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Deciphering

Leo XIV in France

What is the Bakhita House, which the Pope will visit in Paris?

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Credit: NurPhoto

During his visit to France, Leo XIV will visit the Maison Bakhita in Paris on September 26th. This place is dedicated to welcoming exiled people and is under the patronage of Saint Josephine Bakhita, a former Sudanese slave who became a nun and a symbol of forgiveness.

The official program for Pope Leo XIV's visit to France next September, published on August 7, 2026, by the Vatican, has revealed a new addition compared to the events already announced: on Saturday, September 26, at 9:00 a.m., the Pope will visit the Bakhita House in the 18th arrondissement of Paris. This institution, which provides assistance to exiled people, is named after a former Sudanese slave who became a nun in Italy and was canonized by John Paul II in 2000.

The Bakhita House finds its origin in the biblical call to welcome the stranger and in Pope Francis's invitation to "welcome, protect, promote and integrate" migrants. Launched in 2018 by the Diocese of Paris, the project is managed by the Pastoral Care for Exiles, within the Solidarity Department.

Its design was based on a broad participatory approach involving nearly forty partner organizations, some fifty exiled individuals, and around one hundred volunteers, according to [the institution's website](#) . This collective reflection fostered a logic of fraternity and integration, starting from the concrete needs of the people involved.

After the first "outside the walls" initiatives from 2019, then the launch of the works in 2020, the Bakhita House was officially inaugurated on September 25, 2021. The Pope's visit, almost to the day, will therefore correspond to the 5th anniversary of the opening of this house.

Josephine Bakhita, icon of exile and forgiveness

The name of this place refers to [Saint Josephine Bakhita](#) (1869-1947), born in Sudan, who was enslaved as a child, tortured, and sold several times in markets before being acquired in 1883 by the Italian consul in Khartoum. The young girl was taken in by the diplomat's family, who then brought her to

Italy, where she was educated by the Canossian nuns, baptized, and entered the congregation, taking her vows in 1896.

Madre *Moretta* ("little black mother"), admired for her devotion, became a well-known figure in her community, traveling to Italian convents to prepare nuns before their departure for Africa. During World War II, the survival of the entire population during the massive bombings that struck the town of Schio, in Veneto, where she lived, was attributed by some residents to her great piety.

Her reputation for holiness and the growing number of testimonies recounting miracles attributed to her intercession led the Vatican to open her cause for canonization in 1958, a little over a decade after her death. She was beatified on May 17, 1992, and canonized by John Paul II on October 1, 2000. The Church celebrates her liturgical feast day every February 8.

Benedict XVI, who had a special affection for her, presented the life of Josephine Bakhita at the beginning of his 2007 encyclical, *Spe Salvi*. The German pontiff, recounting the young former slave's discovery of Christianity, explains that she had discovered "not only the small hope of finding less cruel masters, but the great hope: I am definitively loved and whatever happens to me, I am awaited by this Love." He specifies that "through the knowledge of this hope, she was redeemed: she no longer felt herself a slave, but a free daughter of God."

Pope Francis, deeply concerned about human trafficking, has often spoken about her. He dedicated his catechesis to her during the general audience of October 11, 2023. "Saint Josephine Bakhita, through her example, shows us the way to finally be freed from our enslavements and our fears. She helps us to unmask our hypocrisies and selfishness, to overcome resentment and conflict," the Argentinian pontiff recounted.

In France, her fame is also linked to Véronique Olmi's book, *Bakhita*, published in 2017 by Albin Michel. This fictionalized biography was a great success in bookstores.

Bakhita instead of Jeanne Garnier?

This visit by Leo XIV to the Bakhita House found its place in the papal agenda after the abandonment of a visit that could have taken place at the Jeanne Garnier House, a palliative care establishment that was once mentioned among the possible stops on the trip.

According to several reliable sources, the vote on the end-of-life law on July 15th led to the rejection of this possibility, deemed too sensitive in the current context. The Constitutional Council must, in particular, rule on the possibility that could be granted to faith-based institutions to refuse euthanasia and assisted suicide in the name of freedom of conscience. Currently, the law as it stands does not include this conscience clause.

