February 8th: Memorial of Saint Josephine Bakhita, Virgin

Gospel text (*Mt* 25:1-13): Jesus told his disciples this parable: “The Kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom... Since the bridegroom was long delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep..."

Saint Josephine Bakhita, virgin (1869-1947)

EDITORIAL TEAM evangeli.net (based on texts by Benedict XVI)
(Città del Vaticano, Vatican)

Today we celebrate an African saint: Josefina Bakhita. At the age of nine, she was kidnapped by slave-traders, beaten till she bled, and sold five times in the slave-markets of Sudan. Finally, in 1882, she was bought for the Italian consul, who returned to Italy. Here, after the terrifying “masters” who had owned her up to that point, Bakhita came to know a totally different kind of “master”, the living God, the God of Jesus Christ.

Now, she came to know that this Lord even knew her, that he had created her—that he actually loved her. She too was loved, and by none other than the supreme “Master”, before whom all other masters are themselves no more than lowly servants. This master had himself accepted the destiny of being flogged and now he was waiting for her “at the Father's right hand”. Now she had “hope” —no longer simply the modest hope of finding masters who would be less cruel, but the great hope: “I am definitively loved and whatever happens to me —I am awaited by this Love. And so my life is good”. Through the knowledge of this hope she was “redeemed”, no longer a slave, but a free child of God.

—On 9 January 1890, she was baptized and confirmed and received her first Holy Communion from the hands of the Patriarch of Venice. On 8 December 1896, in Verona, she took her vows in the Congregation of the Canossian Sisters.