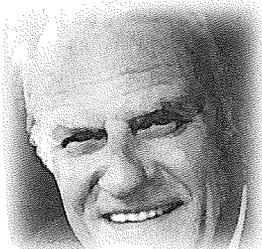




# HEROES OF THE FAITH



Gene Fedele

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Newberry, Florida 32669 USA

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*Heroes of the Faith*

by Gene Fedele

Design: Gene Fedele

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- 51** **Columba (521-597):** *Columba set the foundation for the greatest achievement of the Irish Church and its monks in the sixth and seventh centuries, the Christianization of North Britain.*
- 53** **Isidore of Seville (560-636):** *Isidore was undoubtedly the most learned man of his age and exercised a far-reaching and immeasurable influence on the educational life and spiritual growth of God’s people in the Middle Ages.*
- 55** **Venerable Bede (672-735):** *Bede became known as the greatest scholar of Saxon England. His ‘Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation’ is the primary source of information on early English history. He also introduced the Christian chronology (B.C. - before Christ, and A.D. - anno Domini) to Europe.*



- 58** **Charlemagne (742-814):** *“By the sword and the cross,” he became master of Western Europe. Through his enlightened leadership the roots of learning and order were restored to Medieval Europe.*
- 63** **Cyril (827-869) and Methodius (826-885):** *Today Cyril and Methodius are honored by Eastern and Western Christians alike, and the importance of their work in preaching and worshipping in the language of the people is recognized on all sides.*
- 65** **King Alfred (849-901)** *was a man who did more than any other to fight against the spiritual decay within the English church as well as against the Viking invaders. He established the English royalty, created the first English navy, authored English literature and ensured the survival of Christianity in England.*
- 69** **King Wenceslaus (907-935):** *The 19th-century Christmas hymn, “Good King Wenceslaus” is an allegorical depiction of the real-life 10th century King of Bohemia who was martyred as a lover of Christ and a provider for the poor and needy.*
- 71** **Olga (890-969) and Vladimir (956-1015)** *were called by the Lord to powerfully lead the Rus (Russian) nation from pagan ritualism to embrace the great religion of Jesus Christ.*
- 73** **Anselm of Aosta (1033-1109):** *Anselm’s lot was cast in troublous times, but he fought against evil in cloister and in court, against corrupt monks, and against the worst king who ever wore the crown of England. He conquered them all because he triumphed through the grace of Christ.*
- 77** **Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153):** *In 1115 A.D. Bernard founded the monastery at Clairvaux. He and the monastery became a major center of spiritual and political influence.*
- 81** **Peter Waldo (1140-1217):** *In one sense, he was a protestant more than 200 years before John Huss. His followers, the Waldenses, began a reformation to which the latter Reformation of the 16th century would strikingly resemble.*
- 85** **Clare of Assisi (1194-1253):** *From her earliest years Clare seemed to have been endowed with the rarest virtues. As a child she was most devoted to prayer and to practices of mortification and devotion, and as she became a young girl her distaste for the world and her yearning for a deeper spiritual life increased.*
- 87** **Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274):** *Thomas Aquinas’ extensive theological writings, along with his simple yet profound style of presenting the gospel makes him one of the most frequently quoted fathers of the Church.*
- 89** **John Wycliffe (1324-1384):** *Church officials feared to see the Bible in the hands of “commoners”, but John Wycliffe believed the Word of God should be open to all people. His translation of the Scriptures from Latin to English was a milestone in biblical enlightenment and Church growth.*
- 93** **John Huss (1369-1415):** *In the remarkable providence of God, the work of John Wycliffe made its way from England to Bohemia and into the mind and heart of John Huss. This humble priest would stand against the formidable forces of the corrupt clergy and become an undaunted pioneer of Reformation in the 16th-century.*
- 97** **Johann Gutenberg (1400-1468)** *loved to read, but became impatient with the time-consuming process of book-making. His genius, faith, and passion for the spread of the Gospel propelled the events that introduced movable type and the first printing press to the world.*
- 101** **Savonarola (1452-1498)** *is considered by ecclesiastical historians as one of the four pre-reformers, along with Waldo, Wycliffe and Huss. Instead of fighting doctrinal errors, Savonarola focused on the practical implications of religion.*
- 103** **Albert Durer (1471-1528)** *is undoubtedly the greatest German artist of the Renaissance, but he is most well-known for his faith in Christ and his resolve to see his Savior honored and proclaimed through his life and his work.*
- 107** **Martin Luther (1483-1546):** *The world has rarely witnessed character and resolve as remarkable as that of Martin Luther. He was created by God to light the torch of the greatest revolution in the history of Christendom.*
- 112** **Hugh Latimer (1485-1555):** *“No one of the Reformers probably sowed the seeds of sound Protestant doctrine and preaching so widely and effectually among the middle and lower classes as Latimer, and no one was so well fitted to do it.”—J. C. Ryle*



