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Saints Saturus, Saturninus, Secundus, Revocatus, Perpetua and Felicity, who fulfilled their martyrdom at Carthage

Ξένες γλώσσες / In English / Συναξαριακές Μορφές





St Perpetua a Byzantine 6th century mosaics of from the Archiepiscopal Chapel at Ravenna.

While the Emperor Valerian's persecution was raging in the Roman province of Africa where Christianity was already widespread (c. 203), the young catechumens Perpetua, Revocatus, Felicity, Saturninus and Secundus were arrested in the town of Thubordo. Revocatus and Felicity were bondservants, while the twenty-two-year-old Perpetua was of noble birth. She asked to keep her child, which was still at her breast when she was arrested, and she was transferred to Carthage with the others, in spite of the efforts of her pagan father to retain her. The stifling atmosphere of the dungeon in which the Martyrs were crammed became a veritable palace for the young mother, in which she awaited the visit of Christ the King. God then revealed to her in a vision what she and her companions were to expect. She saw a narrow, bronze ladder set up on the earth and reaching to heaven. Instruments of death of all kinds were attached to its rungs and a dreadful dragon sat at its foot threatening all who would climb it. The first to mount the ladder was their catechist, Saturus, who had given himself up voluntarily in order to join them. On reaching the top, he called: Perpetua, I'm waiting for you, but take care that the dragon doesn't bite you!' 'Through the Name of Jesus Christ', she replied, it shan't do me any harm.' Then, springing forward, she crushed the dragon's head with her heel and reached the top of the ladder in a single bound, gaining entrance to the Paradise of delight in which she was welcomed by countless thousands of white-clad Martyrs.



St Felicity a Byzantine 6th century mosaics of from the Archiepiscopal Chapel at Ravenna.

After their appearance at the tribunal, the holy Martyrs received with joy the sentence of condemnation to the beasts and awaited the day of the games, strengthened by holy visions which assured them of victory against the Devil and of entry to the heavenly court. ‘God be praised!’ exclaimed Perpetua after these visions, I have always been of a cheerful frame of mind and now I shall be the more so!’ Felicity, who was eight months pregnant, was distressed at the thought of her contest being postponed because of her condition. At the prayer of the Martyrs, God saw to it that the pains of childbirth should come upon her three days before the games. As she groaned in labour, one of the gaolers mocked her with the promise of incomparably greater pains to come. Now it is I who suffer what I suffer,’ the Saint replied, ‘but then there will be Another within me who will suffer for me and what I suffer will be for Him!’ She entrusted the daughter to whom she gave birth to the care of a Christian woman and immediately made ready for the final contest.

On the eve of the games, the prison was opened to a crowd of visitors who joined

the captives in a feast at which they spoke of the marvellous things of God. The next day, the Martyrs appeared radiant on their way to the amphitheatre. God granted all of them that kind of death by which each one had wished to partake of the sufferings of Christ. Saturninus and Revocatus were attacked by a leopard as soon as the games began, and then mauled by a bear. Saturus, who had a horror of bears, was spared by the beasts, until a leopard with a single bite gave him perfect Baptism in his own blood.



An enraged cow was let loose on the two young women. Perpetua was tossed by the animal and fell to the ground on her back. With less concern for the pain than for decency, she immediately pulled her dress over her bare limbs and put up her hair which had become undone as she fell. The noble demeanour and beauty of

Perpetua and Felicity caused the crowd to calm down for a while and they were taken out of the arena. But when the atrocious spectacle had reached its end, the bloodthirsty mob demanded that the Martyrs should be dispatched in the midst of the arena. The Saints made their way to the designated spot. They exchanged the kiss of peace and submitted silently to the sword as though they were already taken up to heaven. True to Perpetua's vision, the gladiator missed his stroke and wounded her in the ribs, so she seized his trembling hand and guided the sword to her throat. Slaughtered as innocent sheep for Christ the Lamb of God, these holy Martyrs thus entered into everlasting glory.

Source: *The Synaxarion, The lives of the Saints of the Orthodox Church, Volume three, Holy convent of the Annunciation of Our Lady, Ormylia, 2001.*