

The Martyrdom (Passion) of Saints Perpetua and Felicity¹

The Martyrdom of Perpetua is named after a woman who, along with several other catechumens (people preparing for Baptism in the Christian faith), were martyred in Carthage, North Africa, in 203 AD. Although the identity of the editor who provided the narrative framework is unknown, sections 3-10 are believed to come from Perpetua's own prison diary. Similarly, sections 11-13 come from the diary of Saturus. The Martyrdom of Perpetua is important in helping us understand how early Christians viewed the martyrs' deaths and the reward that would be theirs in the afterlife. Note, in particular, the many references to Baptism contained in this story

I.

1. Ancient examples of faith that bear witness to the grace of God and edify men have been set down in writing so that by their reading – as if by a reproduction of the events – God may be honored and man may be strengthened. Why then shouldn't new examples, which serve the same purposes, also be set forth?
2. Furthermore, when these new examples themselves become old, they too will be indispensable for future generations, even if in their own present time they are considered to be of lesser authority, because of antiquity's presumed respect.
3. But those who judge the one power of the one Holy Spirit in terms of periods of history will understand that the more recent things must really be considered the greater because they are more truly the *last* things, in relation to the superabundance of grace decreed for the last days of the age.
4. For *in the last days, says the Lord, I shall pour forth from my Spirit over all flesh and their sons and daughters will prophesy; and over my servants and handmaids I shall pour forth from my Spirit; and young men will see visions and old men will dream dreams.* (Acts 2:17; Joel 2:28)
5. And just as we do with the prophecies, so we also recognize and honor new visions as equally promised. We regard them and the other powers of the Holy Spirit to be for the assistance of the Church, to whom the same Spirit has been sent in order to administer all his gifts among all people, according as the Lord has distributed to each. Therefore by necessity we publish [these materials], and in their reading we pay honor to the glory of God, so that neither feebleness nor loss of faith may reckon that divine grace existed only among the ancients in terms of their martyrs or in the value of their revelations. For God always brings about what he has promised, as a testimony for unbelievers, as a benefit for believers.
6. And therefore, that which we have heard and touched, we proclaim also to you (cf. 1 John 1:1-3), brothers and dear sons, so that you who were not there may also be mindful of the glory of the Lord, and you who now understand through listening might have communion with the holy martyrs, and through them with our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom is splendor and honor unto the ages of ages. Amen.

II.

1. Young people who were catechumens were arrested²: Revocatus and Felicity, his fellow slave, Saturninus and Secundulus; among these was also Vibia Perpetua, of noble birth, with a liberal education, wed as a lawful wife,
2. with a father and a mother and two brothers, one of whom was likewise a catechumen, and an infant son at her breast.

¹ Translated from the text in *Passion de Perpétue et de Félicité*, ed. Jacqueline Amat (Sources chrétiennes, 417; Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1996), 97-183.

² The events recounted in this text took place in 203 in Roman North Africa, during the reign of the emperor Septimius Severus. The arrest and initial imprisonment probably occurred in Thuburbio Minus (modern-day Tiburba), a small city located about 50 km from Carthage. Later (cf. VII.9) the Christian prisoners were transferred to the military prison in Carthage.

3. She was about twenty-two years old. This woman has narrated the whole account of her martyrdom from this point forward, just as she left it written in her own hand and in her own thought:

III.

