

Daily Parish Communication

March 7, 2023

Good Morning!

Hilltopper's 11:30-1:30 - Irish Stew for the main dish.

1. Today's Readings: [Tuesday of the Second Week of Lent | USCCB](#)

2. The RE Corner with Jan Heithaus: Sts. Perpetua and Felicity were Christian martyrs who lived during the early persecution of the Church in Africa by the Emperor Severus. With details concerning the lives of many early martyrs unclear and often based on legend, we are fortunate to have the actual record of the courage of Perpetua and Felicity from the hand of Perpetua herself, her teacher Saturus, and others who knew them.

3. Quotes of the Day:

~"In the arena another will be in me suffering for me, because I will be suffering for Him." *St. Felicity*

"Stand fast in the faith and love one another." *St. Perpetua*

~"It shall happen as God shall choose, for assuredly we depend not on our own power but on the power of God." *St. Perpetua*

***Sts. Perpetua and Felicity, Pray for Us!***  
***St. Joseph, Pray for Us!***

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## Sts. Perpetua and Felicity

Sts. Perpetua and Felicity were Christian martyrs who lived during the early persecution of the Church in Africa by the Emperor Severus.

With details concerning the lives of many early martyrs unclear and often based on legend, we are fortunate to have the actual record of the courage of Perpetua and Felicity from the hand of Perpetua herself, her teacher Saturus, and others who knew them. This account, known as "The Passion of St. Perpetua, St. Felicitas, and their Companions," was so popular in the early centuries that it was read during liturgies.

In the year 203, Vivia Perpetua, a well-educated noblewoman, made the decision to follow the path of her mother and become a Christian, although she knew it could mean her death during the persecutions ordered by the Emperor Severus. Her surviving brother (another brother had died when he was seven) followed her leadership and became a catechumen as well, meaning he would receive instruction from a Catechist in the Catholic Christian faith and be prepared for Baptism.

Her pagan father was frantic with worry and tried to talk her out of her decision. At 22-years-old, the well-educated, high-spirited woman had every reason to want to live -- including a baby son whom she was still nursing. We know she was married, but since her husband is never mentioned, many historians assume she was already a widow.

Perpetua's answer was simple and clear. Pointing to a water jug, she asked her father, "See that pot lying there? Can you call it by any other name than what it is?"

Her father answered, "Of course not." Perpetua responded, "Neither can I call myself by any other name than what I am -- a Christian."

This answer upset her father and he attacked her. Perpetua reports that after that incident she was glad to be separated from him for a few days -- even though that separation was the result of her arrest and imprisonment.

Perpetua was arrested with four other catechumens, including two slaves, Felicity and Revocatus, and Saturninus and Secundulus. Their instructor in the faith, Saturus, chose to share their punishment and was also imprisoned.

Perpetua was baptized before taken to prison. She was known for her gift of "the Lord's speech" and receiving messages from God. She tells us that at the time of her baptism she was told to pray for nothing but endurance in the face of her trials.

The prison was so crowded with people that the heat was suffocating. There was no light anywhere and Perpetua "had never known such darkness."

The soldiers who arrested and guarded them pushed and shoved them without any concern. Perpetua had no trouble admitting she was very afraid, but during all this horror, her most excruciating pain came from being separated from her baby.

The young slave, Felicity was even worse off, for Felicity suffered the stifling heat, overcrowding, and rough handling while being eight months pregnant.

Two deacons who ministered to the prisoners paid the guards to place the martyrs in a better part of the prison. There, her mother and brother were able to visit Perpetua and bring her baby to her.

When she received permission for her baby to stay with her she recalled, "my prison suddenly became a palace for me." Once more her father came to her, begging her to give in, kissing her hands, and throwing himself at her feet. She told him, "We lie not in our own power but in the power of God."

When she and the others were taken to be examined and sentenced, her father followed, pleading with her and the judge. The judge, out of pity, also tried to get Perpetua to change her mind, but when she stood fast, she was sentenced with the others to be thrown to the wild beasts in the arena.

Perpetua recanted how her brother spoke to her, "Lady sister, you are now greatly honored, so greatly that you may well pray for a vision to show you whether suffering or release is in store for you." Perpetua, who spoke to the Lord often, told her brother she would tell him what happened the next day.

While she prayed, Perpetua was shown a golden ladder of the highest length, reaching up to heaven. On the sides of the ladder were swords, lances, hooks and daggers so that if anyone did not climb looking up on Heaven, they would be severely injured. At the bottom of the ladder laid a large dragon to try to scare those journeying up away from Heaven.

Perpetua first saw Satorius go up. After he reached the top of the ladder he said, "Perpetua, I wait for you, but take care that the dragon does not bite you." To which she replied, "In the name of Jesus Christ, he will not hurt me," and the dragon put his down his head.

Perpetua traveled up the ladder and saw a beautiful vast garden with a tall man with white hair dressed like a shepherd and milking sheep. 'Thou art well come, my child," he said to Perpetua, giving her some of the curds from the milk. She ate and all those around her said, "Amen."

Perpetua woke from her dream with a sweet taste still in her mouth. At once, she told her brother what happened and together, they understood they must suffer.

Meanwhile, Felicity was also in torment. It was against the law for pregnant women to be executed. To kill a child in the womb was shedding innocent and sacred blood. Felicity was afraid that she would not give birth before the day set for their martyrdom and her companions would go on their journey without her. Her friends also didn't want to leave so "good a comrade" behind.

Two days before the execution, Felicity went into a painful labor. The guards made fun of her, insulting her by saying, "If you think you suffer now, how will stand it when you face the wild beasts?" Felicity answered them calmly, "Now I'm the one who is suffering, but in the arena, another will be in me suffering for me because I will be suffering for him."

She gave birth to a healthy girl who was adopted and raised by one of the Christian women of Carthage.

The officers of the prison began to recognize the power of the Christians and the strength and leadership of Perpetua. In some cases, this helped the Christians: the warden let them have visitors -- and later became a believer. But in other cases, it caused superstitious terror, as when one officer refused to let them get cleaned up on the day they were going to die for fear they'd try some sort of spell.

Perpetua immediately spoke up, "We're supposed to die in honor of Ceasar's birthday. Wouldn't it look better for you if we looked better?" The officer blushed with shame at her reproach and started to treat them better.

There was a feast the day before the games, so that the crowd could see the martyrs and make fun of them. But the martyrs turned this all around by laughing at the crowd for not being Christians and exhorting them to follow their example.

The four new Christians and their teacher went to the arena (the fifth, Secundulus, had died in prison) with joy and calm. Perpetua in usual high spirits met the eyes of everyone along the way. We are told she walked with "shining steps as the true wife of Christ, the darling of God."

When those at the arena tried to force Perpetua and the rest to dress in robes dedicated to their gods, Perpetua challenged her executioners. "We came to die out of our own free will so we wouldn't lose our freedom to worship our God. We gave you our lives so that we wouldn't have to worship your gods." She and the others were allowed to keep their clothes.

The men were attacked by bears, leopards, and wild boars. The women were stripped to face a rabid heifer. The two were thrown out and attacked, but the crowd cried out they had had enough. The women were removed and clothed again. Perpetua and Felicity were thrown back into the arena to face the gladiators.

Perpetua called out to her brother and other Christians, "Stand fast in the faith, and love one another. Do not let our sufferings be a stumbling block to you."

Perpetua and Felicity stood side by side and were killed by sword at Carthage in the Roman province of Africa.

Sts. Perpetua and Felicity are the patron saints of mothers, expectant mothers, ranchers and butchers. Their feast day is celebrated on March 7.

*Source: catholic.org*