

Saint Perpetua Martyr

† MARCH 7, 202

PURGATORY

She suffered martyrdom at Carthage in 203, during the persecution of Septimius Severus. From this mother and martyr we come to know the belief in Purgatory of the first Christians and their value of prayer for the deceased. Perpetua, who was twenty-two years old, had been imprisoned together with Felicity, Revocatus, Saturus and Saturninus. While waiting to be killed in hatred of the faith, Perpetua narrated a story about what was happening to her in prison: “A few days after the sentence of our death penalty, while we all were praying, suddenly in the middle of the prayer I emitted a scream and called: Dinocrates. I was surprised because I had not called him before, but only in this instant, and filled with sadness I thought about his fate. I also realized that I should pray for him and immediately I began to pray and supplicate the Lord for him. During the night in a vision I saw Dinocrates exiting from a dark place where there were many desolate and thirsty people, very pale and with dirty clothes, with a wound on their faces, like Dinocrates had when he died. Dinocrates was one of my brothers, who died at seven years old ravaged by a cancer of the face, whereby his death was terrifying for everyone. I prayed for this deceased brother of mine and between me and him there was a large distance so that we could not meet. Far from the place

where Dinocrates was, there was a basin filled with water, but its edge was much higher than where Dinocrates could reach, and he tried to stretch as if trying to drink. I was sad, because that basin was filled with water, but he, due to the height of this basin, could not drink. At that moment I awoke and felt within me that my brother was suffering; however I felt that I could assist him during the days that we would remain in prison; because at the games we would have had to fight against the wild beasts; it was indeed then the birthday of the Emperor Geta. And I prayed night and day with sighs and tears so that he would be presented to me.”

On the day in which we remained tied, in prison, I then had the following vision: “I saw the place seen earlier, and this time Dinocrates with his body washed, well dressed, was enjoying himself; where his wound had been I saw a scar, and the edge of that basin was lower and now reached only to the navel of the boy, he dipped from that basin without stop. Over the edge there was also a gold cup full of water; Dinocrates drew near and began to drink from the gold cup, and this did not empty; after he drank enough of that water he started to play happily like children do. At that moment I woke up and realized that Dinocrates had been liberated from his suffering.”