- 117 John Knox (1505-1572):** John Knox has become recognized as the most prominent figure of the Scottish Reformation. One of Knox's greatest accomplishments was through his writings, in particular his "History of the Reformation."
- 120 John Calvin (1509-1564):** Among the great theologians to expound the doctrines of the Christian faith was John Calvin. He defended them against centuries of human error, and was the foremost thinker in Biblical learning, as well as in literary power.
- 126 Anne Askew (1520-1546)** was martyred for her faithfulness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Her fine example of resolute faith and gentle piety gave courage to an entire generation of English Christians.
- 131 Joan Mathurin (1539-1560):** This brave, young Vaudois woman chose to stand up against tyranny and die at the stake next to her loving husband, rather than deny her faith in Jesus alone for salvation.
- 135 Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661)** was a non-conformist Presbyterian who would not be silenced by the designs of godless men. He preached with vigor, repentance and faith in Christ alone, and a nation moved to deeper piety and holy living.
- 139 Richard Baxter (1615-1691):** The "holy Baxter" is renowned for his preaching, teaching, pastoral care and shepherding, as well as his renowned classic writings. In a stormy and divided age he helped point the way to "The eternal."
- 143 John Owen (1616-1683):** You will find in Owen the learning of Lightfoot, the strength of Charnock, the analysis of Howe, the savor of Leighton, the glow of Baxter, the copiousness of Barrow, and the splendor of Bates.
- 145 John Bunyan (1628-1688)** had the remarkable ability and biblical insight to view the Christian life in allegorical forms. Even his classic and immortal "Pilgrim's Progress" draws from experiences in his own life.
- 150 Isaac Newton (1642-1727)** is generally regarded as the most original and influential discoverer of scientific principles and laws under creation. His understanding of light and color led to the invention of his telescope. This great man of God also discovered the law of gravity, calculus, and the three laws of motion.
- 155 Isaac Watts (1674-1748):** The poetic gifts of the "father of English hymnody" was evident at the tender age of seven. He wrote more than 700 hymns in his lifetime, many that are regularly sung in services of Christian worship today.
- 159 John Brown (1676-1714):** Rather than compromise their principles of civil and religious freedom the Scottish Covenanters, or "Martyr Warriors" were dragged from their homes and places of worship by the king's soldiers to face execution.
- 161 Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758):** Over two centuries after Edwards' death, the great British preacher, Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, said of him; "No man is more relevant to the present condition (revival) of Christianity than Jonathan Edwards."
- 165 John Wesley (1703-1791):** The Methodist revival cut across denominational lines and touched every class of society. England itself was transformed in the process. In 1928 Archbishop Davidson wrote that "Wesley practically changed the outlook and even the character of the English nation."
- 169 George Whitefield (1714-1770)** was the most travelled preacher and one of the greatest evangelists of the 18th century. His diligence and sacrifice helped turn two nations back to God.
- 175 David Brainerd (1718-1747)** lived only 29 years, but inspired many to follow Christ through his tireless missionary work in New England. His example of piety encouraged many into the mission field, such as William Carey and Henry Martyn.
- 179 John Newton (1725-1807):** This former slave-trader became one of England's most prominent preachers. Today, John Newton is renowned for his inspiring hymn "Amazing Grace," which is probably the best known hymn ever written.
- 183 Richard Allen (1760-1831)** was the pivotal leader and founder of the American Methodist Episcopal Church. He was born as a slave in 1760, bought his freedom, gave his life to Christ, and is now recognized as one of the great Christian leaders in American history.
- 185 Adoniram Judson (1788-1850) and Ann Judson (1789-1826):** In 1812, Adoniram and Ann Judson set sail for India. These first American missionaries to evangelize Burma and translated the Scriptures into the Burmese language.