1. She says: While we were still with the prosecutors, my father both desired to agitate me with words and persevered in casting me down [from the faith] because of his affection: "Father," I said, "for example, do you see this vase lying there, some water-jug or other?" And he said, "I see it."
2. And I said to him: "Is it possible to call it by any other name than what it is?" And he said: "No." "So I am also unable to call myself anything except what I am, a Christian."
3. Then my father, moved by this example, threw himself upon me, so that he might tear out my eyes. But he was only upset and he left, defeated, along with the Devil's arguments.
4. Then during the few days that my father was gone, I gave thanks to the Lord and I revived in his absence.
5. In that same space of a few days we were baptized; and the Spirit declared to me that I should not seek anything from the water except the endurance of the flesh. After a few days we were put into prison; and I was terrified, for I had never experienced such darkness.
6. What a dreadful time! The heat heavy because of the crowded condition, the threats of the soldiers. On top of all that, I was tormented by worry for my baby there.
7. Then Tertius and Pomponius, the blessed deacons who ministered to us, paid a bribe so that we could recover for a few hours, sent into a better part of the prison.
8. Then, departing from the prison, we were all free to attend to ourselves; I nursed my baby, now weak from hunger; concerned for him, I spoke to my mother and comforted my brother, I entrusted my son [to them]; I pined away because I saw them pining away on my account.
9. I endured such concerns for many days; and I managed to arrange that my infant could stay with me in prison; and immediately I became well and I was relieved of the suffering and concern for my infant, and the prison immediately became for me a palace, so that I preferred to be there than anywhere.

IV.

1. Then my brother said to me: "Lady sister, now you are in such great esteem [with God] that you may ask for a vision, and it will be shown to you whether there will be suffering or release."
2. And I, who knew that I spoke with the Lord, whose great favors I had experienced, faithfully promised him saying: "Tomorrow I will report back to you." And I asked, and this was shown to me:
3. I see a bronze ladder of wondrous height, stretching all the way to heaven and narrow, which only one person could climb at a time, and on the sides of the ladder all sorts of iron implements were fastened (cf. Gen. 28:12). There were swords, spears, fishhooks, short swords, javelins, so that if anyone climbed carelessly or without looking up, he would be torn to pieces and his flesh would stick to the iron instruments.
4. And lying below that ladder there was a dragon of astonishing size, who launched an ambush on the ones who were climbing and frightened them from going up.
5. Nevertheless, Satorus climbed up first (who afterwards voluntarily gave himself up for our sake, because he had instructed us, and then when we were led there, he was not present).
6. And he arrived at the top of the ladder, and he turned around and said to me: "Perpetua, I will support you; but watch out so the dragon does not bite you." And I said: "He will not harm me, in the name of Jesus Christ."
7. And he, as if fearing me, slowly laid down his head beneath the ladder; and as if I were stepping on the first rung, I stepped upon its head and climbed up (cf. Gen. 3:15).
8. And I saw a huge expanse of garden and a white-haired man sitting in the middle (cf. Rev. 1:14), dressed as a shepherd, huge, milking his ewes; and many thousands clothed in white standing around him.
9. And he lifted his head and looked at me and said to me: "Welcome, child." And he called me and gave me a small morsel, as it were, from the cheese which he was milking; and I received it with joined hands and I ate; and all those standing around said: "Amen" (cf. Rev. 7:9-14).

10. And at the sound of their voices I woke up, still chewing something sweet, I know not what. And immediately I told my brother; and we understood that there would be suffering, and we began to have no hope in the world.

V.

1. After a few days a rumor spread that we would be tried. But my father too, consumed with grief, came up from our city and climbed up to me in order to cast me down, saying:
2. "Pity, daughter, my white hairs; pity your father, if I am worthy to be called 'father' by you, if with these hands I have raised you to this flower of youth, if I have favored you over all your brothers: do not put me to shame before men!
3. Look at your brothers, look at your mother and motherhood, look at your son, who will not be able to survive you.
4. Set aside your courage, lest you put us all to death: for none of us will speak freely, if you suffer anything."
5. He spoke these things as a father for the sake of his devotion, kissing my hands, and throwing himself at my feet and weeping, he called me no longer "daughter" but "lady."
6. And I grieved over my father's misfortune, because he alone out of my whole family was not going to rejoice over my suffering; and I comforted him saying: "This will happen on that scaffold because God has willed it; that is to say, know that we are not placed in our own power, but in God's." And he went away from me saddened.

VI.

