



Prayer Service for Darfur, Sudan

Leader: Today we gather to remember those who are suffering from conflict throughout the world – especially in Sudan. Sudan's internal conflict in Darfur, an area near the country's border with Chad, continues. This has resulted in death, violence and displacement for thousands of Sudanese civilians. So we will begin with a prayer from the Dinka people of Sudan. (Split group into A and B voices.)

A: In the time when God created all things, God created the sun;
B: And the sun is born and dies and comes again.
A: God created the moon;
B: And the moon is born and dies and comes again.
A: God created the stars;
B: And the stars are born and die and come again.
A: God created humankind;
All: And a human being is born and dies...and does not come again.

Leader: As Christians we believe in life everlasting in Christ. It is our Easter hope that in Christ people rise again.

But we also know acutely the loss of people who are born and who die and who no longer walk among us. This wisdom from the Dinka tribe of Sudan is particularly pertinent given the situation of conflict in Sudan. Violence in Darfur continues at unacceptable levels, including killings, rapes, and families being driven from their homes. Neighboring Chad, despite its own internal conflict, has taken in hundreds of thousands of Darfuri refugees.

So today we pray for those who will not come again as a result of this violence. And we pray for those who cling to the Easter hope of new life, for the chance to see another moon and another sun, and who long for peace to come again.

Scripture: Romans 8: 35-39

What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword?

As it is written: "For your sake we are being slain all the day; we are looked upon as sheep to be slaughtered."

No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us.

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers,
nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Leader: As Catholics we remember the stories of our saints and ask their intercession, not because they were perfect, but because they lived the Gospel so well, a sign of the power of faith in Christ, and a reminder of what true discipleship entails. And so as we pray for the people of Sudan, we evoke the story and the intercession of a saint from Sudan, St. Josephine Bahkita, who was from Darfur, this very region in Sudan where violence continues.

Reading: St. Bahkita's Story

Saint Josephine Bahkita was born to a wealthy Sudanese family in 1869 in Olgossa, a village in Darfur, Sudan. She was a member of the Dargiu tribe. In 1875 at age 9, she was kidnapped by slave-traders, imprisoned, and sold into slavery. She was given the name Bahkita by her captors, which means "fortunate". Sold and resold in the markets at El Obeid and Khartoum, she was finally purchased in 1883 by Callisto Legnani, Italian consul who planned to free her. She accompanied Legnani to Italy in 1885, and worked as a nanny for the family of Augusto Michieli. She was treated well and grew to love Italy. She converted to Catholicism on January 9, 1890, at which time she took the name of Josephine as a symbol of her new life.

She entered the *Institute of Canossian Daughters of Charity* in Venice, Italy in 1893, taking her vows on December 8, 1896 in Verona, and serving as a Canossian Sister for the next fifty years. Her gentle presence, her warm, amiable voice, and her willingness to help with any menial task were a comfort to the poor and suffering people who came to the door of the Institute. After a biography of her was published in 1930, she became a noted and sought after speaker, raising funds to support missions. She died in Italy in 1947 and was canonized on October 1, 2000. Her feast day is observed on February 8.

Petitions:

- ◆ In his rising from the dead, Jesus gave us the power to rise above our own difficult situations; help our displaced brothers and sisters in Sudan overcome their plight, even as St. Bahkita overcame her early displacement from her family.

Response: St. Bahkita please intercede for us.

- ◆ Protect our Sudanese brothers and sisters from violence Oh Lord; may they be secure in the knowledge of your steadfast love and mercy.
- ◆ Almighty God, you who are the great provider, make it possible for people affected by the crisis in Sudan to have their basic needs met: food, water, and shelter; give them spiritual nourishment in these trying times.
- ◆ Bring your healing touch to our Sudanese brothers and sisters; bring understanding and peace where there is conflict.
- ◆ In the spirit of hope, we pray your blessings upon us all; we pray your blessings upon our brothers and sisters, remove our anxieties and give us all love in our hearts. AMEN.

Close with everyone saying the St. Bahkita prayer:

PRAYER

O Holy Trinity,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
we thank you for the gifts
of humility and charity
which you bestowed on
Blessed Josephine Bahkita
Deign to glorify her
for her singular virtues
and grant the prayers
of those who invoke her, AMEN.