- 189 Horatius Bonar (1808-1889):** *A man of prose and poetry, Horatius Bonar was also a man of sorrow. Five of his children and his wife died during his lifetime. His deep faith and preaching of the Scriptures led many to saving faith in Christ.*
- 193 Samuel Crowther (1809-1891):** *Once a victim of Muslim slave-traders, Crowther became free—not only in body, but in receiving the Holy Spirit—that he might become the first to minister the blessed truths of Jesus Christ to his native Africans.*
- 197 Charles Dickens (1812-1870)** *frequently told his children about his precious Savior, Jesus Christ, making mention of Him in his letters to them. His most personal profession of faith was beautifully, and humbly expressed in his “Life of Our Lord.”*
- 199 Robert Murray M’Cheyne (1813-1843):** *“Among Christian men, a ‘living epistle,’ and among Christian ministers, an ‘able evangelist,’ is rare indeed. Mr. M’Cheyne was both. And without presumption, I say he was a ‘disciple whom Jesus loved,’” says his friend and fellow minister, James Hamilton.*
- 203 J. C. Ryle (1817-1900)** *is known as one of the most practical writers of Christian truth. Though dead he still speaks with poignant accuracy to the heart and mind of any who dare to read his books. The reader cannot help but be affected by Mr. Ryle’s candid, yet urgent appeal to holy living.*
- 205 Elizabeth Prentiss (1818-1878):** *Bearing her cross in this world with sweet resignation to the Lord, Elizabeth Prentiss has blessed and encouraged the hearts of thousands through her precious, Christ-centered writings.*
- 209 “Fanny” Crosby (1820-1915):** *A stack of twenty hymnals together could hardly contain the number of Christian hymns written by Fanny Crosby wrote in her lifetime! Though many have been forgotten today, a large number still remain favorites of Christians all over the world.*
- 211 Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892):** *The “Prince of Preachers,” was also a gifted teacher, counselor, author, and philanthropist. More than any other individual of his time, he revived a sybaritic English society into God-fearing, Christ-serving people.*
- 217 Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899)** *traveled in Europe and America, holding revival campaigns, and personally speaking with over 750,000 individuals. He preached to more than 100,000,000 people, and saw over 1,000,000 converted to Jesus Christ.*
- 221 J. R. Miller (1840-1912)** *wrote more than seventy books, edited more than a dozen Christian periodicals, and pastored in a number of congregations. His ministry reached the hearts of hundreds of thousands and continues to reach millions more.*
- 226 Amy Carmichael (1861-1951):** *Obedience, love, and selflessness were the marks of Amy Carmichael’s life. Even after a tragic accident left her confined to the Dohnavur Fellowship compound, Amy blossomed as a Christian woman and writer.*
- 231 Karl Barth (1886-1945)** *is considered by some to be the greatest Protestant theologian of the 20th century and possibly the greatest since the Reformation. More than any other, Barth inspired and led the renaissance of theology that took place from about 1920 to 1950.*
- 233 C. S. Lewis (1898-1963)** *published 52 books, 153 essays, and a great many prefaces, letters, and book reviews. To this day, he remains one of the world’s most popular Christian authors, with more than 1.5 million copies of his works sold each year.*
- 237 D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981):** *Young and old, rich and poor, men and women, bright and dull, all seemed to come to hear the message of Jesus Christ put forth with a power and authority not often matched, by Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones.*
- 239 Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945)** *was one of the few German Church leaders who stood up against Hitler in courageous opposition to his inhumane practices and anti-Christian beliefs.*
- 241 Billy Graham (1915-present):** *Renowned evangelist and Baptist clergyman Billy Graham has been touching audiences around the world for over 50 years. A master of modern media, Graham has preached the Christian gospel through radio, television, film, and the printed word.*
- 243 Joni Eareckson Tada (1950-present):** *The name “Joni” is recognized around the world. Overcoming the suffering and challenges of her paralysis Joni Eareckson Tada has ministered to the hearts of millions of people over the past thirty-five years.*



