

About Human Trafficking

Human Trafficking -the buying and selling of people and the exploitation of their labour is the most shameful scandal of our 21st century. It is doubtful that any country is untouched by trafficking, especially the trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation. It is generally referred to as Modern Day Slavery or the New Slavery. Modern day slaves are:

(i) **cheap** and (ii) **disposable**

Children especially are sold for very low prices. Victims regularly encounter health problems and are then discarded because they are no longer of use to their bosses.

Human Trafficking is a very **hidden crime growing in Africa**. It is a serious human rights violation - a total disregard for the dignity of the human person. Its consequences – individual as well as social – are grave. One of the best defences against human trafficking is **education**, as traffickers routinely rely upon deception. Many people who end up being trafficked are tricked into it. Once tricked, traffickers have control and the individuals become enslaved victims of violence. Severe suffering in the form of physical and mental abuse always follows.

Human Trafficking - a serious problem in Sub- Saharan Africa

89% of those trafficked in Africa are trafficked to and from neighbouring countries

34% of African Countries are major sources of trafficking to Europe

26% of African countries ,(mainly East Africa) are major sources of trafficking to Arab Nations

Our Aim here

- To have a Day – 8 February when each year we in Africa stand united against human trafficking on our continent
- To pray, through the intercession of St Bakhita, (trafficked herself as a small child) for an end to human trafficking;
- To assist readers to keep informed and conversant with the reality of human trafficking; to discuss it in their communities and parishes.
- To continue to stand in solidarity with those who are trafficked.

Together we can make a difference

St Josephine Bakhita 1869 – 1937

Patron Saint of Sudan



Feastday : 8 February

Early Life

Bakhita was born in Olgossa in 1896 in a village in the western Sudanese region of Darfur. Her father was the brother of a tribal chief. At the age of 8 or 9 she was kidnapped by Arab slave traders and over the course of the next eight years was sold and resold five times in the markets of El Obeid and Khartoum. The trauma of her abduction caused her to forget her own name. The name given her by the slave traders was Bakhita (the Arabic word for lucky). She was also forcibly converted to Islam.

Life as a Slave

Bakhita suffered much brutality during her captivity. On one occasion, one of her owner's sons beat her so severely that she spent a month unable to move from a straw bed. She later recalled that her most terrifying memory was of her fourth owner, an Ottoman Army officer, having her and other slaves marked as "his" by having them tattooed.

Her memoirs, written in Italian many years later, recall that a dish of white flour, a dish of salt and a blade were brought by a woman who drew patterns on her skin and then cut deeply along the lines before filling the wounds with salt and flour to ensure permanent scarring. More than sixty patterns were cut into her breasts, belly, and arms.

Conversion

Bakhita's final owner was an Italian diplomat, Callisto Legnani. He brought her to Italy when he and his friend Michieli were returning there. Bakhita became nanny to the Michieli's daughter, Mimmina. In 1888 Bakhita and Mimmina were left in the custody of the Canossian Sisters in Venice while the Michielis moved to the Red Sea on business. In 1890 Bakhita was baptised a Christian.

Freedom

When the Michielis returned to collect her and their daughter, Bakhita refused to leave. Mrs. Michieli tried to force the issue, but the superior of the school that Bakhita and Mimmina had attended in Venice complained to the authorities. An Italian court ruled in favour of Bakhita.

Italian law did not recognize slavery, Sudan had outlawed slavery years before. Bakhita had never in fact been a slave.

A Sister

In 1896 Bakhita became a nun and was sent to Schio. During her 45 years in Schio, Josephine was usually employed as portress (door keeper) of the convent, and so was in frequent contact with the local community. Her gentleness, calming voice, and ever-present smile became well known and Vicenzans referred to her as *la nostra madre moretta* ("our little brown mother"). Her special charisma and reputation for sanctity were noticed by her order, and she was instructed to publish her memoirs and to give talks about her experiences; these made her famous throughout Italy. Her last years were marked by pain and sickness, but she retained her cheerfulness, and if asked how she was, would always smile and answer "as the Master desires".

Illness and Death

In the extremity of her last days Bakhita's mind was driven back to the years of her slavery and in her delirium she would cry out: "Please, loosen the chains ... they are so heavy". Josephine died on February 8, 1947. For three days her body lay on display while thousands of people arrived to pay their respects.

Canonization

The calls for her canonization began immediately, and the process began in 1959, only twelve years after her death. On December 1, 1978, Pope John Paul II declared Josephine *Venerabilis*, the first step towards canonization. On May 17, 1992, she was declared Blessed and given February 8 as her feastday. On October 1, 2000, she was canonized and became Saint Josephine Bakhita. She is venerated as a modern African saint, and as a saint with a special relevance to slavery and oppression. She has been adopted as the patron saint of Sudan.



Prayer to St Bakhita

St Bakhita we honour you our African Saint and Patron Saint of Sudan.

