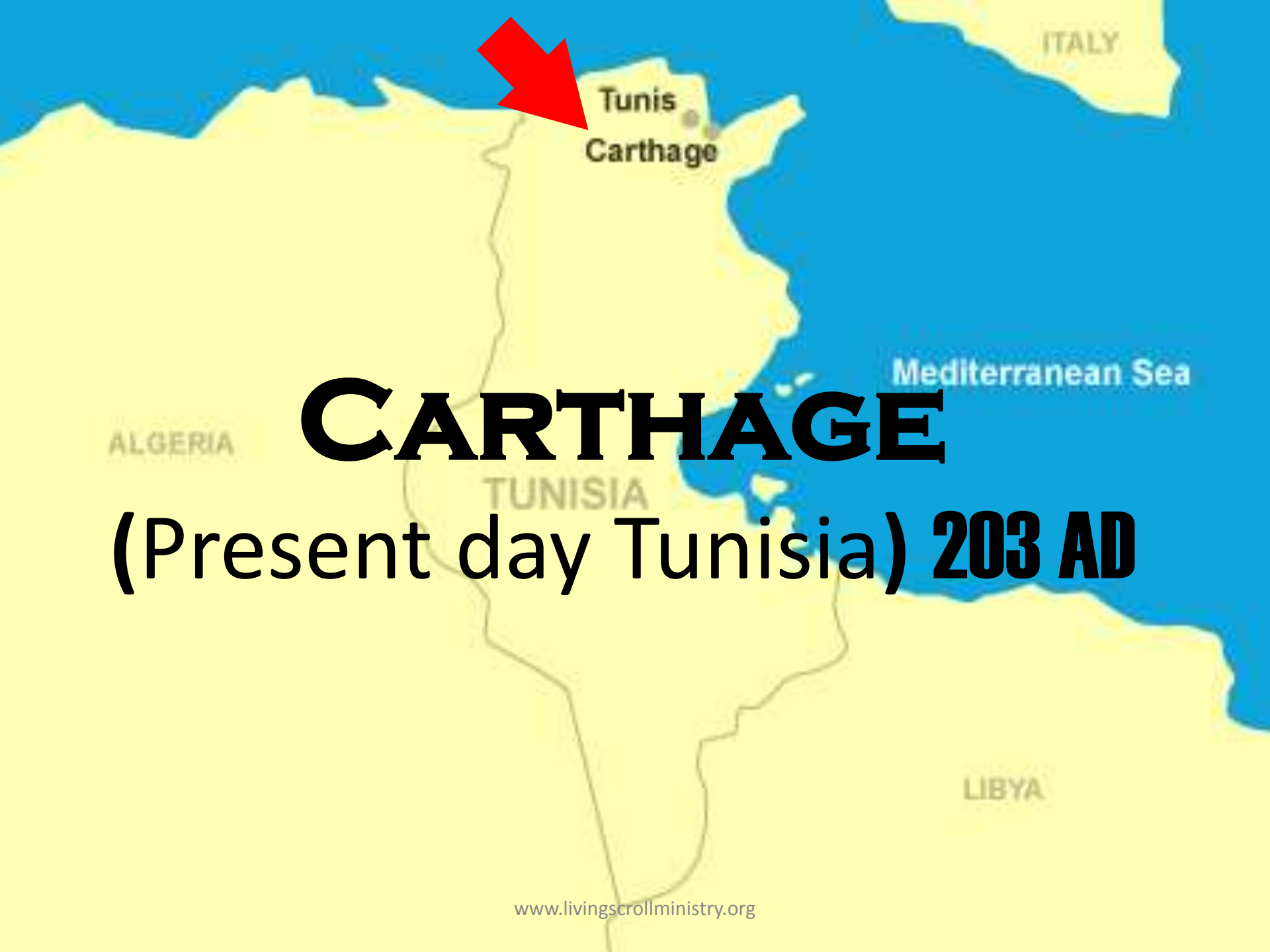




VIBIA PERPETUA

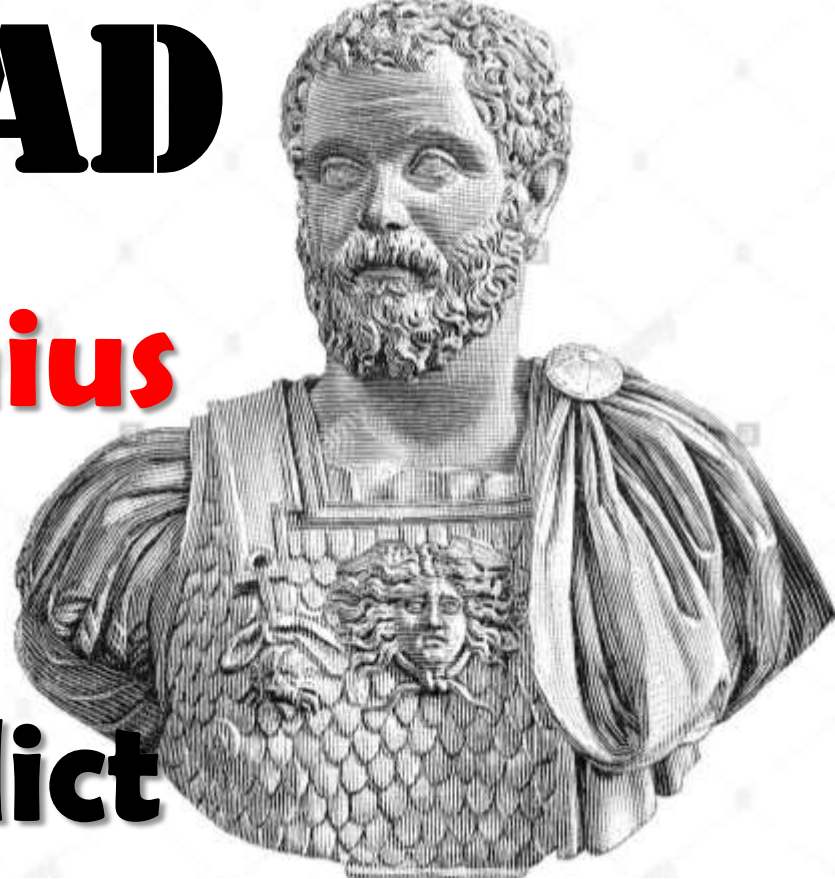


CARTHAGE

(Present day Tunisia) 203 AD

203 AD

**Emperor Septimius
Severus**




**had issued an edict
that there shall be**

**NO NEW CONVERT TO
CHRISTIANITY.**

In ancient civilization of those times, so many gods were worshipped, and Christians alone refused to bow to the gods.





**As a result
Christians were
continually **blamed**
for all the evils that
befall the societies,
from drought to
famines to epidemic
outbreaks.**



WHY?

