



Bakhita: From Slave to Saint

By Roberto Italo Zanini

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When she was about nine years old, Josephine Bakhita was kidnapped near Darfur, Sudan, by Arab slave traders. For several years she was subjected to brutal and humiliating treatment until she was ransomed and taken to Venice, Italy, where she became a Catholic and a nun.

Joyfully and serenely Bakhita served in a convent, school and infirmary run by Canossian sisters in a small, obscure town in northern Italy until her death in 1947. Then something even more remarkable than her redemption happened.

Hundreds of ordinary people came to see Bakhita lying in state, and along with these visits came stories about how the simple nun had given comfort, advice and encouragement as she went about her tasks as cook, doorkeeper, nurse, etc. Almost immediately graces and miracles attributed to Bakhita's intercession began to be reported.

Ever since, the place where Bakhita died and the wonders began has been a shrine visited by people from all over the world. They come to seek the intercession of one who was no stranger to loss and suffering and yet had given herself with complete confidence to the Lord. It is here, in this sparsely furnished room, where Italian journalist Roberto Italo Zanini begins his story of Bakhita and her journey from slavery to sainthood.

Based on Bakhita's autobiography, which she dictated to a Canossian sister in obedience to her superior, the canonization files and many other sources, Zanini records the life, virtues and miracles of this daughter of Africa who has become a sister to the whole world.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Every story of sanctity is that of a person who takes her life whole - the gifts and the sorrows, wounds and wonders all - and opens to the grace of God. Such is the story of St. Josephine Bakhita told beautifully and with careful scholarship by Roberto Italo Zanini. By choosing Christ and choosing forgiveness, Bakhita illuminates the darkest shadows of the human condition with the transforming light of faith in the one true Master."

--

Mother Dolores Hart, O.S.B., Prioress, Regina Laudis Abbey

About the Author

Roberto Italo Zanini is an editor and writer for *Avvenire*, the daily newspaper of the Italian bishops. His articles have appeared in many Italian publications, both Catholic and nonreligious.

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