1. On another day while we were having lunch, we were suddenly seized in order to be tried. And we arrived at the forum. Immediately the rumor spread through the neighborhood around the forum and a huge crowd gathered.
2. We ascended the podium. All the others were interrogated and confessed. They came to me. And my father appeared there with my son, and he dragged me from the step, saying: "Say the prayer; pity your son!"
3. And Hilarianus the procurator, who at that time had received the right of capital punishment in the place of the dead proconsul Minucius Timinianus, said: "Spare the white hairs of your father, spare your infant son. Perform the rite for the health of the emperors!"
4. And I responded: "I will not do it." Hilarianus said: "Are you a Christian?" And I responded: "I am a Christian."
5. And because my father was standing his ground for casting me down, Hilarianus ordered him to be thrown out and beaten with rods. And my father's misfortune grieved me, as if I had been beaten: thus I was grieved for his unhappy old age.
6. Then he sentenced us all and condemned us to the wild beasts; and we cheerfully went down to the prison.
7. Then, because my baby had been accustomed to nurse from me and to stay with me in the prison, I immediately sent the deacon Pomponius to my father, asking for the child.
8. But my father did not want to give him. And as God willed it, neither did he desire to nurse any more, nor did my breasts become inflamed, so that I was not tormented by concern for my baby or by my breasts' pain.

VII.

1. After a few days, while we were all praying, suddenly in the middle of prayer my voice was raised and I called out the name Dinocrates. And I was amazed because I had not thought about him at all until that moment, and I grieved as I remembered his misfortune.
2. And I knew immediately that I was deemed worthy [to help him] and that I ought to intercede for him. And I began to pray intensely for him and to groan toward the Lord.
3. Immediately that very night this was shown to me:

4. I see Dinocrates going out from a shadowy place, where there were also many other people. He was sweating profusely and thirsty, with his face filthy and his complexion pale; and there was the wound on his face, which he had when he died.

5. This Dinocrates had been my brother in the flesh. When he was seven years old, he died of an illness with his face so badly eaten with cancer that his death was a source of disgust to everyone.

6. On his behalf, then, I had made a prayer; and between me and him there was a great gulf, so that we were unable to approach each other.

7. In that place where Dinocrates was, there was a basin full of water, whose sides were taller than the boy's height ; and Dinocrates was stretching up as if he was going to drink.

8. I was sad, because that basin did have water, but he was not able to drink because of the height of the side.

9. And I was awakened, and I understood that my brother was suffering; but I was confident that I was going to ease his suffering. And I prayed for him every day until the time when we moved into the military prison; for we were going to fight in military games: at that time the birthday of Geta Caesar was being observed.³

10. And I made my prayer for him day and night, groaning and weeping, so that it would be granted to me.

VIII.

1. On a day when we were still in fetters, this was revealed to me: I see that place which I had seen before, and Dinocrates with his body intact, well dressed, reviving; and where there had been a wound, I see a scar;

2. and [I see] that basin, which I had seen before, its sides having been lowered all the way to the boy's navel, and he was drawing water from it without ceasing;

3. and above the side there was a golden cup full of water. And Dinocrates approached it and began to drink from it; and the cup never ran out.

4. And after he drank his fill, he came away from the water to play, rejoicing in the manner of children. And I was awakened. Then I understood that he had been delivered from punishment.

IX.

1. Finally after a few days a soldier named Pudens was appointed as warden of the prison. Understanding that we possessed great power, he began to esteem us highly and to admit many people to visit us, so that we might refresh one another.

2. As the day of the games approached, my father came in to me, consumed by grief, and he began to pull out his beard and to throw himself onto the ground, and to prostrate himself on his face, and to reproach me with his age, and to say such words as would move all creation.

3. I mourned for his unlucky old age.

X.

1. The day before we fought, I see this in a vision: that Pomponius the deacon had come to the door of the prison and was violently knocking.

2. And I went out to him and opened to him; he was dressed in a loosened white garment and had on sandals with many thongs.

