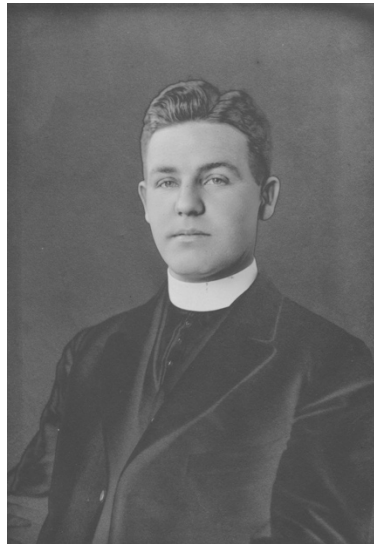


House of O'Rourke

St. Lawrence & St. Josephine Bakhita



Fr. Thomas Patrick O'Rourke



- General biography:
  - Born in Lorena, TX on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1889.
  - Father was a railroad foreman so his family moved around a lot.
  - He was ordained to the priesthood in Toronto on June 29<sup>th</sup>, 1916.
    - First native Texan ordained into the Basilian Order.
  - Teacher, football and baseball coach, prefect of discipline, and principal (1927-1931).
    - He was responsible for having the foresight to purchase the piece of land at Memorial and Shepherd which the school would eventually relocate to in 1940.
  - Hall of Honor member.

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- Interesting stories/information:
  - His family was known for its great charity as his dad owned a grocery store and gave out food to the poor and they also housed local families in their own home who had fell on hard times during the Great Depression.
  - A big, hearty man who spoke frankly and charmed with his Irish humor.
    - Had the Irish proclivity to be himself rather than put on a false persona.
  - Friends with famous WI American chaplain Fr. Francis Patrick Duffy.
  - Never finished his BA but ironically completed his Masters and Doctorate, and his thesis, *The Franciscan Missions in Texas, 1690-1794* was highly sought after.
    - Father Guilday, head of the American Catholic Historical Society, offered him a job but he became principal of St. Thomas instead.
  - Wrote anti-communist pamphlet that was distributed in the Basilian schools.
  - As principal:
    - Had the foresight to see that Houston was expanding and decided the future of St. Thomas would be better off by leaving Downtown and moving to what then was considered the suburbs, an extensive tract of land at the northeast intersection of Shepherd and Buffalo Bayou.
    - Famous phrase to the students:
      - “Don’t let them fence your goodness in”.
  - Poet:
    - Was a prolific poet, drawing on his faith, love of Texas, and Irish heritage for inspiration.
  - Pastor of St. Anne’s:
    - Responsible for the Spanish Missionary style architecture of St. Anne’s.
  - On the radio:
    - Gave a series of talks on the radio in Windsor, Ontario based on Catholic social teaching of Popes Leo XIII and Pius XI.
  - Ministry to the Poor:
    - He began the Basilian apostolate to serve the Hispanic poor in Texas.
  - University of St. Thomas:
    - Responsible for acquiring the tract of land off of Montrose Blvd. that would become University of St. Thomas in 1947.
  - Member of the Wartime Relations Board during WWII.
  - Irish heritage:
    - Parents were Irish immigrants.
    - He was cousins with Ronald Reagan!
  - His brother:
    - He and his brother developed a unique language in which they would talk backwards to each other.
  - See brilliant and inspiring funeral sermon about him.

St. Lawrence



Summary of Life:

St. Lawrence was born in Rome during the 3rd century and served as a deacon in the Church there. Interestingly, he is patron saint of comedians and cooks. Here's why: He was entrusted with the great duty of caring for the treasury and riches of the Church to facilitate the distribution of alms to the poor. One day, the pagan prefect of Rome demanded that St Lawrence turn over the riches of the Church. St Lawrence asked for three days to gather the wealth and on the third day, he brought with him the Church's treasures, that is, a huge crowd of the poor, the sick, the crippled, the orphan, and the widow. He boldly proclaimed with a smile on his face, "Here are the treasures of the Church! The Church is truly rich, far richer than your emperor." The prefect was not laughing. He ordered him to be put to death by being cooked alive on a large open grill. As he was on the flames, the guards noticed he was murmuring something to which then several of them leaned in to hear what he was saying at which point he delivered his famous final words to his Roman executioners: "Turn me over. I'm done on this side." According to one account, one of the guards flew into a rage and kicked over the grill and they had to put St. Lawrence back on it to complete the job. This is why you will often see images of St. Lawrence with a large grill. Look for St. Lawrence in his rightful and proper place in the cafeteria.

