

For everyone, the Jubilee means conversion to Jesus Christ. For those who work in the university, the Jubilee is also concretized in an invitation to consider, anew and in depth, its role in the world and in the Church. It is also a call to renew the desire for Christian consistency, attained through the effort to know and love Jesus, God made man, who gives himself to us in the sacraments, who listens to us and speaks to us in prayer; who comes to meet us in our work. Yes, the work of the intellect also, the fatiguing but incomparable work of examining the truth, in the light of faith, with a desire of loving and serving, can and should be turned into prayer.

When the minds and hearts of intellectuals are open to the light and warmth of God's love, there descends upon them torrents of wisdom, as the water runs down from the snow-capped peaks, filling the fields with fruit. Our times call out, more than does arid land, for an end to the "drama of the separation of faith and reason" (John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, no. 45). And this work is the task of intellectuals: it depends on their faith and love, on each one's humble correspondence to God's grace. Then in our day and age the words of the psalm will be fulfilled: "Dominus dabit benignitatem, et terra nostra dabit fructum suum" (Ps 85:12).

## Milan, Italy October 1, 2000

*Article published in the newspaper "Avvenire" on the occasion of the canonization of Saint Giuseppina Bakhita*

"The saints are the supreme expression of beauty." These words of the Pope, spoken in an informal conversation with journalists during a plane trip to spread the Gospel, seem very appropriate for describing the holy life of Josephine Bakhita.

The saints, through the power of their witness, make up for the violence against man committed in the course of history. They deeply transform, each in his or her own way, all that others suffer. Their importance for the present age is especially timely, in this century of "progress" that nothing defines more starkly than the number of its martyrs. The saints' patience in the face of injustice displays the vigor of the most refined charity, while their docile suffering illuminates every corner of daily life. By their determination to love always and at all costs, the saints are the ones who create new civilizations.

An outstanding example of this reality is Josephine Bakhita, the Canossian nun who died in Schio, Italy, in 1947. Her life was marked by great suffering. She was kidnapped and enslaved when still a little girl, tortured, and sold several times in the slave markets of El Obeidh and Khartoum (recent documents, including audiovisuals, testify to the continuance of a flourishing slave trade in the Sudan). After being rescued by the Italian consul in 1882, she was taken in by the Canossians of Schio and baptized at the age of 21. At 27 she became a Canossian nun. Her path was truly a difficult one, and her natural goodness was not enough to explain the compassion she showed for those who had made her suffer.

Her forgiveness was the expression of a charity that only God can infuse. Thus her life became, to return to the Pope's image, an expression of what is most truly beautiful in this world.

The entire Bishops' Conference of the Sudan will be present at Bakhita's canonization. The bishops, with the daring of faith, point to the message that emanates from her life: a strong message of hope and forgiveness to the Catholics of Sudan, who at this very moment are the object of a cruel persecution that deprives them of even their most basic rights. It is a message for the conscience of all of us, who so often cover over with silence the injustice that crushes those who have no voice to make themselves heard.

In Bakhita we also see the personification of the Christian paradox of freedom. When she finally had the possibility of freely deciding on her own life, she gave herself to another "Master" (as she called God) and handed over to him even the beating of her heart and all of her thoughts. Thus while she carried out the humblest tasks with joy, she spread love to all around her with great simplicity. Bakhita served our Lord for almost fifty years. To renew one's own Yes to our Lord each day is to point oneself towards eternity. For her, looking to the future did not mean forgetting the past, but rather transfiguring it, redeeming it with the freedom of love.

Bakhita, at the end of her life, expressed in these simple words, hidden behind a smile, the journey of her life: "I travel slowly, one step at a time, because I am carrying two big suitcases.

One of them contains my sins, and in the other, which is much heavier, are the infinite merits of Jesus. When I reach heaven I will open the suitcases and say to God: Eternal Father, now you can judge. And to St. Peter: Close the door, because I'm staying."

La Madre "Moretta," as the people of Schio called her, was beatified together with Blessed Josemaria, the founder of Opus Dei, on May 17, 1992. For all of us this was an unforgettable experience. Ever since that day we have felt very close to her. And therefore today is a day of great joy for me. The heroic example of Bakhita, of the Chinese martyrs, of Katherine Drexel and of Maria Josefa of the Heart of Jesus shows to mankind the glorious countenance of Christ, who triumphs in charity. Every canonization is the celebration of the Church's holiness, of the continuous miracle of the supreme beauty that Christ's Spouse radiates to the world. And it is always a feast for the whole Church.

## Braga, Portugal October 2, 2000

*Interview published in the  
Diário do Minho*

*The presence of the Prelate of Opus Dei in Fatima for the beatification of the two little shepherd children requires no explanation. He is present with many other Christians and Catholic institutions who are joyfully accompanying Pope John Paul II in this historic mo-*