

Library Support

North African Agony: 203, A. D.

By Rev. Benedict Binnema

On this earth, there can be no glory that is not bought with pain: no honor without its cross. I write this week that St. Augustine and the glowing glory of the Church in North Africa, but that glory did not come until the Church had passed through the blood-bath of persecution. In North Africa, too, an emperor, the Emperor Diocletian, was the cause of the most remarkable witness to the Faith.

Best known of the North African Martyrs are the five women, St. Perpetua and St. Felicitas, who were executed last Wednesday. They were only two of many who have blood-witness to Jesus Christ in North Africa, but we know most about these two because the record of their trial is complete, and has come down to us quite intact.

Perpetua was a noble free-woman; Felicitas was a slave; both of them from Carthage. They were taking instruction in the Christian religion. A new edict of the Emperor Diocletian Severus made it a crime for the imperial subjects to become Christians. Perpetua and Felicitas were arrested. Perpetua, with an unweaned child in her arms; Felicitas, with an unweaned child in her arms. They were cast into a dark, dank prison with several other catechumens (i.e., people under instruction). Before they were committed to prison, however, they were interrogated.

At the trial Perpetua's aged father begged her to recant, and not to drag his name into disrepute. One time he even brought her back to his home to break down her resistance. There's this little scene in the minutes of the trial:

PROCONSUL: "Spare the gray hairs of your father; spare your little infant; Perpetua, the sacred rite for the welfare of the Emperor."

PERPETUA: "I will not do it."

PROCONSUL: "Are you a Christian?"

PERPETUA: "I am."

Condemned to die, they were restricted to prison to await their execution. As the Roman law forbade pregnant women to be put to death, Perpetua begged her companions that she might be delivered of her child, for it was the eighth month with her, and she did not wish to be left behind by her companions. In answer to her prayer, the baby was delivered prematurely. During the morning of her birth-pangs, the jailer said to her, perhaps half in jest: "If this is the way it is now, what will you do when you are thrown to the wild beasts?" Her answer was one of those rare golden sayings which make the Acts of the Martyrs so fascinating—and she only a recent convert: "This pain I'm suffering now, it is I who suffer it; but then another shall suffer in me for whom I shall suffer."

They were put to death in public spectacles, gored by a wild cow in the imperial games, March 7, 303.

In his "Mint by Night," Fr. Alfred Burnett, S.J., has enshrined their martyrdom as graciously in verse that I beg leave to quote his poem here, through the courtesy of the America Press.

TWO CARTHAGINIAN GIRLS

Walking at night-fall where the pink
And red hibiscus trimly furled,
I watch two petals blow to the great,
Two crimson stains to make me think
Upon those Carthaginian girls,
Perpetua, Felicitas,
Whose very names our minds still
In perpetual felicity.

Blurred centuries dissolve. I see
A martyr walking to her crown,
Pale as her ungraced gown,
The tall, serene, petal-like
Perpetua . . . Felicitas.
Of humbler origin, a slave,
Nurses her dungeon-born with tears,
Her hair of two brief days. Some man
Derides her (travail pain and sneers,
"How against the beasts will you be brave?")
To whose the martyr makes reply,
"I suffer now, but when I die
Christ suffers in me then, not I."
They walk unseeing side by side,
When over the arena sands
Races a swiny, snarling tide,
A surf of lions circling round,
Lions that tringe and paw the ground—
For suddenly no spear can pierce
Them on to where Perpetua stands
Like a light-house shining out to God
With the white beams of extended hands,
Careless of death, its when and how,
Perpetua, Felicitas,
The mistress and the serving lass,
Enrich one another's necks,
Embracing, till a pained cry
Is loosed to match and mock their sex.
Perpetua is tossed. She falls
Piteously. The heifer snarls
With violating horns. But she
Arises, mangled, smooths her dress
And drapes that river-tink, low
Mindful of pain that modesty
Then gathering her streaming hair
In the pathos of her womanly pride,
Begs for some clasp. With skill and care
Both arms sweep in sweet curves
To her head, that, though her robes be torn
His eyes whom she dying serves
May deem her vain as any bride,
And not as one who seems to mourn . . .
Two Carthaginian girls, they kneel,
Perpetua, Felicitas,
Upon their lifted throats to feel
The sacrificial coup-de-grace,
The stroke of consecrating steel.

So far away and long ago
These girls were born and loved and died,
If daily sets my heart aglow
To see—like petals side by side—
Perpetua, Felicitas,
Pressed in the Casse of the Mass!