# Ignatius 30-117

## *Divine Lamp of the Early Church*

*It has been aptly recorded that the first century following the Resurrection of Christ was one of great tribulation for the people who embraced Him as God and Savior. The pleasure-seeking dictatorial Roman Emperor Nero began the persecution in A.D. 64 when he blamed the great fire that destroyed half of Rome on the Christians. The Apostles Peter and Paul, among thousands of other Christians, perished in the ensuing persecution. A few decades later, Emperor Trajan sought to perfect the universality of his dominion with one religion. He decreed, therefore, that the Christians should unite with their pagan neighbors in the worship of the gods. What followed in the courageous life of Ignatius of Antioch was instrumental in strengthening the first generation of Christians to persevere and gain victory in their faith, even in the face of death.*



At the time Trajan had succeeded to the throne of the Roman Empire, Ignatius, the disciple of John the Apostle, a man in all respects of an apostolic character, governed the Church of the Antiochians with great care. All the sterling qualities of the ideal pastor and a true soldier of Christ were possessed by the Bishop of Antioch in a preeminent degree. When the storms of persecution from the Roman Emperor poured down upon the Christians of Syria, they found their faithful leader prepared and watchful. Though Ignatius had formerly escaped the fury of Emperor Domitian, he resisted not the proclamation of Trajan, who condemned him to the wrath of fierce lions in the arena.

It was the one great wish of the chivalrous soul of Ignatius that he might receive the fullness of Christian discipleship through martyrdom. For he inwardly reflected that the confession that is made by martyrdom would bring him into a yet more intimate relationship with the Lord. After continuing a few years longer with the Church, and, like a divine lamp, enlightening everyone's understanding by his expositions of the Scriptures, he was finally called to die for Christ.

During his interrogation, Trajan asked, "Dost thou then carry within thee Him that was crucified by Pontius Pilate?" Ignatius replied, "Truly so; for it is written, 'I will dwell in them, and walk in them.'" Then Trajan pronounced his sentence, "We command that Ignatius, who affirms that he carries about within him 'Him that was crucified,' be bound by soldiers, and carried to Rome, and there be devoured by the beasts for the gratification of the people." When the holy martyr heard this sentence, he cried out with joy, "I thank thee, O Lord, that Thou hast vouchsafed to honor me with a perfect love towards Thee, and hast made me to be bound with iron chains (which he referred to as "spiritual pearls"), like Thy Apostle Paul."

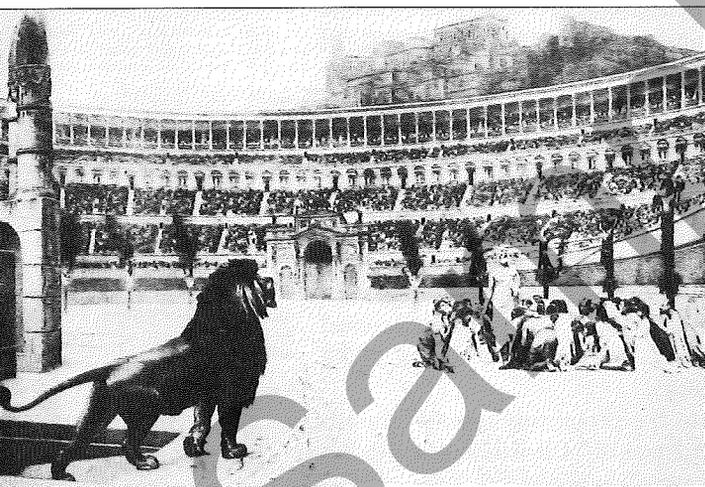
*Ignatius Theophorus was appointed by the Apostle Peter to succeed Eusebius as bishop of Antioch. He was the first to speak of the Church as "catholic," meaning "universal." Antioch is also noted as the place where the followers of Christ were first called Christians.*

*More than one of the early church writers identifies Ignatius as the young child whom the Savior called to himself and set in the midst of the apostles as described in Mark 9:36.*

After having spoken thus, he clasped the chains about him with delight and prayed for the Church, commending it with tears to the Lord. The cruel soldiers then savagely carried him away to Rome, to furnish food to the bloodthirsty beasts.

