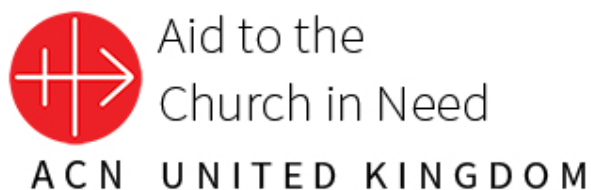


## Aid to the Church in Need: Notes for Teachers

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### #RedWednesday Assembly: Resource for Secondary Schools

This resource is intended to be used in an assembly as preparation for #RedWednesday (23-11-22). Ideally, you could show it a week or two before #RedWednesday to give students the opportunity to prepare activities for the day itself. **Some of the content may be hard-hitting, so we would advise you check the section on Leah Sharibu. This section could be omitted or amended for 11–12-year-olds.**

#### Aim:

The aim of this assembly is to show pupils that tolerance, diversity and the promotion of peace needs to include an awareness of the persecution of people of faith around the world. Two hundred million Christians and other faith minorities are at risk and the media remain largely silent about the severity and extent of what is sometimes genocide. This assembly is to promote #RedWednesday and enable students to ‘Break the Silence’ on this issue.

#### You will need:

A plan in place your school’s #RedWednesday activities. Older pupils/chaplaincy team leaders/heads of house, etc. who can explain these plans during the assembly.

### Red Wednesday Assembly: Links to proposed new RECD

(this will be updated when the RECD is released)

RECD Link:	Statement:
7.3	The corporal works of mercy are ways Catholics can help marginalised people
7.3	Jesus' ministry was for all, and that through his ministry to those who are poor, marginalised and lost he reveals God’s special care for those on the peripheries of society
R7.3.1	Consider how they respond to those they encounter on the margins
U7.3.10	Recognise that Christ continues to encounter people today by his presence in “the poor, sick and imprisoned”
7.5	Work of Aid to the Church in Need
R8.1.3	Consider ways in which they can stand up for conscience in the face of unjust, coercive power.
R8.4.1	Consider how they can alleviate the suffering of others

U8.4.23	Example of a Christian person’s expression of their faith and acceptance of suffering
9.1	Ethical issues connected with the communal dimension of the moral life, e.g., freedom of religion/limits of freedom
R9.1.2	Reflect on the mystery of Imago Dei and the difference this makes to their relationship with themselves, with others and with the wider community
U9.1.7	Describe how the mystery of Imago Dei reveals certain truths about human beings
U9.4.22	Investigate the work of a Catholic organisation that works for justice and peace
R9.4.3	Explore the work of organisations dedicated to peace, justice and reconciliation and consider what ways they could support this work
U9.6.2	Recognise the essential elements of the commitment to the common good (peace and well-being)

Slide 1:

Have this on as students arrive for the assembly.

Slide 2:

Script: Today I want to talk about St. Josephine Bakhita, an amazing woman of faith who has much to teach us about the topic of this assembly. St Josephine was an African slave during the 19th century who was kidnapped as a young girl, beaten violently and sold as a slave. Thirteen years later, she was freed and migrated to Italy where she encountered Christianity and became a Catholic religious Sister. She had seen first-hand how evil the world could be, but she was an example of hope, forgiveness and faith. As Pope Benedict XVI said, “Now she had hope.”

Slide 3-12

Script: I am now going to show you some questions. There are five questions in total and I would like you to give yourself a rating for each. If you totally agree give yourself a ‘5’, if you do not agree, give yourself a ‘1’. At the end you will have a score out of 25. Try to keep this number in your head.

Instructions: These slides may be played quite quickly. If you have time, you may want to ask students to discuss their answers with the person sitting next to them. Most pupils will have rated themselves highly as people who care about fairness Justice and tolerance.

Slide 13:

Script: The dictionary definition of tolerance is the willingness to accept behaviour and beliefs that are different from your own although you might not agree or approve of them. Is this a definition of tolerance we recognise?

One aspect of this is religious freedom. It is a fundamental human right, but sadly the world has become more intolerant of religion. After the horrors of World War II and the despicable treatment of Jews, there was hope that it could not happen again. We need to be the people who speak up for people of all religious beliefs and also for those who have none. Every person has the right to believe or not – this is what #RedWednesday is about.

Slide 14

Over its 2,000-year history, the Catholic Church has developed a significant body of teaching on human rights and conscience protection. Jesus never forced people to believe in him, and the Bible teaches us that we are given free will. Christians believe that every person has worth and dignity and so the Catholic Church teaches that religious freedom is the “cornerstone of a society that promotes human dignity; it is a fundamental human right, which follows on the duty of all people to seek the truth about God.”  
([www.usccb.org/committees/religious-liberty/church-teaching-religious-freedom](http://www.usccb.org/committees/religious-liberty/church-teaching-religious-freedom))

Slides 15-19

Instructions: Let the pupils read the slides or have a pupil read them out. If you would like extra facts, please see below\*

Slide 20:

Script: I suspect that you haven't heard of Leah Sharibu. On February 19<sup>th</sup> 2018, Leah Sharibu was kidnapped along with 109 other students when Boko Haram (a terrorist group) attacked a boarding school in the city of Dapchi, in north-eastern Nigeria. Some of the girls kidnapped along with Leah died.

A month later all the others who were still alive – 101 girls– were released, all except Leah.

Those who were released testified that Leah was the only Christian of the group and was held back for refusing to give up her faith in Jesus. Her refusal to deny her faith meant she lost her freedom.

