St. Josephine Bakhita

Born: 1868 at Oglassa, Darfur, Sudan

Died: 8 February 1947 of natural causes in Italy

Canonized: 1 October 2000 by Pope John Paul II at Saint Peter's Basilica, Rome, Italy, thought to be the only saint originally from Sudan

Patronage: Sudan

Born to a wealthy Sudanese family, she was kidnapped by slave-traders at age 9, and given the name Bakhita (lucky) by them. Sold and resold in the markets at El Obeid and Khartoum, finally purchased in 1883 by Callisto Legnani, Italian consul who planned to free her. She accompanied Legnani to Italy in 1885, and worked as a nanny for the family of Augusto Michieli. She was treated well in Italy and grew to love the country. An adult convert the Christianity, she joined the Church on 9 January 1890, she took the name of Josephine as a symbol of her new life.

She entered the Institute of Canossian Daughters of Charity in Venice, Italy in 1893, taking her vows on 8 December 1896 in Verona, Italy and serving as a Canossian Sister for the next fifty years. Her gentle presence, her warm, amiable voice, and her willingness to help with any menial task were a comfort to the poor and suffering people who came to the door of the Institute.

After a biography of her was published in 1930, she became a noted and sought after speaker, raising funds to support missions. Her feast has been designated the International Day of Prayer to Stop Human Trafficking.