

March 7

Perpetua and Felicity (d. 203) martyrs

Perpetua and Felicity were members of a group of catechumens imprisoned in Carthage during Settimius Severus' persecution of Christians. Their *Passio* is one of the most moving early Christian writings. It reveals the martyrs' full awareness of what it meant for them to face death: according to their own witness, their one source of their strength and pride was Christ, who lived and suffered with them and in them.

Perpetua, a young woman from an aristocratic family, was arrested soon after the birth of her first child. Felicity, a slave, was pregnant when she was arrested. Three days before her martyrdom, she gave birth to a daughter. During her labor, a prison guard asked her, "If you are suffering so much now, what will you do when you are thrown to the beasts?" She replied, "Now it is I who suffer, but there, another will suffer in me and for me, because I am suffering for him now."

Perpetua, when she was baptized in prison, wrote, "The Spirit of God has inspired me to implore no more from this water than the strength to endure the physical suffering of martyrdom."

The two women were martyred in Carthage in the year 203. They quickly became immensely popular, and their names open the list of martyrs in the Roman Canon.

PRAYER

Blessed are you, Lord God,
for Perpetua and Felicity,
who found in you the strength
to withstand their persecutors
and to undergo the torments of death in faith:
may their love unto martyrdom
direct our gaze towards the glory and light they share
with Jesus, who is risen and lives forever and ever.

BIBLICAL READINGS

Sir 51:1-12; Mt 10:28-33

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ANGLICANS:

Perpetua, Felicity and companions, martyrs in Carthage

WESTERN CATHOLICS:

Perpetua and Felicity, martyrs (Roman and Spanish-Mozarabic calendars)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (28 amsir/yakkatit):

Theodore the Greek (3th-4th cent.), martyr (Coptic Church)

LUTHERANS:

Perpetua and Felicity, martyrs in Carthage

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:

7 bishops of Cherson (4th cent.), hieromartyrs

9 children of Kola, martyrs (Georgian Church)

EAST SYRIAN ORTHODOX:

Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274; Malabar Church)

OLD CATHOLICS:

Perpetua and Felicity, martyrs