As he was being led into the amphitheater he was met by many of his brethren who sought to secure his release. But he entreated them to not “envy his hastening to the Lord.” We have Ignatius’s own words, given in a letter that he wrote to his dear friend Polycarp of Smyrna while on his death march, “...nearness to the sword is nearness to God; to be among the wild beasts is to be in the arms of God; only let it be in the name of Jesus Christ. I endure all things that I may suffer together with Him, since He who became a perfect man strengthens me.”

The character of Ignatius, as revealed from his own writings and also those of his contemporaries, is that of a true athlete of Christ. The honor of Christian, bishop, and martyr was



**The Colosseum of Rome was the sight of hundreds of first century martyrdoms.**

well merited by this energetic soldier of the faith. An enthusiastic devotion to duty, a passionate love of sacrifice, and an utter fearlessness in the defense of Christian truth were his chief characteristics. Zeal for the spiritual well-being of those under his charge breathes from every line of his writings. He was ever vigilant lest his fellow saints be infected by the rampant heresies of those early days. And he prayed continually for them that

their faith and courage would not grow weak in the hour of persecution and death. In every sense, Ignatius was a pure pastor of souls—the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep.

**Key Writings of Ignatius:** 1. *Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians*; 2. *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians*; 3. *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Trallians*; 4. *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Romans*; 5. *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Philadelphians*; 6. *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans*; 7. *The Epistle of Ignatius to Polycarp*; 8. *The Third Epistle of the Same St. Ignatius*; 9. *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Tarsians*; 10. *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Antiochians*; 11. *The Epistle of Ignatius to Hero, a Deacon of Antioch*; 12. *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Philippians*; 13. *The Epistle of Ignatius to Mary at Neapolis, Near Zarbus*; 14. *The Epistle of Ignatius to St. John the Apostle*; 15. *A Second Epistle of Ignatius to St. John*.

**Worth Reading:** *Vindiciae Ignatianae* (1846); *Corpus Ignatianum* (1849); *Apostolic Fathers*, by Bishop Lightfoot (1907); *Early Church: From Ignatius to Augustine*, by George Hodges (1915).

# Polycarp 69-155

## “Angel” of Christian Truth

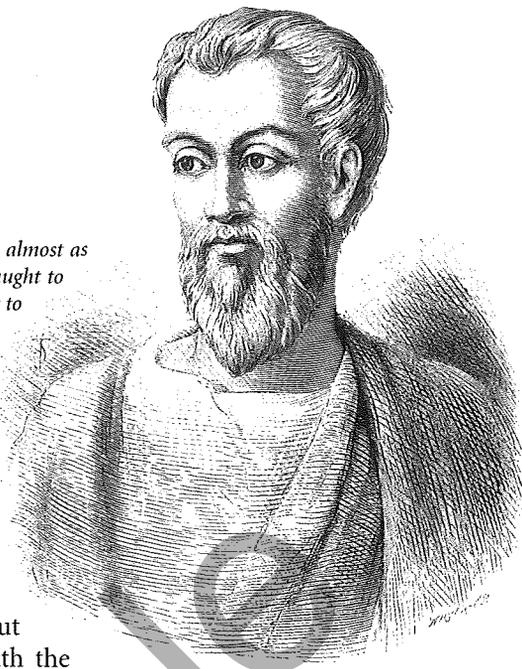
*In the perilous times of the early Church, martyrdom was almost as common as conversions. Yet those of genuine faith were taught to never seek martyrdom or to avoid it when the only choice is to deny Christ. The heathen believed it was not possible for a true Christian to deny his Lord. Through his martyrdom the heroic Polycarp set the example from which believers drew strength and courage to face their own ordeals.*



The interest attached to the life of the great Bishop of Smyrna arises not only from the simplicity and strength of his personal character, but from his close connection with the apostolic period, and the light that his career and writings throw upon the New Testament Scriptures. He was the principal link between two great eras of the Church's history. On the one hand, he was a pupil of the Apostle John. On the other, he was a teacher of Irenaeus, who in turn, became a chief representative of the Church's literary activity in the latter part of the second century. Through this very important period, therefore, Polycarp carried on the testimony both to the records and the substance of the Christian faith. From the apostles he received the doctrine, and in unquestioning faith he transmitted it, without any attempt at analysis or speculation. His confidence in the gospel was based not on elaborate reasoning, but on the experience of a lifetime; and the power and value of his convictions were attested by a martyr's triumphant death.

