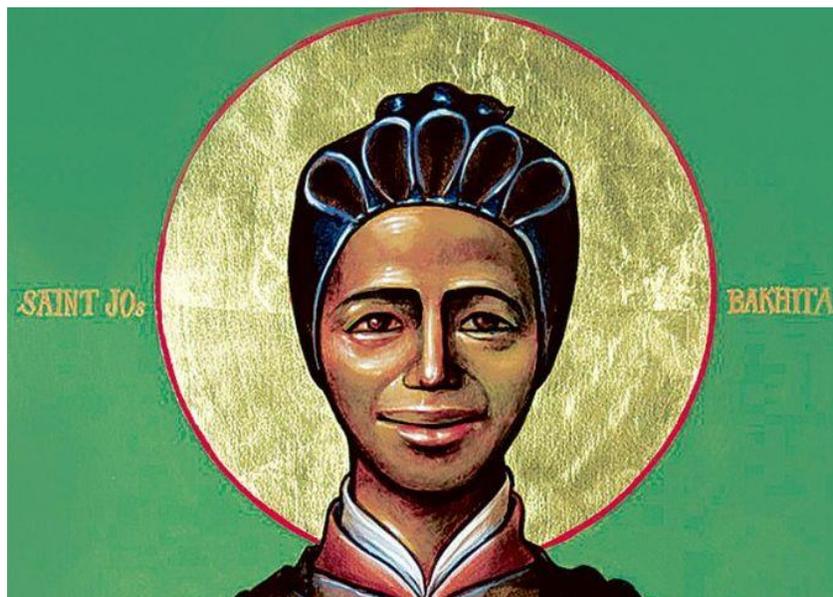


**International Day of Prayer for Victims of Human Trafficking
Feast of St. Josephine Bakhita, February 8, 2022**



Leader: We gather in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul who challenged the owner of galley slaves with the words, "These are your people, Sir! You will have to answer for them before God."

All: This is our spirit; may we be faithful.

Leader: We gather in the spirit of early Daughter of Charity Barbe Angiboust who placed her body between a galley slave and the guard who wanted to beat him.

All: This is our spirit; may we be faithful.

Leader: We gather in the spirit of Mother Seton who joined with other women to minister to immigrant women workers, often defrauded of wages and sexually abused.

All: This is our spirit; may we be faithful.

Leader: We gather in the spirit of all the members of the Company of Charity throughout the world who raise consciousness about human trafficking, advocate against it, relieve its victims, challenge the structures that promote it.

All: This is our spirit; may we be faithful.

Opening Song:

-We shall overcome, We shall overcome, We shall overcome, some day.

Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe, we shall overcome, some day.

-We shall all be free, We shall all be free, We shall all be free, some day.

Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe, we shall all be free, some day.

-We will live in peace, we will live in peace, we will live in peace someday.

Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe, we will live in peace, some day.

A reading from the book of Lamentations (5:1,11,13,15)

Remember, O God, what has befallen us;

look, and see our degradation!

Our pursuers are at our necks;

we are weary; we are given no rest.

Women are raped in Zion,

young girls in the towns of Judah.

Young men are compelled to grind at the mill,

and boys stagger under loads of wood.

The joy of our hearts has ceased;

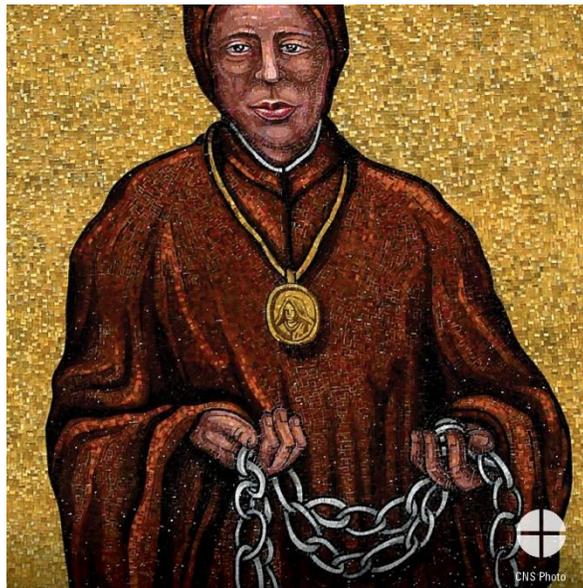
our dancing has been turned to mourning.

Pause for silent reflection.

There also may be a period of sharing if the participants wish.

What in my/our life style contributes to the reality of human trafficking and forced labor?

What is one action I/we can take to change the unjust structures that cause human trafficking and forced labor?



Leader: Saint Josephine Bakhita was a member of the Canossian Daughters of Charity, an Italian congregation influenced by the spirituality of Saint Vincent de Paul. Born in Sudan in 1869, she was kidnapped, tortured and enslaved and given the ironic name Bakhita, “the Lucky One” by her captors. Later freed by her owner in Italy, she entered religious life and died in Italy in 1947. In the delirium of her final illness she relived the torments of her slavery, often crying out “Please, loosen the chains. They are so heavy.” We use these words of Saint Josephine Bakhita as the response to our petitions:

Please, loosen the chains. They are so heavy

- For the estimated 21 million women and men, boys and girls who are held in slavery-like conditions in the world today...
- For conversion of heart for the organizers and perpetrators of trafficking...
- For governments, corporations and consumers, that we will examine the economic structures that make trafficking possible...
- For the success of those who advocate for and minister to trafficked people...
- That we will make changes in our own lifestyle that make us complicit in the sufferings of other people...
- For those people for whom the upcoming Super Bowl will be the occasion of exploitation and abuse...

Leader: As we conclude our prayer, I invite you to place a hand on the shoulder of a person near you as we pray the words of blessing together:

May God bless us with discomfort at easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships so that we may live deep within our hearts. Amen.

May God bless us with anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people so that we may work for justice, freedom and peace. Amen.

May God bless us with enough foolishness to believe that we can make a difference in this world, so that we can do what others claim cannot be done. Amen.

POSSIBLE ACTIONS TO TAKE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

- Talk to five other people about human trafficking today.
- Distribute copies of this prayer to your families, friends, and co-workers.
- Check your local supermarket to see if they sell Fair Trade products like coffee, tea, or chocolate and ask the manager about it if they don't.
- Take the Human Trafficking 101 Training offered by Polaris. It consists of several short modules (averaging 5 minutes in length) that give up to date information on trafficking and shares the testimony of trafficking victims. Share this link with others.
<https://polarisproject.org/human-trafficking-101/>
- Talk to your local parish, school, civic organizations and encourage them to offer a workshop on human trafficking.
- Direct people to the prayer and reflection resources on human trafficking on the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth website
<https://www.scnj.org/peace-justice-ecological-integrity>