Slide 21:

Script: In February 2021, ACN spoke with Evangelical pastor and friend of the Sharibu family, Reverend Para-Mallam. Reverend Para-Mallam called on the world's governments to apply pressure on Nigeria's president to step up its efforts to release all those held by Boko Haram.

He said: *“Challenge your government to use their power and diplomatic channels to raise Leah's issue with our president and the relevant structures of power in Nigeria to act in order to free Leah and others in captivity.”*

He asked why the international governments didn't seem to be doing anything to help Leah saying: *“Why is the world standing by and watching as she remains in unjust captivity?”*

In October 2021, Reverend Para-Mallam said reliable sources were keeping him informed of Leah Sharibu's situation.

Slide 22:

Script: He said: *“Leah is being unjustly held by Boko Haram, but the good news is that she is still alive. One of the captives got to see her recently and I also received news last week, from diplomatic circles, that Leah is alive.”*

Slide 23

Script: *“It is very sad that, as Nigeria celebrated her 61<sup>st</sup> independence anniversary on the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021, Leah Sharibu is still in captivity with many other innocent Nigerians, both Muslims and Christians.”*

Since this time there have been reports that Leah has married one of the terrorists, given up her faith and had a child. The reverend said that if this is true, it cannot have been her choice because if it was, *“she would have simply denied Christ and been set free on 21st March 2018, but Leah refused.”*

Slide 24:

Script: He asked us to continue to work and to pray for Leah to be set free. Like St Josephine Bakhita, her family still have hope that she will be released, but her mum has begged all people to pray for her safe release. Let us pray also for her and her family. The situation for Christians in Nigeria could be described as ‘deadly and horrible times.’ Christians in Nigeria have never had it so bad. The killings are real.

*“Why is the world standing by and watching as she remains in unjust captivity? Arise, citizens of the world, and break the wall of silence and cry out for the release of Leah Sharibu!”*

Slide 25:

Script: This is one case. ACN works to help Leah and thousands of others like her. #RedWednesday is on November 23<sup>rd</sup> and they are asking that we at *(your school name)*\_\_\_\_\_ join our voices to theirs and break the silence.

Slide 26:

Instructions: An older pupil could now explain what your school is doing on the day.

Slide 27:

Script: This is an international movement, with over 20 countries taking part. No person on this planet should be forced to believe, to convert or be unable to express their faith.

Slide 28:

Script: Some schools are taking part in a meal – could we do something similar?

Slide 29:

Any money we raise will go to help ACN’s efforts to free people like Leah and these projects.

Slide 29:

Script: Donations also support communities who are living in poverty as a result of persecution. Aid to the Church in Need helps people all over the world, upholding their human rights and making sure their stories are heard. The charity also helps individuals and communities survive, whether that be through emergency aid – like food baskets, medicine, education, counselling, money for rent, care for the elderly and spiritual support to give them hope and help heal their wounds. Here are two examples out of tens of thousands of projects.

Slide 30:

Nigeria video (1.03)

Slide 31

Syria video (3.04)

Note This clip uses the word Islamist. You may need to make clear that this word refers to terrorists and not Muslims (they attack Muslims as well as Christians).

Slide 32:

Script: Are we ready to ‘Break the Silence?’

Slide 33:

Prayer for the intercession of St Josephine Bakhita:

Let us ask St Josephine to pray for Christians and other minorities around the world who suffer for their faith:

St. Josephine Bakhita, you were sold into slavery as a child and suffered untold hardship and pain.

St. Bakhita, assist all those who are trapped in a state of slavery or made to do anything against their freedom as children of God.

We ask for your prayers for those who face discrimination and who suffer imprisonment, violence and oppression because of their faith. St Josephine, we ask you to provide comfort to survivors of slavery and religious persecution. May they look to you as an example of hope and faith.

Help all survivors find healing from their wounds. We ask for your prayers and intercession for people of all faiths and none.

May you pray with us for the liberation of Leah Sharibu and all the other young girls who are being held by terrorists.

May we all work for a fair world and may all religions be respected.

Help all people to understand that God alone can provide the freedom we seek.

You said, *“Be good, love the Lord,*

*pray for those who do not know Him.*

*What a grace it is to know God!”*

Let us appreciate the gift of faith and the love of God in our lives.

Amen.

(Adapted for the prayer to St. Josephine Bakhita USCCB <https://www.usccb.org/prayers/prayer-st-josephine-bakhita>)

#### Slide 34

#### Contact

\*Other facts for your information:

1. Christians are the world’s “most widely targeted” faith group. (Pew Research Centre)
2. Research indicates that Christians make up 95% of women and girls held by Islamist extremists in Nigeria. (Hear Her Cries)
3. 1,000 Christian and Hindu girls are kidnapped, raped, forced to convert to Islam and marry their abductors every year. (The Movement for Solidarity and Peace)
4. In 62 countries there are violations of religious freedom. (Religious Freedom in the World Report 2021)
5. There are violations of religious freedom in 23 of 54 African countries. (Religious Freedom in the World Report 2021)
6. Changing or renouncing your religion can have grave legal and/or social consequences in 21% of countries. (Religious Freedom in the World Report 2021)
7. In Pakistan, research suggests Christians could comprise up to 70% of women and girls forcibly converted and married. (Hear Her Cries)
8. 5,898 Christians were murdered for their faith in 2021. (Open Doors: World Watch List 2022)
9. 5,100 churches were attacked in 2021. (Open Doors: World Watch List 2022)
10. At least 360 million Christians around the world experience high levels of persecution and discrimination – 1 in 7 of the Christian population. (Open Doors: World Watch List 2022)

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