His pupil Irenaeus gives us one of the very few portraits of an apostolic man that are to be found in antiquity, in a few sentences: "I could describe the very place in which the blessed Polycarp sat and taught; his going out and coming in; the whole tenor of his life; his personal appearance; how he would speak of the conversations he had held with John and with others who had seen the Lord; and how he made mention of their words and of whatever he had heard from them respecting the Lord." Thus he unconsciously tantalizes our reverent curiosity. That such conversations were not written for our learning. But there is a wise Providence in what is withheld, as well as in the inestimable treasures we have received.

Irenaeus further tells us that "Polycarp was instructed by the apostles, and was brought into contact with many who had seen Christ." In fact, in A.D. 110, Polycarp experienced a lasting encounter with Ignatius that had a profound effect upon his mind and character. The elder "father" and fellow student



*Polycarp was not merely an illustrious teacher, but also a preeminent believer, whose martyrdom all desired to imitate, as having been altogether consistent with the Gospel of Christ.*

of John the Beloved urged his younger associate to maintain a brave and hopeful spirit amidst the conflict already begun. In the time following, before the martyrdom of Ignatius, the two exchanged warmhearted letters of truth and encouragement.

One afternoon, while resting in his home, Roman soldiers broke in and arrested Polycarp. He asked that he might pray before being led away. His words moved even the hearts of those who were commissioned to affect his execution. When he reached the arena, the Proconsul pleaded with him to renounce Christ, that he might be set free, but Polycarp's resolve was firm.

"Eighty-six years I have served Him. He has never done me wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King who has saved me?" was the reply of the aged saint.

They did not nail him then, but simply bound him. And he placed his hands behind him, and being bound like a distinguished ram taken out of a great flock for sacrifice, and prepared to be an acceptable burnt-offering unto God, looked up to Heaven, and said, "O Lord God Almighty, the Father of thy beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the knowledge of Thee, the God of angels and powers, and of every creature, and of the whole race of the righteous who live before thee, I give Thee thanks that Thou hast counted me worthy of this day and this hour, that I should have a part in the number of Thy martyrs, in the cup of thy Christ, to the resurrection of eternal life, both of soul and body, through the incorruption [imparted] by the Holy Ghost. Among whom may I be accepted this day before Thee as a fat and acceptable sacrifice, according as Thou, the ever-truthful God, hast fore-ordained, hast revealed beforehand to me, and now hast fulfilled. Wherefore also I praise Thee for all things, I bless Thee, I glorify Thee, along with the everlasting and heavenly Jesus Christ, Thy beloved Son, with whom, to Thee, and the Holy Ghost, be glory both now and to all coming ages. Amen."

At that last word the torch was applied and the fire instantly rose high, but the flames seemed to arch themselves around their victim. Seeing that the fire had failed to do its work, the officer charged upon Polycarp and pierced him with a sword. The eminent saint then gave up his spirit. It was more a day of triumph than one of tragedy. So this brave and true man of God received his "crown of life."

**Key Writings of Polycarp:** *The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians*

**Worth Reading:** *The Encyclical Epistle of the Church at Smyrna: Concerning the Martyrdom of the Holy Polycarp*

*"Eighty-six years I have served Him. He has never done me wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King who has saved me?" was the reply of the aged saint, Polycarp, as he stood before his persecutors.*

# Perpetua 185-211

## Martyr of the Early Church

The most famous and complete record of early Church persecutions is found in "Foxes' Book of Martyrs," originally published in the late 16th century. The suffering and death of this courageous young lady along with hundreds of Christ's faithful servants is thus recorded.



The martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas at Carthage was one of the memorable events of the persecution of the early Christian Church.

Perpetua was a Roman lady of exalted birth, and highly educated, who had become a Christian at an early age. Her friend, Felicitas, was a young Christian bride, about to become a mother. The parents of Perpetua were pagans, as were her two brothers. She was only a twenty-six year old wife and mother with an infant child.

