

Saints and Martyrs

*A presentation to the
2008 Bridgefolk Conference
Saint John's Abbey Collegeville, MN
July 22, 2008*

“After this I had a vision of a great multitude
which no one could count—
from every nation, race, people, and tongue.

They stood before the throne
and before the Lamb,
wearing white robes
and holding palm branches in their hands.

They prostrated themselves before the throne,
worshipped God, and exclaimed,

“Amen. Blessing and glory,
wisdom and thanksgiving,
honor, power, and might be to our God
forever and ever. Amen.”

Then one of the elders spoke up
and said to me,
“Who are these wearing white robes,
and where did they come from?”

I said to him,
“My lord, you are the one who knows.”

He said to me,
“These are the ones who have survived
the time of great distress.

For this reason
they stand before God’s throne
and worship him day and night.”

The Book of Revelation

Perpetua and Felicity

Early Christian Martyrs

“A few days later we were lodged in prison...

What a day of horror!

Terrible heat...Rough treatment by the soldiers!

*To crown all I was tormented with anxiety
for my baby.*

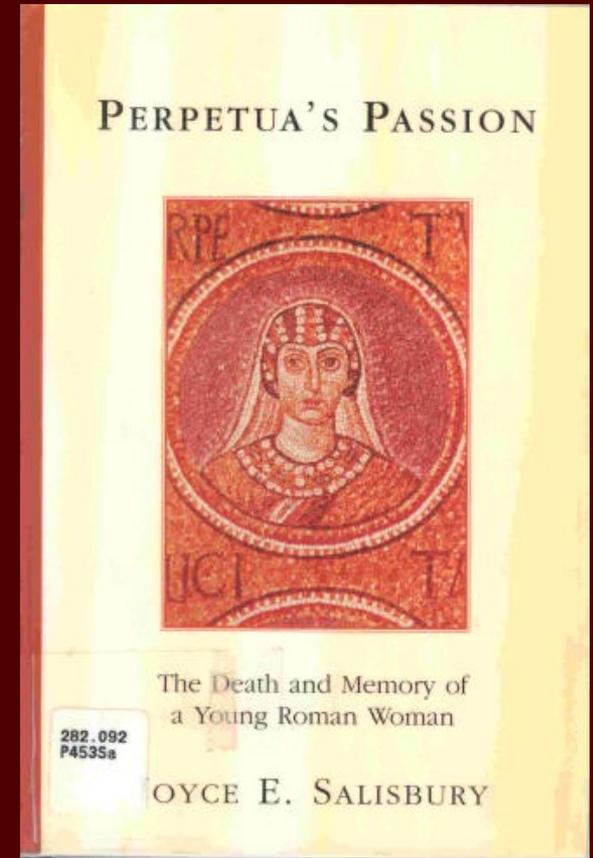
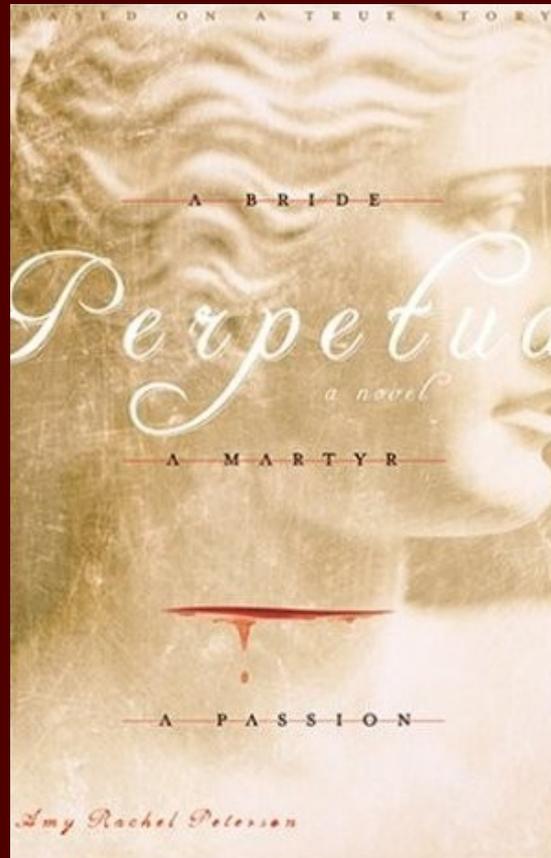
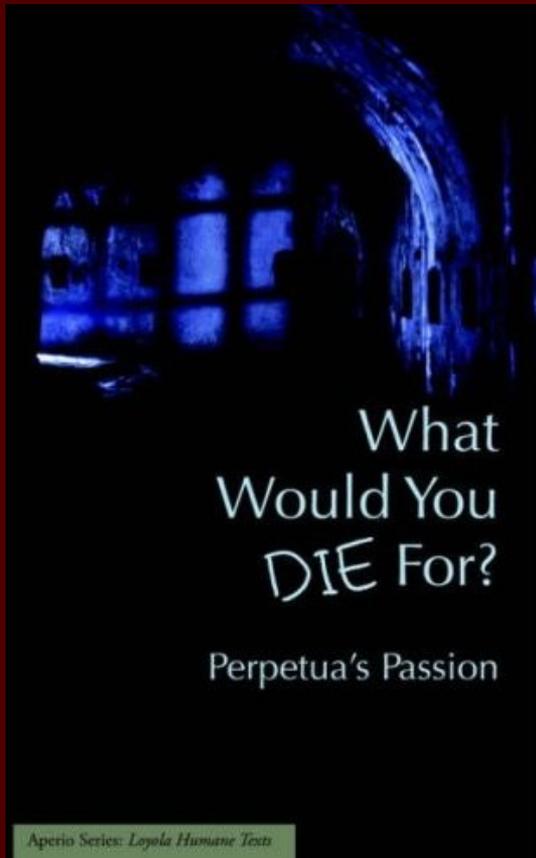
*Then the deacons who ministered to us
paid for us to be removed for a few hours
to a better part of the prison...*