### Outline of Life:

- Born December 31st, 225 in Rome and died on August 10th, 258.
- Feast: August 10th.
- Notable Information:
  - He was one of seven deacons of Rome executed in the reign of Emperor Valerian.
  - He was appointed archdeacon of Rome by Pope Sixtus II, a position of great trust that included the care of the treasury and riches of the Church and the distribution of alms to the poor.
  - The prefect of Rome demanded that St Lawrence turn over the riches of the Church.
  - St Lawrence asked for three days to gather the wealth.
  - He worked swiftly to distribute as much Church property to the indigent as possible, so as to prevent its being seized by the prefect.
  - On the third day, at the head of a small delegation, he presented himself to the prefect, and when ordered to deliver the treasures of the Church he presented the indigent, the crippled, the blind, and the suffering, and declared that these were the true treasures of the Church.
  - He declared to the prefect, "The Church is truly rich, far richer than your emperor."
  - He then stated, "Behold in these poor persons the treasures which I promised to show you; to which I will add pearls and precious stones, those widows and consecrated virgins, which are the Church's crown."
  - He was condemned to death by being grilled alive.
  - His famous final words to his Roman executioners were, "Turn me over, I'm done on this side."
  - Thus, he is patron saint of comedians and cooks.
- Quotes:
  - "Turn me over, I'm done on this side." [dying words]
  - "Sheltered under the name of Jesus Christ, I do not fear these pains, for they do not last long."
  - "Learn, unhappy man, how great is the power of my God; for your burning coals give me refreshment but they will be your eternal punishment."
  - "These are the treasures of the Church which you seek." [upon bringing the poor of Rome before the Roman judge]

St. Josephine Bakhita



Summary of Life:

She was born to the North African Daju tribe in the Sudan. Her respected and reasonably prosperous father was brother of the village chief. At age seven, her village was raided by Arab Muslim slave traders and she was taken as a slave. Over the next many years she would change hands many times, traveling over a thousand miles, enduring horrific abuse including sexual assault. She had incredibly painful tattoos engraved into her skin and she lost all memory of her original name. She was nicknamed by the Arabs "Bakhita" which means "lucky one". She was eventually sold to the wife of a Turkish general who treated her miserably. "During all the years I stayed in that house," she remarked, "I do not recall a day that passed without some wound or other. When a wound from the whip began to heal, other blows would pour down on me." She finally was delivered from bondage when she was sold to an Italian family in 1888 who then placed her in the care of group of nuns in Venice. There, cared for and instructed by the sisters, Bakhita encountered Christianity for

the first time. Grateful to her teachers, she recalled, "Those holy mothers instructed and cared for me with heroic patience and introduced me to that God who from childhood I had felt in my heart without knowing who He was." On 9 January 1890, Bakhita was baptized with the names of Josephine Margaret and Fortunata which is the Latin translation for the Arabic Bakhita. Once she was asked, "What would you do, if you were to meet your captors?" Without hesitation she responded: "If I were to meet those who kidnapped me, and even those who tortured me, I would kneel and kiss their hands. For, if these things had not happened, I would not have been a Christian and a religious today." She is the patron saint of human trafficking survivors and modern-day slaves."

### Outline of Life:

- Born in Darfur, Sudan in Africa in 1869 and died February 8th, 1947.
- Feast Day:
- Notable Information:
  - She belonged to the powerful Daju tribe.
  - Her respected and reasonably prosperous father was brother of the village chief.
  - She was surrounded by a loving family of three brothers and three sisters; as she says in her autobiography: "I lived a very happy and carefree life, without knowing suffering."
  - Sometime between the age of seven to nine, probably in February 1877, she was seized by Arab Muslim slave traders, who had abducted her elder sister two years earlier.
  - She was forced to walk barefoot 600 miles east to the city of El Obeid and was sold and bought twice before she arrived there.
  - Over the course of twelve years (1877–1889) she was sold three more times and then given away.
  - She endured many horrors including sexual abuse.
  - Bakhita was not the name she received from her parents at birth.
  - It is said that the trauma of her abduction caused her to forget her own name; she took one given to her by the slavers, bakhita, Arabic for "lucky" or "fortunate".
  - She was also forcibly converted to Islam.
  - In El Obeid, Bakhita was bought by a rich Arab who used her as a maid for his two daughters.
  - They liked her and treated her well but after offending one of her owner's sons, possibly by breaking a vase, the son lashed and kicked her so severely that she spent more than a month unable to move from her straw bed.
  - Her fourth owner was a Turkish general, and she had to serve his mother-in-law and his wife, who were cruel to their slaves.
  - Bakhita said: "During all the years I stayed in that house, I do not recall a day that passed without some wound or other. When a wound from the whip began to heal, other blows would pour down on me."
  - She says that the most terrifying of all of her memories there was when she (along with other slaves) was marked by a process resembling both scarification and tattooing, which was a traditional practice throughout Sudan.

