

# Once Upon a SAINT

by Rebecca O'Loughlin



## St. Bakos and Servant of God Amanitore, Kandake of Kush

My dearest children, when Christ began His public ministry, a Kandake (or queen) ruled in the far off land of Kush (Kush is modern Sudan and a tiny bit of southern Egypt). Her name was Amanitore, and her favorite servant was a “djan daraba,” which means “eunuch” or “servant of the queen.” His name was Bakos, and he guarded her treasury. Bakos was clever: he knew math and how to read. He was always interesting to talk to.

Amanitore was beautiful and smart, but in her family, the most important thing was being fearsome. Luckily, Amanitore was a mighty warrior, and the daughter of Warrior Queens. Her own grandmother had fought off Julius Caesar, and her mother and she continued the practice: Keep Rome and invaders out of Kush. Amanitore was respected and awed. All kinds of powerful people—from emperors to great philosophers—visited and honored the Kandakes of Kush.

One day, Kandake Amanitore was sitting on her roof, enjoying the sunshine heating up her skin. Her head lifted to the heavens, rays shining on her face. Bakos sat nearby.

“Bakos,” Amanitore murmured, “Bakos, I think I need to send you up north to Jerusalem.”

“Jerusalem? Me? My Kandake!” Bakos was confused. “I will go if you wish it, but what is Jerusalem to us?”

“I have heard of a teacher, a wise man in Jerusalem named Yeshua. I want you to go find him. You know how to read, Bakos, so you must be the one to go. I need to know what Yeshua is teaching. I need to be wiser, not only strong and fierce in battle.”

“Yeshua.” The name felt strange yet familiar on Bakos’ tongue. “Of course, I will go.”

“To prepare, I want you to read the books of those people, the Jews. I want you to learn as much of the language and faith as you can. You will leave in one year.”

Bakos nodded. He had always loved learning. It felt that somehow this new mission would change the world.

Bakos was ready a year later. He and Amanitore had studied, and asked every traveler about any news concerning the Teacher, until their hearts felt like they would burst with desire for Yeshua and His faith.

Amanitore repeated the words she had heard had come from Yeshua in Jerusalem: “unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”

Bakos replied, “ah Kandake! The words of Yeshua! But what do they mean?”

Amanitore told Bakos, “I don’t know! I feel more than ever the need to know Yeshua. Go and pray in Jerusalem! Tell me everything you can about Yeshua’s God! Something great is going to happen. I can feel it!”

“My Kandake,” Bakos said bowing low before Amanitore, “I leave you, both glad and sad. I too believe that praying with and learning from Yeshua is the right step.”

Amanitore kissed him lightly on his bowed head. “Go swiftly, my djan. Hurry home.”

Bakos started out on his long journey. Many months later, he was in Jerusalem. He worshipped in the temple and met many people. Yeshua had been killed some time before, however, and some said that He had risen from the dead and gone to paradise. Bakos didn’t know where to go. He decided to return home, empty handed as it were. Kandake Amanitore’s mission seemed to be as lost as the body of Yeshua. Poor Bakos had learned no more than what he had started with.

It was getting dark on that lonely road between Jerusalem and Gaza. Bakos lit the lamps on his caravan and once more looked over the Jewish scripture. His heart was heavy.

He heard footsteps as a man approached his caravan. Strong and in his prime, Bakos could see that the man was very wise.

The stranger looked at Bakos and asked: “Do you understand what you are reading?”

Bakos shook his head. “How can I unless someone guides me? I was looking for the Teacher Yeshua, but he is gone.”

The man smiled. “I am Phillip, and I was one of Yeshua’s students. I will tell you everything you need to know. Now what are you studying?”

Bakos leaned over the parchment. “Isaiah writes: “Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him.”

Bakos looked at Phillip. “Tell me, who is this passage about?

The writer or someone else?”

Phillip’s eyes sparkled, “why, it has several meanings, but most importantly, it is about the Yeshua you are seeking! It was a prophesy that foretold how he would die willingly, and without justice. He did so in order to bring all sin and evil to the grave with Him, and then He rose from the dead so that we too might have everlasting life!”

“It is true then!” Bakos’ tears poured down his cheeks, “it is true what they say, that Yeshua conquered death!”

Phillip and Bakos talked throughout the night. Bakos’ eyes and heart were opened, and finally he understood the scripture he had read so often. They came to some water and Bakos grabbed Phillip’s arm in excitement.

“See here!” Bakos almost shouted, “water!! Water! And what is stopping me from being baptized? You must make me a follower of Yeshua at once!”

Phillip baptized Bakos, and as they came up out of the water, Bakos watched as Phillip was carried away by the Holy Spirit toward Azotus and Caesarea.

“Goodbye! Goodbye and thank you!” Called Bakos, and Phillip waved.

Bakos danced with joy on the shore, and then, running to his caravan, shouted, “we must return to Kandake Amanitore! We must tell her the Good News! We are all saved!”

Bakos returned to Kush and told Amanitore everything. They taught the people of Kush about Yeshua, and before long, the apostles Phillip and Matthew arrived to establish the Church, which is now known as the Ethiopian Church. Because of Amanitore and her faithful servant Bakos, much of Africa came to know Christ.

We celebrate the feast of St. Bakos on August 27, and although Kandake Amanitore isn’t recognized as a saint in most churches, there is a good chance she is in heaven too, since she worked so hard to convert Kush to Christianity and encouraged Bakos to learn everything he could about Jesus. We can celebrate her conversion to Christ on August 27th as well. Bakos is the saint to turn to if you are having trouble understanding your studies!

### Collect of the Day

**Almighty and everlasting God, You called Your servant Simeon Bakos to preach the Gospel to the people of Africa: Raise up in this and every land evangelists and heralds of Your Kingdom, that Your Church may proclaim the unsearchable riches of our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, forever and ever. Amen.**