

Little Way Healing Ministry

Yesterday was the feast of St. Josephine Bakhita. Born in the Sudan, as a girl she was kidnapped, sold into slavery, beaten and abused. One of her owners, with a razor, carved tattoos all over her body, rubbing salt into the wounds to make them permanent. But at 16, she was bought by an Italian, who took her to Italy, and it was there, after meeting some religious sisters, she converted to Christ. Eventually she joined the sisters and became a truly holy woman. Her life is a testimony to how, once a person truly meets Jesus Christ and develops a personal friendship with Him, they can overcome the most horrible memories and the wounds of abuse, finding healing and an ability to forgive: *If I were now to meet the slave-traders who kidnapped me and those who tortured me, I would kneel and kiss their hands, for if that hadn't happened, I wouldn't today be a Christian and a nun.* St. Josephine died in 1947 and was canonised in the year 2000 by Pope John Paul II.

You are the light of the world. In today's Gospel, Jesus speaks about being a disciple. A disciple is a learner, an apprentice, who imitates the Master in order to become like Him. We are meant to imitate Jesus Christ. He is the Light of the World but without us and our good works, His light cannot shine. As 1stR said: *Share your bread with the hungry; shelter the homeless poor; clothe the man you see to be naked. Then will your light shine and your wounds be quickly healed.* Jesus also uses another image: *You are the salt of the earth.* God the Father works in the world through His two Hands, the Son and the Spirit, and as disciples we are meant not only to imitate Jesus's good works but also like him, to be people filled with the Holy Spirit and those fruits of character Paul mentions in Gal 5: *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness.* In other words, a disciple is a friend of Jesus, but one filled with the Spirit, healed and transformed, sent on mission to all.

In her book *Forming Intentional Disciples*, the American Sherry Weddell notes how a lot of lapsed Catholics become Evangelicals. The reasons they give are not Church teaching, the abuse-crisis or a marriage issue, but because, they say, their spiritual needs are not being met. They didn't have a personal friendship with Christ, a sense of call. She then adds, a staggering 40% of *practising* Catholics say they do not have a deep relationship with Christ, which is why in most parishes it's always the same few who come to everything. If Weddell is right, then surely the time has come to put all the Church's resources at the service of helping people to pray, to experience God, to learn the art of prayer and to develop in life a real, personal relationship with Christ. As Catholics, we have immense resources for this, in the Liturgy, in the lives of the saints, and in two millennia of spiritual theology.

The good man is a light in the darkness for the upright said the Psalm. The Little Way Healing Ministry, under the patronage of St. Theresa of Lisieux – maybe also St. Josephine Bakhita? - has a crucial role in the Church's mission today: to help people really encounter Jesus Christ, to find in him healing and release, and, with lives changed, to become missionary disciples. Prayer, mutual support and the laying on of hands, the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Anointing and Holy Eucharist, the healing of memories, reparation and indulgences, are salvific and therapeutic means by which a wounded soul can meet Our Lord and Saviour. In this Mass, we pray that He will enrich you with the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit, that you can bring His healing to all.