3. And he said to me: "Perpetua, we are waiting for you, come." And he held my hand and we began to go through rough and winding places.

³ Publius Septimius Geta, born on 7 March 189, was the younger son of the Roman emperor Septimius Severus and brother of Caracalla. Both boys shared the titles "caesar" and "augustus" and were therefore co-emperors until Caracalla arranged the murder of Geta in 211. Subsequently, all images and references to Geta in public monuments and writings were destroyed at Caracalla's demand. Only one manuscript of "The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity" retains his name.

4. Finally we barely arrived, panting, at an amphitheater. And he led me into the middle of the arena and said to me: “Do not be terrified: I am here with you and I suffer with you.” And he departed.
5. And I see a huge, thunderous crowd; and because I knew that I had been condemned to the wild beasts, I was surprised that beasts were not let loose at me.
6. And a certain Egyptian, ugly in appearance, along with his helpers, came out against me, to do battle with me. And handsome youths came to me as my helpers and protectors.
7. And I was stripped and turned into a man; and my protectors began to rub me with oil, just as they are accustomed in athletic competition; and opposite me I saw the Egyptian rolling in the dust.⁴
8. And a man came out of such great height, that he even exceeded the top of the amphitheater, his garment loosened and decorated with a purple band between the two vertical stripes across the middle of his chest, and many-thonged sandals made out of gold and silver, and carrying a rod like a gladiator-master, and a green branch on which were golden apples.
9. And he asked for silence and said: “This Egyptian, if he defeats this woman, shall kill her with his sword; she, if she defeats this man, shall receive this branch.” And he withdrew.
10. And we approached each other and we began to trade blows; he tried to grab my feet, but I kicked his face with my heels.
11. And I was lifted in the air, and I began to kick him as if I were not standing on the ground. But when I saw that the fight was dragging out, I joined my hands, so that I put fingers against fingers, and I grabbed his head, and he fell on his face, and I stamped on his head.
12. And the crowd began to shout, and my protectors began to sing psalms. And I approached the gladiator-master and received the branch.
13. And he kissed me and said to me: “Daughter, peace be with you.” And I began to go with glory toward the Sanavivarian gate.⁵
14. And I woke up. And I understood that I was not going to fight against wild beasts, but against the devil; but I knew that victory would be mine.
15. I have told the story all the way up to the day before the games; but if anyone wants to write down the act of the games themselves, let him do so.

XI.

1. And blessed Saturus also recounted a vision of his own, which he wrote down himself.
2. He says: We had suffered and had passed out of the flesh, and we began to be carried east by four angels, whose hands did not touch us.
3. But we were not traveling turned over on our backs, but as if we were ascending a gentle slope.
4. And having passed the first world,⁶ we saw a great light, and I said to Perpetua – for she was at my side: “This is what the Lord promised us: we have received the promise.”
5. And while we were carried by those four angels, a wide space was made for us, which was like a pleasure-garden with rose-trees and every kind of flower.
6. The trees were as tall as cypresses, and their leaves were singing unceasingly.
7. There in the pleasure-garden were another four angels brighter than all the others; they honored us when they saw us and said to the other angels: “Behold, here they are, behold, here they are,” with admiration. And the four angels who were carrying us, becoming awestruck, put us down.
8. And we traveled some distance by foot on a wide road.

⁴ Athletes in a typical Greek wrestling competition would typically rub their skin with oil and then powder themselves with dust.

⁵ The name of this gate literally means “of those who are healthily living;” gladiators entered the arena through it and only those who survived the competition would return through it.

⁶ This is a cosmological reference. The Christians have passed the border between their world and the atmosphere of ether, the fiery sphere which was thought to surround the earth and to be the dwelling place of celestial beings.

9. There we found Iocundus and Saturninus and Artaxius, who were burned alive in the same persecution, and Quintus, who had also died as a martyr in prison. And we were asking them where all the others were.