She was arrested and thrown into prison for refusing to follow Roman edicts of worship to pagan gods. Her aged father, who loved Perpetua, tenderly prostrated himself upon his knees before his daughter, and with tears gushing from his eyes, pleaded with her to save her life by sacrificing to the gods. She remained firm. A large crowd assembled at her trial. Her father brought into the court her little baby and entreated Perpetua, for the sake of her child, to save her life. He hoped that the sight of her child would cause her to relent and renounce Jesus. The public prosecutor, Hilarien, then said to her:

"In mercy to your aged father, in mercy to your babe, throw not away your life, but sacrifice to the gods."

"I am a Christian," she replied, "and cannot deny Christ." The anguish of her father was so great that he was unable to restrain loud expressions of grief, and the brutal soldiers drove him off with multiple harsh blows. "I felt the blows," says Perpetua in a brief memorial, "as if they had fallen on myself." Perpetua was then condemned to be torn to pieces by wild beasts.

"When the day for the spectacle arrived," says Perpetua, "my father threw himself on the ground, tore his beard, cursed the day in which he was born, and uttered piercing cries which were sufficient to move the hardest heart."

Both Perpetua and Felicitas were doomed to the same death. The two victims were led into the arena of the vast amphitheater, where they were to be cruelly gored to death by bulls. The rising seats that surrounded the amphitheater were crowded with spectators to enjoy the spectacle.

Imagine descending into the dark, damp dungeons opening into the arena. Here in this den are growling lions, gaunt and



*Perpetua was an example of Christian resolve and courage, choosing to suffer and die with a clear conscience and truthful lips, rather than live life in denial of her Savior; that she might live with Him forever in glory.*

fierce. Next to it is a den of panthers with glaring eyes. They have been kept starved for many days to make them furious. In another cell of stone and iron, which the glare of the torch but feebly illumines, is a band of Christians—fathers, mothers, sons, and daughters. They are to be thrown tomorrow into the arena naked, that they may be torn to pieces by the panthers and the lions, and that the hundred thousand pagan spectators may enjoy the sport of seeing them torn limb from limb, and devoured by the fierce and starved beasts.

In one of these cells Perpetua and Felicitas were confined. In another were several wild bulls. Within the amphitheater was congregated all the wealth and fashion of the city—vestal virgins, pontiffs, ambassadors, senators, and in the loftiest tier sat a countless throng of slaves. Carthaginian ladies, presenting the utmost delicacy and refinement, competed with men in the eagerness with which they watched the bloody scenes.

Perpetua and Felicitas were escorted from the prison to the arena “joyfully as though they were on their way to Heaven,” records one witness.

In the center of the arena there was suspended a large network bag of strong fine twine, with crevices so large as to afford no covering or veil whatever to the person. Perpetua was first brought into the arena, young and beautiful, a pure and modest Christian lady. She was led forth entirely divested of her clothing, that to the bitterness of martyrdom might be added the pangs of wounded modesty. A hundred thousand voices assailed her with insult and derision. Brutal soldiers placed her in the transparent network. There she hung in mid-air, about two feet from the ground, as if floating in space. Then the burly executioners gave her a swing with their brawny arms, whirling her in a wide circle around the arena, before they departed.

The two women called out verbal affirmations of their love for each other, as well as encouraging words to “Stand fast in the faith.” The iron door creaked upon its hinges, and flew open. Out from the dungeon leapt the starving bull, with flaming eyes, bellowing, and pawing the sand in rage. He glared around for an instant upon the shouting thousands, and then caught a glimpse of the maiden swinging before him. With a bound he plunged upon her and buried his horns in her side. The blood gushed forth, and she was tossed in the air. The shrieks of the tortured victim were lost in the hundred thousand shouts of excitement.

This scene cannot be described. It can hardly be imagined. Lunge after lunge the bull plunged upon his victim, piercing, and tossing, until the sand of the arena is drenched with blood. Her body swung around, a mangled mass. Felicitas in the meantime is compelled to gaze upon the scene, that she may taste twice the bitterness of death. She was next placed in the suspended network, and in the same fiery chariot of martyrdom ascended to Heaven.

*To these two women the thought of denying their faith was worse than the prospect of death in the arena. They felt the power of the Spirit to persevere, regardless of the consequences.*