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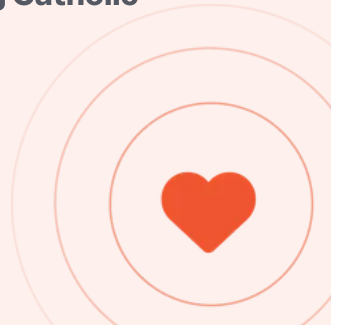


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General Audience: The Liturgical Year, a Path to Living the Mystery of Christ.

During the general audience this Wednesday, August 12, the Pope delivered his sixth catechesis on Sacrosanctum Concilium, the Second Vatican Council's constitution on the liturgy. In a packed St. Peter's Basilica, Leo XIV affirmed that the liturgical year is the actualization of the work of salvation that Christ accomplishes in history, filling all the faithful with his grace.

Augustine Asta – Vatican City

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Jordan is preparing for the celebrations of the Baptism of Christ in 2030.

On Monday, August 10, the first meeting of the committee tasked with preparing and overseeing this major historical and religious event took place. Chaired by Prime Minister Hassan, the committee is composed of ministers, religious leaders, and representatives of various institutions. In accordance with the directives of King Abdullah II, all resources are being mobilized to carry out various projects, such as a museum and a village for pilgrims.

Vatican News

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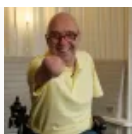


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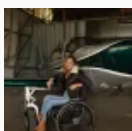
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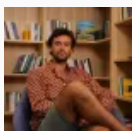
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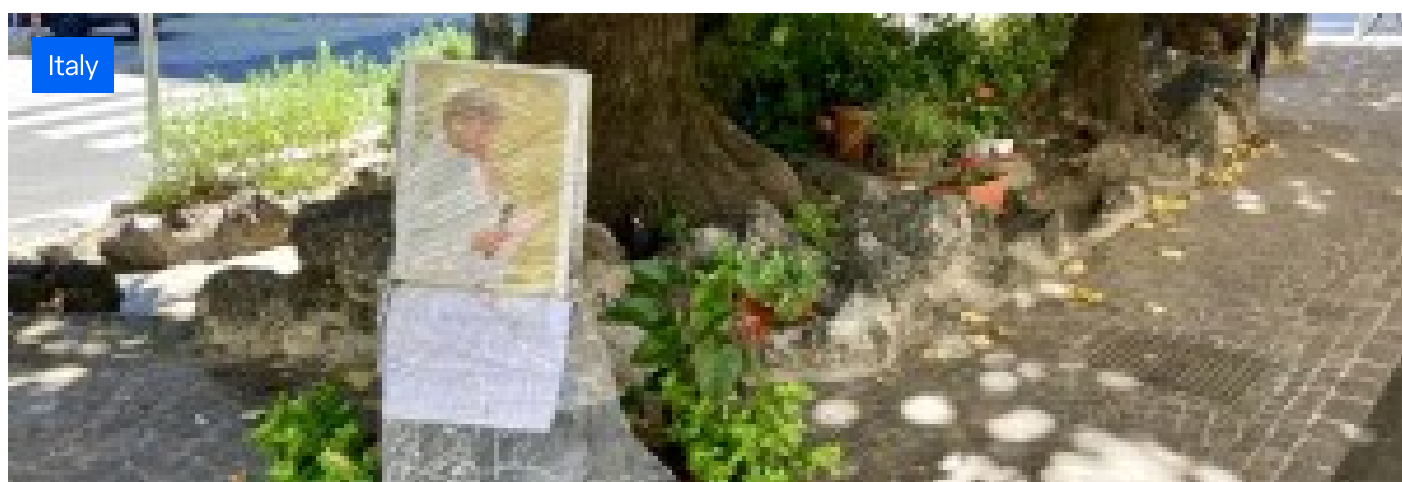
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