10. The angels said to us: “First come, enter, and greet the Lord.”

XII.

1. And we approached a place whose walls were like they were made of light (cf. Rev. 21:18); and in front of the door of that place stood four angels, who dressed the ones who were entering with white stoles.

2. And we entered and heard voices saying in unison: “Holy, holy, holy,” unceasingly (cf. Is. 6:3; Rev. 4:8).⁷

3. And in the same place we saw someone sitting like a white-haired man, whose hair was like snow and whose face was young, but whose feet we did not see.

4. And on his right and on his left were four elders, and behind them many other elders were standing (cf. Rev. 4:4, etc.).

5. And entering with wonder we stopped before the throne, and the four angels lifted us up, and we kissed that man, and with his hand he pulled us to his face.

6. And the other elders said to us: “Let us stand;” and we stood and exchanged peace. And the elders said to us: “Go and play.”

7. And I said to Perpetua: “You have what you want.” And she said to me: “Thanks be to God, that, as happy as I was in the flesh, I am even happier here and now.”

XIII.

1. And we went out and we saw in front of the gates Optatus the bishop on the right and Aspasius the priest and teacher on the left, divided and sad.

2. And they threw themselves at our feet and said: “Make peace between us, because you have gone and you have left us thus.”

3. And we said to them: “Are you not our pope,⁸ and you a priest? [How is it] that you should throw yourselves at our feet?” And we were moved and embraced them.

4. And Perpetua began to speak with them in Greek, and we drew them apart into the pleasure-garden beneath a rose tree.

5. And while we were speaking with them, the angels said to our clergy: “Allow them to rest; and if you have any disagreements among you, forgive each other.”

6. And the angels reproached them, saying to Optatus: “Correct your people, for they have assembled in your presence as if they were coming back from the racetrack and arguing about the teams.”

7. And it seemed to us as though they wished to close the gates.

8. And we began to recognize many brethren there, and also martyrs. And we were all nourished by an indescribable smell, which was satisfying to us. Then, rejoicing, I woke up.

XIV.

1. These are the extraordinary visions of the most blessed martyrs Saturus and Perpetua, which they themselves wrote down.

2. But God called forth Secundulus by means of an earlier passage from the world while he was still in prison, not without grace, so that he might evade the wild beasts.

3. Nevertheless, even if his soul did not know the sword, certainly his flesh did.

XV.

⁷ The Latin text preserves the Greek words for “holy, holy, holy.”

⁸ The term “pope” was a respectful term for a bishop which, at the time of this text’s composition, was not yet reserved to the bishop of Rome.

1. But as for Felicity, the grace of the Lord also touched her in the same way.
2. Since she had already been carrying a child for eight months – for she was arrested while pregnant – when the day of the games approached she was in great mourning, for fear that because of her pregnancy her death would be delayed (for it is not lawful that pregnant women be presented for punishment) and for fear that she would pour out her holy and innocent blood later, among criminal strangers.
3. And her fellow martyrs were also greatly saddened, for fear that they might leave such a good friend behind, as a lone companion on the road of their same hope.
4. Therefore, groaning together in unison, they poured forth a prayer to the Lord before the third day of the games.
5. Immediately after their prayer the labor pains fell upon her. And since she was in pain, suffering on account of the natural difficulty in a delivery in the eighth month, one of the prison attendants said to her: “If you suffer like this now, what protests will you make against the wild beasts, which you scorned when you refused to make sacrifice?”
6. But she answered: “Now I suffer what I suffer; there, however, another one will be in me who will suffer for me, because I too will have suffered for him.”
7. Thus she gave birth to a girl, whom a certain sister raised for her as a daughter.

XVI.

