

Week beginning 3rd February (Monday)



The Lord has loved me so much:
WE MUST LOVE EVERYONE,
we must be compassionate!
- ST. JOSEPHINE BAKHITA

This coming Saturday is the Feast Day of St Josephine Bakhita - the patron saint of victims of modern slavery and human trafficking.

On this day Catholics are encouraged to pray for all those affected by the crimes of modern slavery and human trafficking, and the people that volunteer and work to eradicate this crime.

We may not be directly affected by this, but we are taught through our faith that we should be supporting those who do not have a voice or power to help themselves.

Let us reflect this morning;

How are you supporting the most needy in our community?

Let us Pray;

Our Father, Who art in heaven

Hallowed be Thy Name;

Thy kingdom come,

Thy will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,

and forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those

who trespass against us;

and lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

Amen.

Week beginning 3rd February (Tuesday)



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Saint Josephine Margaret Bakhita was born in 1869 in the village of Olgossa in the Darfur region of Sudan. She was a member of the Daju people and her uncle was a tribal chief. Due to her family lineage, she grew up happy and relatively prosperous, saying that as a child, she did not know suffering.

Historians believe that sometime in February 1877, Josephine was kidnapped by Arab slave traders. Although she was just a child, she was forced to walk barefoot over 600 miles to a slave market in El Obeid. She was bought and sold at least twice during the gruelling journey.

For the next 12 years she would be bought, sold and given away over a dozen times. She spent so much time in captivity that she forgot her original name.

After many years and several 'owners' Josephine was put into the care of Canossian Sisters in Venice while her mistress went abroad. While she was in the custody of the sisters, she came to learn about God. According to Josephine, she had always known about God, who created all things, but she did not know who He was. The sisters answered her questions. She was deeply moved by her time with the sisters and discerned a call to follow Christ.

She was baptized on January 9, 1890 and took the name Josephine Margaret and Fortunata. (Fortunata is the Latin translation for her Arabic name, Bakhita). She also received the sacraments of her first holy communion and confirmation on the same day. The Archbishop who gave her the sacraments was none other than Giuseppe Sarto, who would later become Pope Pius X.

Let us pray to Saint Josephine;

O St. Bakhita, assist all those who are trapped in a state of slavery; Intercede with God on their behalf so that they will be released from their chains of captivity.

Those whom man enslaves, let God set free. Provide comfort to survivors of slavery and let them look to you as an example of hope and faith. Help all survivors find healing from their wounds. We ask for your prayers and intercessions for those enslaved among us.

Amen

Week beginning 3rd February (Wednesday)



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Mwanahanisi's Story

A retired hospital boss brought a woman into the UK and worked her like a slave .

Saeeda Khan, 68, made Mwanahanisi Mruke, 47, sleep on the kitchen floor, fed her two slices of bread a day and forced her to work 18-hour shifts.

Mrs Mruke had been a cleaner at a hospital in Tanzania owned by Khan but in 2006 she was brought over to work in her boss's £500,000 house in Harrow, North London. At first she was paid £10 a month but Khan then stopped payments.

A jury at Southwark crown court convicted Khan of trafficking a person for exploitation. She was later sentenced to nine months in prison, suspended for two years.

She was ordered to pay the woman £25,000.

Labour exploitation currently makes up the greatest percentage of modern slavery cases in the UK. Victims of forced labour are made to work long hours, often in tough conditions without training and safety measures in place.

The majority, if not all, of wages are taken by the traffickers. This is often accompanied by threats and violence. Cases of labour exploitation have been widely reported in car washes and nail bars, however victims have been found in the manufacturing, entertainment, hospitality, agriculture, and construction industries.

Let us pray;

Dear Lord,

Most of us reading this story will never experience the kind of pain that millions of people live with every day. Help us to be understanding and compassionate toward their needs. Help us to love them in the way that You love them. Give us the will to make things better.

Amen

Week beginning 3rd February (Thursday)



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Michael's Story

Michael was homeless when he was approached by a couple to sell drugs. At first, the then 34-year-old says he was treated well, but things changed. No matter how much money Michael earned from selling drugs, the couple would say he owed more for what he had taken himself.

