to help?

6. Veronica wipes my face.

All: Jesus, we thank you for the example of your life and death. They show us redeeming paths for our lives.

Jesus: I see a woman push her way toward me. Her eyes are full of compassion and pain. She takes a cloth and wipes my face, and I am soothed by her gesture - touched by her kindness and courage braving, the shoves and punches of the soldiers to care for me. I am heartened.

Bakhita: The new owner has Bakhita and her friend act as handmaids to his two daughters, and they were treated rather well - a respite in their suffering.

All: As we follow Jesus and Bakhita, may our hearts grow in compassion for victims of human trafficking.

Were you there when the woman wiped His face?

Were you there when the woman wiped His face?

Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when the woman wiped His face?



9. I fall a third time.

All: Jesus, we thank you for the example of your life and death. They show us redeeming paths for our lives.

Jesus: I feel so weak. I try to keep myself from falling because getting up is so difficult, but still I fall. I try to have faith that this will come to some good, but I feel abandoned and unable to go on. Again, it is greater pain that moves me forward. I am prodded and kicked. I feel for those who are doing this to me. I see they don't know what they are doing - that hurting others doesn't make problems go away but only causes bigger ones.

Bakhita: In the Turkish general's household, all the slaves were treated cruelly, with many beatings often to the point of death. No help was offered to sick, beaten slaves; they were just left to suffer unless the other slaves could offer a little help. Bakhita suffered not only from her treatment but from witnessing what happened to other slaves.

All: As we follow Jesus and Bakhita, may our hearts grow in compassion for victims of human trafficking.

Were you there when He fell yet one more time?

Were you there when He fell yet one more time?

Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when He fell yet one more time.



8. Some women of Jerusalem mourn for me.

All: Jesus, we thank you for the example of your life and death. They show us redeeming paths for our lives.

Jesus: I see several women who are grieving for me bewildered at what is happening to me. I see a sense of failure in their hearts and eyes, and as I feel my own failure to get people to understand me, my heart goes out to them. I tell them to cry for themselves - not for me.

Bakhita: At the home of the Turkish general, Bakhita and another girl were charged with caring for the general's mother and his wife who were very demanding and cruel. Bakhita spent three years there and doesn't remember a day without being hit, sometimes severely.

All: As we follow Jesus and Bakhita, may our hearts grow in compassion for victims of human trafficking.

Were you there when the women wept for Him?

Were you there when the women wept for Him?

Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when the women wept for Him?



7. I fall again

All: Jesus, we thank you for the example of your life and death. They show us redeeming paths for our lives.

Jesus: This walk to my death is a long one. Again, I feel my legs crumbling under the weight of my burden, and I can go no further. I fall. Only greater pain moves me on. I think of many who bear heavy loads in life, whose pain goes on and on. I am pulled up again. I walk in solidarity with those who hurt.

Bakhita: One day, the older brother of the two sisters became very angry at Bakhita and beat and kicked her and then left her for dead. She took over a month to recover, and then she was sold to a general in the Turkish army.

All: As we follow Jesus and Bakhita, may our hearts grow in compassion for victims of human trafficking.

Were you there when He fell the second time?

Were you there when He fell the second time?

Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when He fell a second time.