1. Therefore, because the Holy Spirit allowed it and, by allowing it, willed that the course of those games be written down, though we are unworthy to add to the description of such glory, nevertheless we fulfill the request, or rather the command, of the most holy Perpetua, by adding the following testimony to her perseverance and nobility of soul.
2. Since the tribune had punished them more severely, because he feared from the warnings of foolish men that they might be freed from prison by means of some kind of magic incantation, Perpetua retorted to his face:
3. “Why do you not allow us at least to refresh ourselves, since we are most noble prisoners, namely Caesar’s, and since we are going to fight on his birthday? Or is it not to your advantage for us to be brought forward fattened for him?”
4. The tribune shuddered and blushed, and so ordered them to be treated more humanely. As a result, her brothers and all the others had the permission to enter and comfort one another, since by now even the warden himself was a believer.

XVII

1. On the day before, as well, while they were eating that last meal which they call “free” (but inasmuch as it was among themselves it was not a “free meal” but their “agape meal”), with the same perseverance they threw these words at the crowd, threatening them with the judgment of God, attesting to the happiness of their suffering, mocking the curiosity of those who were gathering. As Saturnus said:
2. “Isn’t tomorrow enough for you? Why do you freely view what you hate? Today friends, tomorrow enemies. Still, take a good look at our faces, so that you may recognize us on that day.”
3. So they all left from there, stunned, and out of their number many believed.

XVIII.

1. The day of their victory dawned, and they processed from the prison into the amphitheater, as if into heaven, joyful, noble in appearance; if they trembled, it was perhaps from joy, not from fear.
2. Perpetua followed with a shining face and a calm step, as spouse of Christ, as the delight of God, staring down the gaze of all with the force of her eyes.
3. Felicity, too, rejoicing that she had safely given birth so that she might contend with the wild beasts, from blood to blood, from midwife to net-gadiator, about to be bathed after her childbirth by a second baptism.

4. And when they had been lead into the gate, they were forced to put on a garment, the men like the priests of Saturn, but the women like the priestesses of Ceres; but Perpetua, that noble woman, stubbornly resisted up until the end.
5. For she said: "If we have come to this point by our own choice, it was not to have our liberty thwarted! If we have handed over our lives, it was not to do something like this! What about the agreement we made with you?"
6. Injustice acknowledged justice: the tribune conceded that they would be led in just as they were.
7. Perpetua sang psalms, already stepping on the head of the Egyptian; Revocatus and Saturninus and Satorus made threatening gestures to the crowd of spectators.
8. Then, as they were passing under the gaze of Hilarianus, with gestures and nods they began to say to Hilarianus: "You judge us," they said, "but God judges you."
9. The mob, provoked at this, demanded that they be goaded with the whips wielded by the handlers; and so they gave thanks that they would imitate something of the Lord's own Passion.

XIX.

1. But he who had said: "*Ask and you shall receive*" (John 16:24), gave to the askers the end which each had desired.
2. For, whenever they had discussed among themselves their wishes for their own martyrdom, Saturninus certainly confessed openly that he preferred to be thrown to all the wild beasts, evidently so that he might wear a more glorious crown.
3. And so he and Revocatus, having been subjected to a leopard at the beginning of the games, were also attacked on the platform by a bear.
4. Satorus, however, abhorred nothing more than a bear; but had long believed that he would be finished off by one bite of a leopard.
5. And so when he was subjected to a wild boar, Satorus was merely dragged around; whereas the hunter who had caught the boar, having been gored by the same beast, perished after the day of the games.
6. And when he had been bound on a bridge for a bear, the bear did not want to come out of its cage. Therefore Satorus was called back again, unhurt.

XX.

