

Session 3

Opening Prayer

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth. O God, who has taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that by the gift of the same Spirit we may be always truly wise and ever rejoice in his consolation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our Lady, Comforter of the Afflicted, pray for us

St Josephine Bakhita, pray for us.

Intercessions, followed by: **Our Father....Hail Mary...Glory be....**

Scripture: Ephesians 2: 4,8,11-13,19-20

God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ...for by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God...remember at one time you were...separated from Christ...having no hope and without God in the world...But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ. So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.

Formation: *Spe Salvi 3* (Pope Benedict XVI)

In what does this hope consist which, as hope, is "redemption"? The essence of the answer is given in St Paul's Letter to the Ephesians: before their encounter with Christ, they were without hope because they were "without God in the world". To come to know God – the true God – means to receive hope...The example of a saint of our time can to some degree help us understand what it means to have a real encounter with the living God for the first time. I am thinking of the African Josephine Bakhita, canonised by [St] John Paul II...She was born around 1869 in Darfur in Sudan. 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 by an Italian who returned to Italy...There she heard that there is a "master" above all masters, the Lord of all lords, and that this Lord is good, goodness in person. She came to know that this Lord even knew her, that he had created her – that

he actually loved her...What is more, 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...Through the knowledge of this hope she was "redeemed", no longer a slave, but a free child of God. She understood what Paul meant when he reminded the Ephesians that previously they were without hope *because* without God... She was baptised [and became a nun]...She made journeys round Italy in order to promote the missions: the liberation that she had received through her encounter with the God of Jesus Christ, she felt she had to extend, it had to be handed on to others, to the greatest possible number of people. The hope born in her which had "redeemed" her she could not keep to herself; this hope had to reach many, to reach everybody.