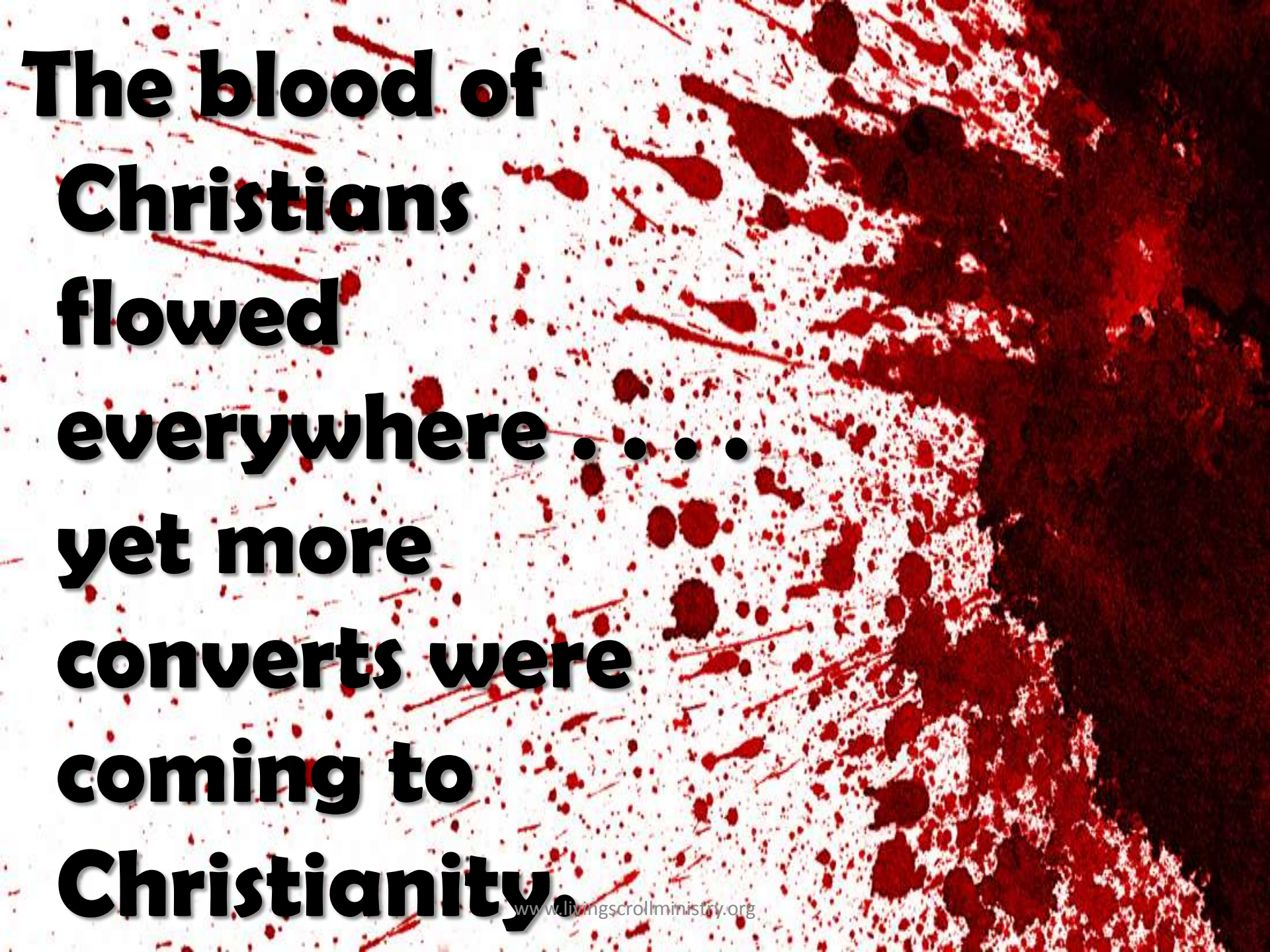
**Christians makes
the gods angry
by dishonoring
the gods.**

**This unleashed
widespread anger,
hatred, murderous rage
and persecution against
the Christians.**



In fact,
to be called a Christian
was a dangerous
thing.





**The blood of
Christians
flowed
everywhere
yet more
converts were
coming to
Christianity.**

**So much coming that the
ancient theologian of
those times; Tertullian,
had to write,**



***“The blood of the
martyrs is the seed of the
Church.”***



How true!

Abel [Gen 4:1-8] the first person born of the human race to believe the Lord end up shedding his blood and giving his life as a witness to the Lord he had believed.



Tertullian is right,

***“The blood of the martyrs
is the seed of the Church.”***



16TH CENTURY JAPAN

– one of many examples



**In 16th Century Japan,
the number of the
Christian community
which took root in
Japan soon reached
300,000,**

**a figure so amazing
that a missionary
writer then concluded
that Japan, of all
nations in Asia, was
“most suited for
Christianity.”**

But situations soon changed.

**Agony, darkness and
persecution descended on
the Church.**



Blood flowed everywhere ...

BUT

***It was the blood of the
saints***

The Twenty-Six Martyrs Museum and Monument; built on Nishizaka Hill in June 1962 for those martyrs executed on the same site on February 5, 1597



**Even today, there is a monument to
26 Christian martyrs from that
bloody era that descended on the
church**



**a few missionaries, some
adult believers, and two boys,
Ibaraki and **Anthony**, the older
been 13 years old.**

**This particular group of believers
was force-marched over **760**
kilometers from their home to a
hill in Nagasaki, Japan.**





**The ordeal began
with their ears
and noses being
cut off,**



**and it concluded with twenty-six
crosses lined up and waiting at
their destination for the
twenty-six of them.**

Their **tormentors must
have been certain this
nightmarish ordeal
would bring about a
change of heart to the
tormented saints.**

They had miscalculated

2 + 2 = 4  (WRONG)