"They started saying that I owed more than I actually did and saying 'I want your card for your benefits'," Michael, which is not his real name, recalls.

"I felt trapped... they threw me in the back of their van [and] took me to their house. I didn't know what was going to happen."

Michael would end up being asked to do more unpaid work for people higher up the chain. He was soon among the rising number of British nationals enslaved in the UK, which official figures show almost doubled last year.

We often think of modern day slaves being brought in from other countries but this is not always the case. In 2019 of the 7,000 people referred to a Home Office scheme to combat modern slavery and help potential victims, almost a quarter, or 1,625, were born and raised in the UK.

Since 2015, people like Michael who have been used to traffic or sell drugs can be treated as victims of modern slavery rather than perpetrators of crime.

Let us ask Mary, Our Mother in Heaven, to intercede for us and all her children as we say together;

Hail Mary full of Grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed are thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb
Jesus.

Holy Mary Mother of God,
pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death
Amen.

Week beginning 3rd February (Friday)



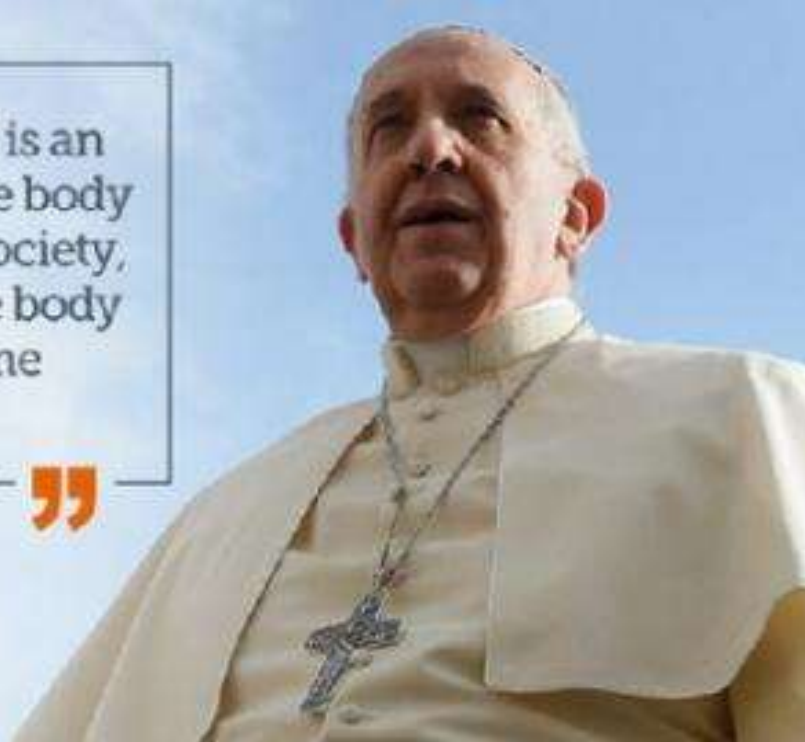
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Human trafficking is an open wound on the body of contemporary society, a scourge upon the body of Christ. It is a crime against humanity.

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POPE FRANCIS



In 2019 on the feast day of St Josephine Bakhita Pope Francis led pilgrims at St. Peter's in this prayer to St. Josephine for an end to human trafficking. He said that all of us “can and must work together to denounce the cases of exploitation and slavery of men, women, and children.”

He also had the prayer printed and distributed to the pilgrims in the Square.

Let us pray together The prayer of Pope Francis;

St Josephine Bakhita, as a child you were sold as a slave, and had to face unspeakable difficulties and suffering.

Once you were freed from physical slavery, you found true redemption in the encounter with Christ and His Church.

Saint Josephine Bakhita, help all those who are trapped in slavery.

In their name, intercede with the God of mercy, that the chains of their captivity might be broken.

May God Himself free all those who have been threatened, wounded, or mistreated by the trade and trafficking of human beings. May He bring relief to those who survive this slavery, and teach them to see Jesus as a model of faith and hope, that their wounds may be healed.

We implore you to pray and intercede for all of us: that we not fall into indifference; that we may open our eyes and look upon the miseries and wounds of so many brothers and sisters deprived of their dignity and freedom, and hear their cry for help. Amen.