

# Evening Prayer Service for an End to Human Trafficking

**Opening Song: LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE ON US** (Kathy Sherman – Love Cannot be Silenced)

**Leader:** Let us begin by observing a moment of silence in solidarity with the more than 27 million women, men and children who suffer each day from modern day slavery.

[Moment of Silence while putting on a blue ribbon as a symbol of solidarity)

**Leader:** In the name of God, our Creator, the Cosmic Christ incarnated in Jesus who liberates, and the Spirit who sustains us. **All:** Amen.

**Leader:** Let us hold all those impacted by human trafficking in our hearts as we pray Psalm 126:

**Together:** Glory to you, God of life and freedom, praise and thanksgiving now and forever.

## **Psalm 126 (Read one after the other)**

When the Lord brought back the exiles of Zíon, we thought we were dreaming. Then was our mouth filled with laughter; on our tongues, songs of joy.

Then the nations themselves said, “What great deeds the Lord worked for them!” What great deeds the Lord worked for us! Indeed, we were glad.

Bring back our exiles, O Lord, as streams in the south. Those who are sowing in tears will sing when they reap.

They go out, they go out, full of tears, bearing seed for the sowing; they come back, they come back with a song, bearing their sheaves.

**Together:** Glory to God, our Creator, the Cosmic Christ incarnated in Jesus who liberates, and the Spirit who sustains us as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

Glory to you, God of life and freedom, praise and thanksgiving now and forever.

**Leader:** Each person forced into slavery has a unique story—a story of struggles, hopes and dreams. Let us listen now to the story of one survivor of human trafficking.

**Reader 1:** St. Josephine Bakhita was born in southern Sudan in 1869. As a young girl, she was kidnapped and sold into slavery. Sold and resold in the markets of El Obeid and Khartoum, she was treated brutally by her captors. She did not remember the name she was given by her parents. Bakhita, which means “fortunate one,” was the name given to her by her kidnappers.

**Reader 2:** In 1883, she was bought by an Italian diplomat who sent her to Italy to work as a maid for the daughter of a family friend studying with the Canossian Daughters of Charity. It was there that Bakhita came to know about God whom “she had experienced in her heart without knowing” who God was. In 1890, she was baptized and received the name Josephine.

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**Reader 1:** Later, the Italian family came to take their “property” back to Africa. Josephine expressed her desire to stay. When the family insisted she go, she remained firm, later writing: “I am sure the Lord gave me strength at that moment.” With the support of the superior of the Canossian Sisters and the Cardinal of Venice, she won her freedom and later entered the novitiate. For the next 50 years she lived a life of prayer and service as a Canossian Sister before her death in 1947.

**Reader 2:** St. Josephine was canonized in 2000. “In St. Josephine Bakhita we find a shining advocate of genuine emancipation. The history of her life inspires not passive acceptance but the firm resolve to work effectively to free girls and women from oppression and violence, and to return them to their dignity in the full exercise of their rights.” ~Pope John Paul II, homily at her canonization

## Quiet Reflection/Sharing

**Response Prayer Leader:** In the weeks before her death, St. Josephine Bakhita re-lived the terrible days of her captivity. More than once, she cried out: “Please, loosen the chains ... they are heavy!” We ask for the intercession of St. Josephine as we pray ...

For the estimated 27 million women, men and children currently held in slavery-like conditions. **R. Loosen the chains, O God; loosen the heavy chains!**

For those exploited and objectified in the commercial sex industry. R. For those forced to become soldiers, especially children who are made into tools for violence. R.

For those exploited for their labor in agricultural fields, factories, restaurants, private homes, or anywhere in the shadows, where they are out of sight. R.

For conversion of heart for the perpetrators and organizers of human trafficking. R.

For governments, corporations, and consumers, that we will address the systems that make human trafficking possible. R.

For the success of efforts to stop the demand for human trafficking. R.

**Leader:** Mindful of Mary, Mother of Jesus, and woman of hope, we listen attentively to the song:

## **HOLD ON TO HOPE (Kathy Sherman)**

**Closing prayer together:** Let us pray: God of hope and freedom, inspire and strengthen us in our work to loosen the chains of human trafficking in our world, so that like St. Josephine Bakhita, we may stand firm in our resolve to create a slave-free world. Through Christ our Lord. All: Amen.

**Leader:** May God bless us and all in the situation of human trafficking today.

All: Amen.