and I suckled my baby, who was faint for want of food.”



SCA
PERPECTUA
ALIVS EDIT
PATIETA DIO
ET EGO MIA

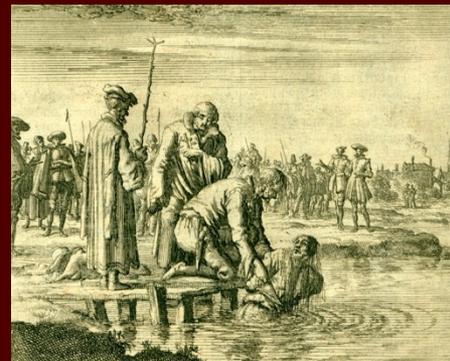
SCA
FELICITAS
IRE QUI
ME QUA
RE PASSA
SUID



The Anabaptist Martyrs of the 1500s

This tradition is enshrined in the *Martyrs Mirror*, an illustrated volume created by Dutch Mennonites in the 1600s. Its engravings have had a profound impact on subsequent generations of Mennonites and Amish.

The Martyrs Mirror



















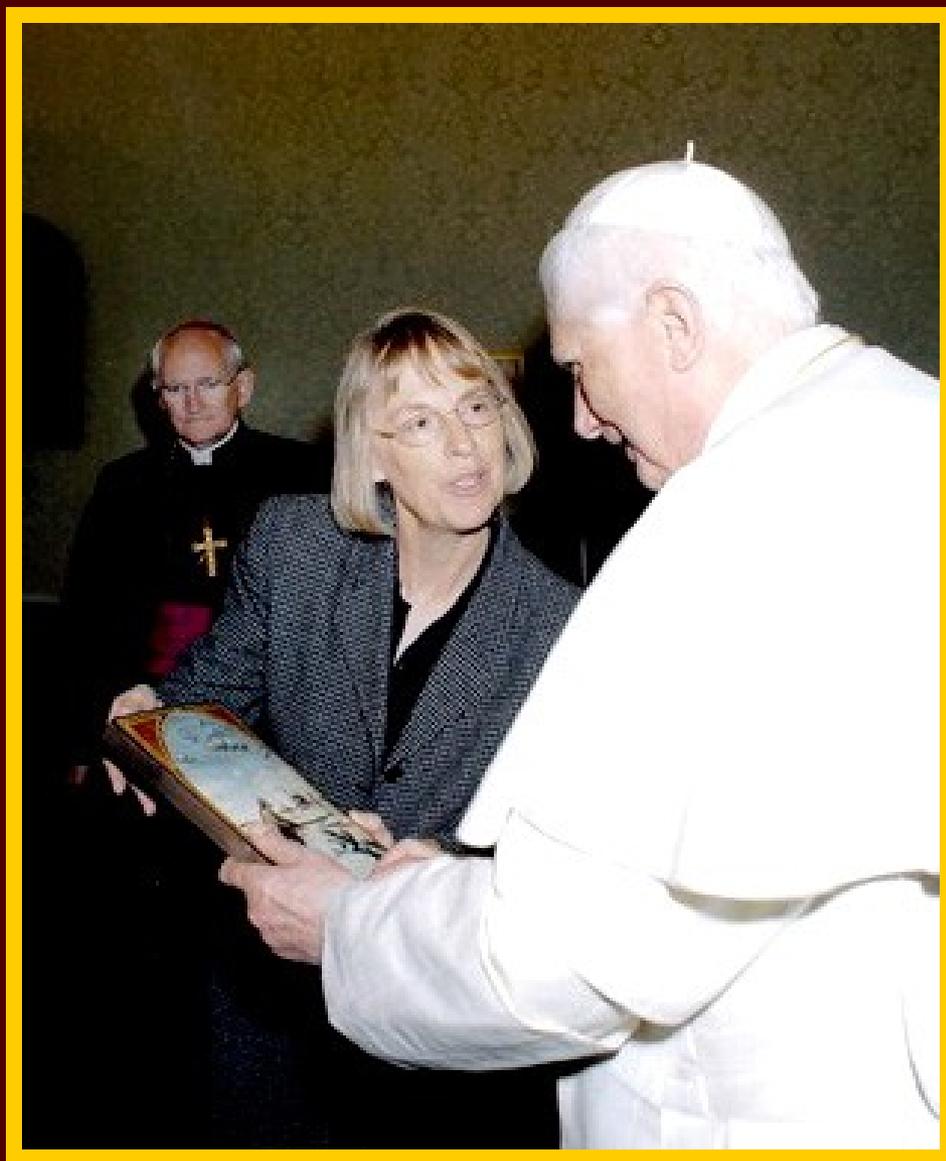












Dr. Nancy Heisey,
President of the
Mennonite World
Conference,
presented an icon of
the Anabaptist martyr

Dirk Willems
to Pope Benedict XVI
during an official visit
to the Vatican.

The Catholic Tradition of Saints

In the earliest centuries
virtually all those revered as saints had been martyrs.

But as time went on others were added to the list,
and this tradition continues to the present.

Each day, including this one,
is celebrated as the anniversary of the saints who died that day.

11 Catholic Saints of July 24

- ❖ *St. Christina*
- ❖ *St. Lewina*
- ❖ *St. Declan*
- ❖ *Sts. Boris and Gleb*
- ❖ *St. Christina the Astonishing*
- ❖ *St. Kinga*
- ❖ *Bd. Nicholas of Linköping*
- ❖ *Bd. Felicia of Milan*
- ❖ *Bd. John of Tossignano*
- ❖ *Bd. Augustine of Biella*
- ❖ *The Durham Martyrs of 1594*

St. Christina

Italy, early 4th century



“A young girl belonging to a noble Roman family who became a Christian and broke up the gold and silver images of the gods in her father’s house, selling the fragments to relieve the poor.”