1. However, as for the young women, the devil prepared a most ferocious cow – and for that reason beyond normal practice – matching their sex even where the beasts were concerned.
2. And so they were led forth stripped and dressed in nets. The crowd was horrified, gazing upon one girl so delicate, the other one fresh from childbirth with her breasts still dripping.
3. So they were called back and dressed in loose garments. First, Perpetua was struck and fell on her backside.
4. And where she sat, she pulled back the garment torn from her side as a covering for her thigh, mindful more of modesty than of pain.
5. Then, having asked for a pin, she also clasped back her disheveled hair; for it was not fitting for a martyr to suffer with her hair undone, lest in the midst of her glory she seem to lament.
6. So she stood up, and when she saw that Felicity had been broken, she came and extended a hand to her and raised her up.
7. And both of them stood as equals. And the brutality of the mob having been defeated, they were called back into the Sanavivarian gate.
8. There Perpetua, having been held up and as if awoken from sleep by a certain then-catechumen by the name of Rusticus, who was keeping close to her – to this point she had been in the spirit and in a trance – begins to look around, and she says to all the astonished people: "When," she says, "will we be led forth to whatever kind of cow that is?"
9. And when she heard that it had already happened, at first she did not believe it until she had recognized the marks of the attack on her body and clothing.

10. After that, she spoke to her brother who had been summoned, and to the catechumen, saying: “Stand firm in faith and love one another, and do not be scandalized by our suffering” (cf. 1 Cor 16:13; John 15:12,17; Matt 26:31,33).

XXI.

1. Meanwhile in another gate, Saturus was encouraging the soldier Pudens saying: “In summary,” he says, “certainly, just as I expected and predicted, I have not been affected by any beast up till now. And now you should believe with your whole heart: behold I go forth to there, and I will be finished by one bite of a leopard.”

2. And immediately at the end of the spectacle, as a leopard was let loose, he shed so much blood from one bite, that as he returned, the crowd acclaimed the testimony of his second baptism: “Well washed, well washed!”

3. And plainly he had been saved who had been washed in this way.

4. Then he says to the soldier Pudens: “Goodbye,” he says, “and remember the faith and me; and let these things not trouble you, but strengthen you.”

5. And at the same time he asked for a small ring from the other’s finger, and he returned it to him as an inheritance having been dipped in his wound.

6. Then, already unconscious, he was laid out for the throat-cutting in the usual place, along with the others.

7. And the mob demanded that they be put in the center, in order that when the sword pierced the bodies their eyes might join it as accomplices in the slaughter. But the martyrs stood up by themselves and moved wherever the mob wished, having already kissed each other beforehand, so that they might consummate their martyrdom by a solemn rite of peace.

8. The others who were immobile also received the sword in silence: even more so Saturus, who had ascended first, had given up his spirit first; for he was already supporting Perpetua.

9. However Perpetua, so that she might taste something of pain, having already been pierced between her bones cried out, and she herself drew the unsteady hand of a young gladiator into her throat.

10. Perhaps a woman so strong that she was feared by the unclean spirit could not have been killed otherwise, had she herself not willed it.

11. O most strong and blessed martyrs! O truly called and chosen for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ! Whoever magnifies and honors and adores such glory, by all means should also read these examples for the building up of the Church, which are not less than the old ones. In this way new virtues may also bear witness that one and always the same Holy Spirit is working even up till now, and almighty God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom is splendor and immense power unto the ages of ages. Amen. (cf. Rev. 5:13, 7:12)

Reading Guide Questions for The Martyrdom of Perpetua

1. *According to the narrator of The Martyrdom of Perpetua, what is the purpose of stories like this one (§1)?*
2. *As the story unfolds, what do we learn about Perpetua? Felicitas? Why had they been arrested?*
3. *Explain the significance of Perpetua's vision about the bronze ladder (§4).*
4. *Explain the significance of Perpetua's two visions concerning Dinocrates (§7-8).*
5. *'What is the significance of Perpetua's vision the day before the battle in the arena, the one in which she becomes a man (§10)?*

6. *What is the significance of Saturus' vision concerning the time after their suffering had ended @11-13)?*
7. *On the day before the games were to begin, the soon-to-be martyrs gather for a meal (§17). What can you conclude about the meaning or significance of this meal?*
8. *As you read the details of the death of these catechumens (§16-21), what can you conclude about the narrator's understanding of the meaning or significance of martyrdom?*