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- As her mistress was watching her with a whip in her hand, a dish of white flour, a dish of salt and a razor were brought by a woman.
- She used the flour to draw patterns on her skin and then she cut deeply along the lines before filling the wounds with salt to ensure permanent scarring.
- A total of 114 intricate patterns were cut into her breasts, belly and into her right arm.
- By the end of 1882, El Obeid came under the threat of an attack revolutionaries.
- The Turkish general began making preparations to return to his homeland and sold his slaves.
- In 1883 Bakhita was bought in Khartoum by the Italian Vice Consul Callisto Legnani, who treated her kindly.
- Two years later, when Legnani himself had to return to Italy, Bakhita begged to go with him.
- At the end of 1884, they escaped from besieged Khartoum with a friend, Augusto Michieli.
- They travelled a risky 400 mile on camel back to Suakin, which was the largest port of Sudan.
- In March 1885 they left Suakin for Italy and arrived at the port of Genoa in April.
- They were met there by Augusto Michieli's wife Signora Maria Turina Michieli and Callisto Legnani gave ownership of Bakhita to Turina Michieli.
- Bakhita's new owners took her to their family villa at Zianigo, near Mirano, Veneto, about 16 miles west of Venice.
- She lived there for three years and became nanny to the Michieli's daughter Alice, known as Mimmina.
- During a long business trip beginning on 29 November 1888, Turina Michieli left Bakhita and the daughter in the care of the Canossian Sisters in Venice.
- There, cared for and instructed by the Sisters, Bakhita encountered Christianity for the first time. Grateful to her teachers, she recalled, "Those holy mothers instructed me with heroic patience and introduced me to that God who from childhood I had felt in my heart without knowing who He was."
- When Mrs. Michieli returned to take her daughter and maid back to Suakin, Bakhita firmly refused to leave.
- For three days Mrs. Michieli tried to force the issue, finally appealing to the king's attorney general while the sisters appealed to the Church authorities for help..
- On 29 November 1889 an Italian court ruled that Bakhita should not be a slave in the first place and must be released from obligations to the Michieli family.
- She chose to remain with the Canossian Sisters.
- On 9 January 1890 Bakhita was baptized with the names of Josephine Margaret and Fortunata (which is the Latin translation for the Arabic Bakhita).
- On the same day she was also confirmed and received Holy Communion from Archbishop Giuseppe Sarto, the Cardinal Patriarch of Venice, the future Pope St. Pius XI!
- 8 December 1896 she took her vows.

- In 1902 she was assigned to the Canossian convent at Schio, in the northern Italian province of Vicenza, where she spent the rest of her life.
- She was put in charge of helping to prepare young sisters for work in Africa.
- A strong missionary drive animated her throughout her entire life - "her mind was always on God, and her heart in Africa".
- During her 42 years in Schio, Bakhita was employed as the cook, sacristan and portress (door keeper) and was in frequent contact with the local community.
- Her gentleness, calming voice, and ever-present smile became well known and Vicenzans still refer to her as Sor Moretta ("little brown sister") or Madre Moretta ("black mother").
- Her special charisma and reputation for sanctity were noticed by her order; the first publication of her story (*Storia Meravigliosa* by Ida Zanolini) in 1931, made her famous throughout Italy.
- During the Second World War (1939–1945) she shared the fears and hopes of the town people, who considered her a saint and felt protected by her mere presence.
- Bombs did not spare Schio, but the war passed without a single casualty.
- Her last years were marked by pain and sickness.
- She used a wheelchair but she retained her cheerfulness, and if asked how she was, she would always smile and answer: "As the Master desires."
- In the extremity of her last hours her mind was driven back to the years of her slavery and she cried out: "The chains are too tight, loosen them a little, please!"
- After a while she came round again and someone asked her, "How are you? Today is Saturday," probably hoping that this would cheer her because Saturday is the day of the week dedicated to Mary, mother of Jesus. Bakhita replied, "Yes, I am so happy: Our Lady ... Our Lady!"
- Bakhita died at 8:10 PM on 8 February 1947.
- For three days her body lay on display while tens of thousands of people arrived to pay their respects.
- Pope Benedict XVI, on 30 November 2007, in the beginning of his second encyclical letter *Spe Salvi* (In Hope We Were Saved), relates her entire life story as an outstanding example of the Christian hope.
- She is the patron saint of human trafficking survivors and modern-day slaves.
- Quotes:
  - "Seeing the sun, the moon and the stars, I said to myself, 'Who could be the Master of these beautiful things?' I felt a great desire to see him, to know him and to pay him homage."
  - "What would you do, if you were to meet your captors?" Without hesitation she responded: "If I were to meet those who kidnapped me, and even those who tortured me, I would kneel and kiss their hands. For, if these things had not happened, I would not have been a Christian and a religious today".
  - "Be good, love the Lord, pray for those who do not know Him. What a great grace it is to know God!"
  - "The Lord has loved me so much: we must love everyone...we must be compassionate!"



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- “O Lord, if I could fly to my people and tell them of your goodness at the top of my voice, oh how many souls would be won!”