

Saint Josephine Bakhita • Saint stories

You love your parents and siblings and expect to grow up in your loving family. This is the way it should be. But for this saint, life didn't happen that way. At the age of seven, she was kidnapped from her village home and sold into slavery.

Can you imagine how scared she must have felt? This horrible experience made her completely forget her name. Her kidnappers, therefore, named her Bakhita, which means "fortunate one." This was the year 1876. (At this time, slavery was no longer allowed in the United States. Bakhita was born in Sudan.)

Bakhita was sold several different times and often felt the pain of a whip against her body when given an order to do something. Eventually, she was sold to an Italian family living in Sudan. Here is where she first experienced kindness since the time she was kidnapped. When this Italian family decided to move back to Italy, Bakhita was heartbroken. "Please don't sell me! Let me come with you!" she begged. They agreed. But after arriving in Italy they sold her to another family, the Michielis. Fortunately, this family treated her kindly too.

When the Michielis had a baby named Mimmina, Bakhita became her babysitter and later, friend. These two were inseparable. A few years later, Mr. and Mrs. Michielis had to travel to Africa for business. They sent their daughter Mimmina to a convent for school and Bakhita accompanied the girl. While at this convent, Bakhita first learned about God and the Catholic faith. After several months she received the sacraments and was given a new name, Josephine. Her soul was filled with joy.

Believing that they still "owned" Bakhita, the Michielis

demanded that she leave with them when they returned for Mimmina.

“We are moving to Africa to live,” they explained. “You are our slave and must come with us.”

Josephine Bakhita refused to leave and went to court. The Italian court ruled that since Josephine Bakhita was in Italy and slavery was illegal in Italy, she was FREE! (Imagine the joy she must have felt after all those years as a slave!)

Josephine Bakhita entered the convent in 1893 and took her vows December 8, 1896. She lived a very humble and simple life in the convent doing various jobs such as cooking, sewing, embroidering, and attending to the door of the convent. When she attended the door, people loved talking with her and listening to her friendly, sweet, and comforting voice. As children passed by she would lay her hands on their heads, giving words of encouragement. She often said, “Be good, love the Lord, pray for those who not know him. What a great grace it is to know God.”

Before she died, she suffered many years from a painful illness. When people asked her how she felt, her response was always, “As the Master wishes.”

Saint Josephine Bakhita died February 8, 1947.

Feast Day: February 8

Saint Josephine Bakhita, pray for us.

Activity: The Kindness Chain

You will need:

- colored construction paper cut into strips at least 6 inches long and 2 inches wide
- school glue or a glue stick

Try to make a long chain to decorate your home. Every time you do something nice without being asked, add a link to your chain. You can either work on making a chain together as a family or each make your own chain and have a competition to see who can make the longest chain during the month of February.

How to make a paper chain:

- Take one strip and make it into a circle.
- Glue the ends together.
- Take a second strip and put it through the first circle and glue the ends together.