STRANGE BUT TRUE



EDITORIALS

(Continued from Page 10)

THE TEMPTER CAME

Temptation appeals to our free will, and has power to force it. The devil must call on his appeal, otherwise he can never have power over us. Filled with guile, still retaining something of that high intelligence that was his as an angel, he is limited in his planning by man's free will and divine grace, he is limited in his knowledge whenever God sees fit to hide from him.

The tempter saw one fasting in the desert, and he might be determined to find out if possible. Forty days and forty nights had gone by, had brought hunger to the faster. The tempter showed his hand at once, put the question directly: "If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." The devil suspected the promised Saviour was before him, but did not know: an miracle would convince him. A swift trip away from the desert even to Jerusalem, to the top of the Temple, sets the stage for a second test, now that the first has been so thoroughly rejected: "If thou be the Son of God, throw Thyself down." A new rejection, a new denial of the miraculous guarantee the devil desired of the identity of the faster. Then the lying promise of power over all the world, of riches without end, as the clumsy final futile attempt to win the faster to abandon God and worship him. The diabolical of tempter and temptations is the peremptory command: "Worship Satan—the Lord Thy God shalt thou worship and Him only shalt thou serve!"

Satan can have no power over Christ. He can have no power over the children of Christ, save that which they give him. As he tempted the Master in ignorance, in curiosity, in pride, so he tempts us. May we be eager to use our knowledge of Christ, our love of Christ, our surpassing power to overcome that man on the grace of Christ! Then the devil will leave us and God's angels shall minister unto us.

'Quiz' Corner

Should the confessional keep one from becoming a Catholic if they believe in all the other doctrines?

If one believes that the Catholic Church is the Church established by Christ he must believe that the Church is infallible in matters of faith and morals. Believing this he will be willing to accept the teaching of the Church in the matter of the Sacrament of Penance as the Divinely appointed way to obtain pardon of sin. When one acknowledges the divine character of the Church one must logically submit to her teachings in all things pertaining to faith and morals. To confess one's sins to a priest is hard to human nature, Catholic human nature as well as any other. But, properly explained, the obligation of confession is easily understood. There is no mystery, it is evident from the words of Christ and satisfies every human instinct.

Is it necessary for others besides the head of the family to contribute to the support of the Church? Every man and woman married or unmarried, rich or poor, who has an income should devote some of it to the support of religion. The Jews of old gave the first one-tenth of all their incomes to the support of religion. The Christian could hardly feel that he would be justified in doing less for his religion, which is the substance, than the Jew did for his, which was the shadow.

Success Or Failure

One of the commonest mistakes and one of the costliest is thinking that success is due to some genius, some magic something or other which we do not possess. Success is generally due to holding on, and failure to letting go. You decide to learn a language, study music, take a course of reading, train yourself physically. Will it be success or failure? It depends upon how much pluck and perseverance that word "decide" contains. The decision that nothing can ever take the grip that nothing can detach, will bring success.

I made a general confession and, though I made a careful preparation, I forgot some sins. What shall I do?

There are two kinds of general confession, one made voluntarily, from a sense of devotion and humility, and the other made of necessity, because former confessions were unworthy. If your general confession was of the first kind, nothing need be done. If it was of the second kind, the forgotten sins must be mentioned in the next confession.

Display In War Times

By Rev. James M. Gilh, C.S.P.

Every day we read reports that our food ration is being distributed in a fairer and more equitable manner. We are told that the rationing system is being improved, that the rationing system is being improved, that the rationing system is being improved. We are told that the rationing system is being improved, that the rationing system is being improved, that the rationing system is being improved.

As a result of all these reports of rationing, I cannot participate in a rationing system. I cannot participate in a rationing system. I cannot participate in a rationing system.

In a whole nation under the shadow of the bomb, the rationing system is being improved. The rationing system is being improved, that the rationing system is being improved, that the rationing system is being improved.

My own reaction when I read the rationing system is being improved. The rationing system is being improved, that the rationing system is being improved, that the rationing system is being improved.

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FIVE and TEN Years Ago

From Mar. 5, 1938, Edition
His Beatitude Archbishop Thomas F. Murphy was inaugurated as the Pastor of St. Thomas Parish, a series of Lenten Lectures entitled "The Catholic Religion" at Columbus Civic Center.

From Mar. 14, 1938, Edition
That it was long time that the world was plunged into gloom and darkness, that the world was plunged into gloom and darkness, that the world was plunged into gloom and darkness, that the world was plunged into gloom and darkness.