

MORNING MEDITATION

Thursday, Fifth Week in Ordinary Time

**We are earthen vessels holding the glory of God.
Be steadfast!**

Genesis 2:18-25

Genesis reflects on man's search for identity, search for "name", character - his own and that of all creatures.

Genesis continues to reflect on how man and woman share the same "bone" - the same thing gives them "form and shape" holds them together!

These verses also reflect how man and woman walked free and without guilt and shame.

Be grateful for and learn to appreciate the "bone" that gives you "form and shape", holds you together, helps you move free and gives your strength.

Psalm 128

**Happy are those who fear the Lord,
Who walk in his ways!**

Mark: 7:24-30

Jesus is in gentile territory. He begins to break down barriers between Jews and gentiles. He meets a Syrophenician woman. She refuses to take "NO" for an answer. She was a woman with a tragedy of an ill daughter at home. Her faith was real. Her faith was tested, and her prayer was answered. What the Jews threw away, the gentiles accepted! This woman stood strong, persevered, persisted...this is hope alive! She came with passionate hope and refused to be discouraged!

She had a sense of humor and she could fall back on it in the face of what seemed to be an insult. She had an urgent need, she was in the midst of trouble, she felt the insult, she felt rejected...but with a little sense of humor, she persisted with hope.

Saint of the Day, February 9 - St. Josephine Bakhita and 20 other saints are remembered this day

Josephine Margaret Bakhita was born around 1869 in the village of Olgossa in the Darfur region of Sudan. Historians believe that sometime in February 1877, Josephine was kidnapped by Arab slave traders. She was bought and sold many times. As a slave, her experiences varied from fair treatment to cruel. Her owners mistreated her, punished her cruelly and often incapacitated her. The wife of one of her masters ordered her to be scarred. As her mistress watched, ready with a whip, another woman drew patterns on her skin with flour, then cut into her flesh with a blade. She rubbed the wounds with salt to make the scars permanent. She would suffer a total of 114 scars from this abuse.

In 1883, the Turkish general sold her to the Italian Vice Consul, Callisto Legani. He was a much kinder master and he did not beat her. When it was time for him to return to Italy, she begged to be taken with him, and he agreed. After the arrival in Italy, she was given away to another family as a gift and she served them as a nanny. When her new mistress decided to travel to Sudan without Josephine, she placed her in the custody of the Canossian Sisters in Venice. While she was in the custody of the sisters, she came to learn about God. She was deeply moved by her time with the sisters and discerned a call to follow Christ.

When her mistress returned from Sudan, Josephine refused to leave. Her mistress spent three days trying to persuade her to leave the sisters, but Josephine remained steadfast. The superior of the institute complained to Italian authorities on Josephine's behalf. The case went to court, and the court found that slavery had been outlawed in Sudan before Josephine was born. So, she could not be lawfully made slave. She was declared free. For the first time in her life, Josephine was free and could choose what to do with her life. She chose to remain with the Canossian Sisters.

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 Giuseppe Sarto, the Cardinal Patriarch of Venice, who would later become Pope Pius X.

Josephine took her final vows on December 8, 1896 in the religious order of the Canossian Daughters of Charity. For the next 42 years of her life, she worked as a cook and a doorkeeper at the convent. She also traveled and visited other convents telling her story to other sisters and preparing them for work in Africa. She was gentle and charismatic and was often referred to lovingly as the "little brown sister" or honorably as the "black mother." She died on the evening of February 8, 1947. Pope John Paul II canonized her on October 1, 2000.

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