



ST. JOSEPHINE BAKHITA

By Brother Robert Lentz OFM

Bakhita came from the Daju people in western Sudan. Arab slave traders abducted her when she was a young girl. Forced to convert to Islam, she was sold five different times to Muslim families and suffered frequent beatings and other forms of physical abuse. In 1883 the Italian vice consul in Khartoum bought her and eventually brought her with him when he returned to Italy. When he left her temporarily with the Canossian Sisters in Venice, she refused to leave the convent when he returned. An Italian court ruled in her favor and she was given back her freedom.

She converted to Catholicism and joined the Canossian Sisters. She died 54 years later after a quiet life of manual work in Canossian convents. She became famous throughout northern Italy and was much loved by the people. She was canonized in 2000.

The bird in this icon represents her free spirit.

Her feast day is February 8.