In punishment her father ordered her execution.

St. Lewina

Britain, c. 5th century

*“Supposed to have suffered martyrdom under the Saxons
in Britain before their conversion to Christ.*

*Nothing is heard of her till 1058 when,
on or about July 24 her relics
were translated from Sussex to Flanders.*

They were honored by many miracles.”



St. Declan

Irish monk, 5th century

“It is not decided whether he preached before or after the coming of St. Patrick.”

“Many miracles are ascribed to him, and two visits to Rome. He had his episcopal church at Ardmore, where he was held in great admiration.”



Sts. Boris and Gleb

Russian princes, 11th century

*Faced with a palace coup,
these two young princes chose to die
nonviolently to avoid a civil war.*

*“It is better for me to die alone
than to be the occasion of death to many,”
Boris said.*

*Their contemporaries demanded they be
recognized as “passion-bearers”—
persons who had “repudiated violence
and quietly accepted suffering and death
in the unresisting spirit of Christ.”*

St. Christina the Astonishing

French mystic, 13th century

St Christina
the Astonishing



“When she was about 22 Christina had a seizure. Assumed to be dead a funeral Mass was begun. Suddenly Christina sat up, soared to the beams of the roof, and there perched herself.”

She later “fled into remote places, climbed trees and towers and rocks, and crawled into ovens, to escape from the smell of humans...Everyone thought she was mad or ‘full of devils’.”

The final years of Christina’s life were spent in a convent where she died at the age of 74.