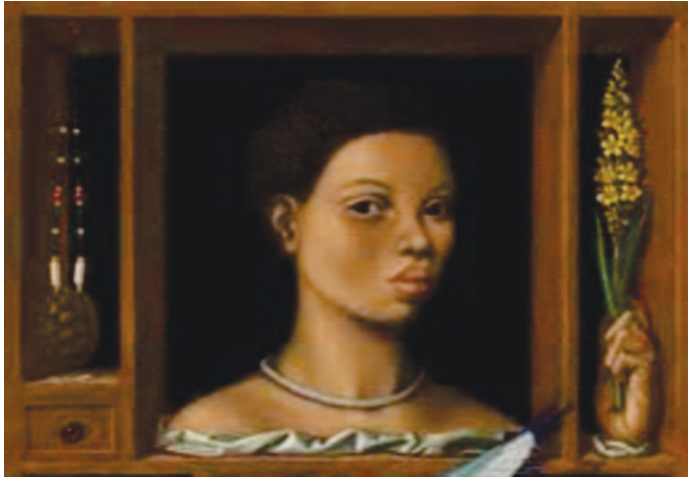
We implore you our African Saint to assist us in our struggle against Human Trafficking in Africa and in the rest of the World.

We honour your feastday, in the Church's liturgical calendar, on 8 February each year.

We know, St Bakhita, that Victims of Human Trafficking are close to your heart. Let them feel the warmth of your loving care.

Pray for us that we persevere in our battle to overcome the scourge; trying to protect victims and all potential victims of human trafficking, so that all can live in the freedom of God's children. Amen.

Saartjie Baartman of South Africa

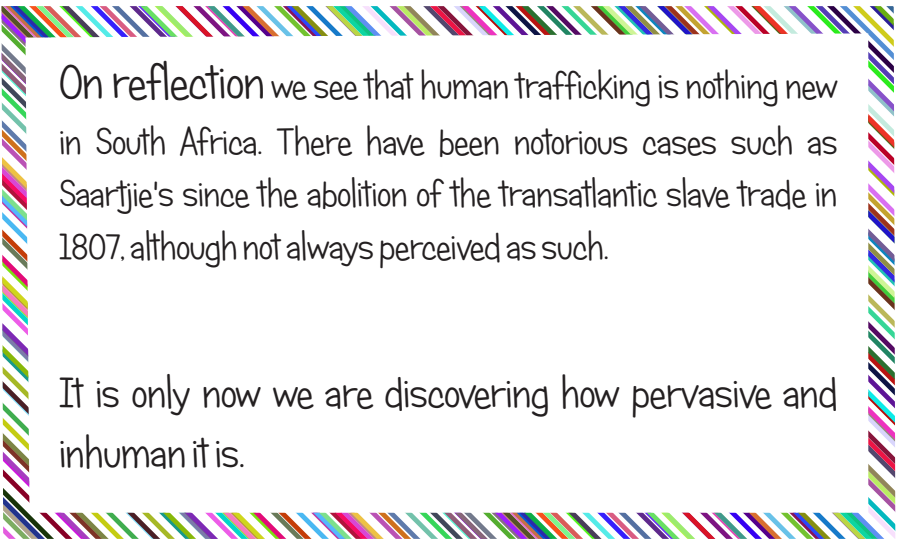


A story that sent shock waves through South Africa in 1994 was that of Saartjie Baartman. It had come to light after former President Nelson Mandela requested her remains to be brought back to South Africa. She was 21 years old in 1810 when a visiting British fleet's surgeon, Doctor William Dunlop, promised her fame, fortune and freedom if she returned with him to England. The doctor obviously had a hidden agenda in mind. Back in London he made his own fortune by exhibiting Saartjie as a freak on stage in front of large crowds. Each individual paid a shilling to view the “Hottentot Venus” as she was nicknamed, apparently very skimpily clad and revealing

features that looked very unusual to the Europeans but common to her nation and tribe.

What makes the story even worse is that when Saartjie died six years later, alone and a pauper in France, her body was dissected. Her skeleton was removed and her brain and genitals were pickled and displayed as curiosities in the Musée de l'Homme in Paris for the next 160 years.

Saartjie suffered for her African features.



On reflection we see that human trafficking is nothing new in South Africa. There have been notorious cases such as Saartjie's since the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in 1807, although not always perceived as such.

It is only now we are discovering how pervasive and inhuman it is.

Kinds of Trafficking

Many women and young girls trafficked are sold into prostitution. Even women married to compulsive gamblers are being raped or forced into prostitution by loan sharks after being used as collateral by their addicted husbands. Young boys (and occasionally men) are also sold for sexual exploitation.

Children are sold as domestic workers, for criminal activities, or for hard labour on farms.

Young girls trafficked from Mozambique are sold as wives to the mine workers.

Young people are forced into pornography.

People are abducted for organ removals.

Men and boys are trafficked for construction industries and illegal sweatshops

Who are the traffickers?

There are different categories of traffickers:

- The single person trafficker
- Second wave trafficker (former victims)
- The pretty woman trafficker (for men)
- Syndicates
- Relatives
- Gangs