St. Kinga

Polish queen and Poor Clare, 13th century

“The queen led a most austere life, wearing a hair-shirt under her royal garments and giving much time to the care of the needy and sick.”

“When her husband died she became a Poor Clare in the convent she had founded.”

“Her last years were marked by many miracles and supernatural manifestations.”



Bd. Nicholas of Linköping

Swedish bishop, 14th century

*“Noted for his reforming zeal
and his personal example of austerity.*

*“He enforced the celibacy of the clergy,
and he used the episcopal power and wealth
solely for the good of religion and the poor.*

*“Bd. Nicholas was a poet
and wrote several liturgical offices in rhyme.”*



Bd. Felicia of Milan

Poor Clare Abbess, 15th century

*“For 25 years she led the hidden and austere life of her order,
remarkable in the community
for her faultless observance of the rule
and her perseverance in prayer and penance
in spite of the diabolical influences that were active against her.*

*“The gentle nun overcame these fierce trials,
and her experience and tempered character
caused her to be elected abbess.”*

Bd. John of Tossignano

Italian bishop, 15th century

*“He joined the Gesuati, a lay nursing congregation,
of whose founder he wrote a biography.*

*“He also translated into Italian parts of the Bible,
and himself wrote several devotional works,
including a treatise on perfection in the spiritual life.*

*“In 1431 he was chosen bishop of Ferrara.
He was loved for his charity and benevolence.”*

Bd. Augustine of Biella

Dominican prior, 15th century

*“His life was outwardly uneventful,
being passed in a careful observance of his duties as a religious.*

*“For a long time he suffered from a painful illness,
and his patience was the admiration
both of his physicians and his brethren.*

*“The success of his preaching and a reputation for miracles
earned him a publicity that was most distasteful to him.”*

The Durham Martyrs of 1594

4 English Catholic martyrs, 16th century

“Bd. John Boste was educated at Oxford.

He was received into the Church in 1576 and five years later was ordained and became one of the most sought after of priests.

“In 1594 he was betrayed and taken to London where he was terribly racked in the Tower.

“An eye witness to his execution states that he was cut down so soon that he revived while being carried for dismemberment.

He prayed, ‘Jesus, Jesus, Jesus forgive thee!’ for his executioner as his heart was being torn from his body.”

One of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales canonized by Pope Paul VI in 1970.

How do you get on the list?

The Catholic Church takes its saints very seriously.

*One of the major departments of the Vatican
is devoted to the saints.*

*Today being recognized as a saint
involves a long judicial process.*

*Mother Teresa and Pope John Paul II
are both midway in that process.*

This tradition continues
into the 20th Century

The Twentieth Century Martyrs

*More Christians died for their faith
in the 20th Century than in any previous time—
an estimated 13,000
Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants.*

*At the end of the century
a powerful movement emerged
to recognize these martyrs in an ecumenical way.*



Westminster Abbey





Sant'Egidio



*“The precious heritage that these courageous witnesses
have passed down to us
is a patrimony shared by all the churches.*

*“It is a heritage that speaks more powerfully
than all the causes of division.*

*“The ecumenism of the martyrs is the most convincing of all.
It shows the path to unity.”*

Pope John Paul II

Homily at the Roman Coliseum, 2000

The Legacy of the Saints

The Saints as Peacemakers

*Saints die for other people,
they don't kill them.*

The Saints as Peacemakers

The saints are neither passive, nor violent.

*They do not avoid conflict;
they offer a way to resolve conflict,
by giving their lives both as martyrs and servants.*

The Saints as Peacemakers

*The saints connect heaven and earth,
by living intentionally in both,
and that is the source of all real peace.*

What are the Saints telling
Bridgefolk?

*Each of the saints did something
that had never been done before.*

*They are Christians who saw new opportunities
and acted on them.*

They were both conservative and liberal.

*They both embraced the Tradition
and extended it into the future.*

*They were the ones who took the next step
in the long, millennial process
of actually following Christ into the future,
of actually reaching the Promised Land.*

We have come far.

We have far to go.

*And we, like those who have preceded us,
will get there one step at a time,
one saint at a time.*

The Biblical Perspective

*“Since we are surrounded by
so great a cloud of witnesses,
let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin,
and persevere in running the race that lies before us,
while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus.*

“Consider how he endured
such opposition,
that you may not grow weary and lose heart.

“In your struggle against sin
you have not yet resisted to the point of
shedding blood.”

The Letter to the Hebrews