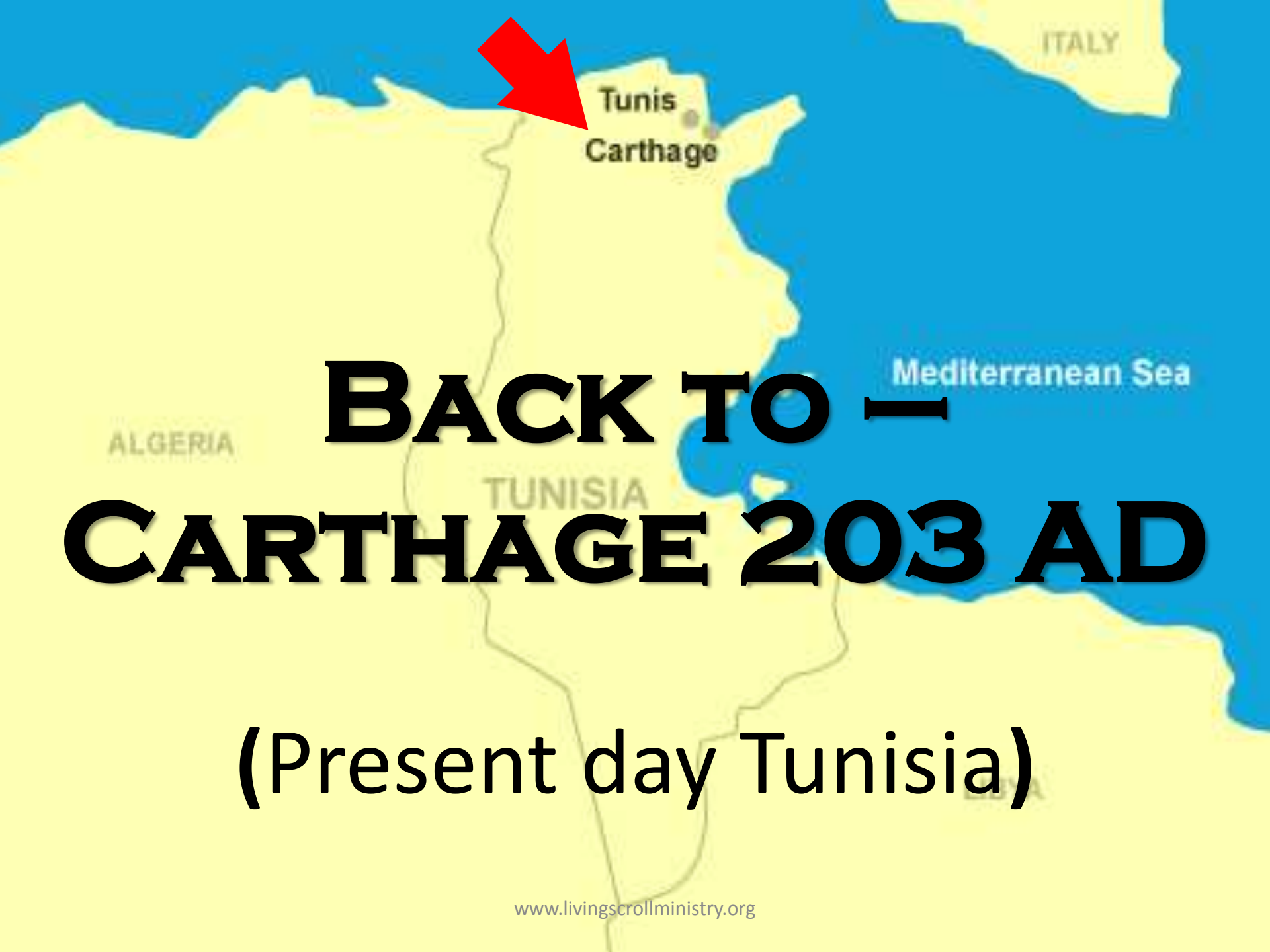
**As soon as they arrived,
one of the battered young
lads stepped forward and
called out,**

“Show me my cross.”





The other boy followed,
“And show me mine.”



BACK TO — CARTHAGE 203 AD

(Present day Tunisia)



**At about the time Emperor
Septimius Severus had made
his decree *that there shall be
no new convert to Christianity,***



**Vibia Perpetua was led to Christ
by her slave maid Felicitas.**



But soon,

**A number of young converts
were arrested, Revocatus and
his fellow slave Felicitas
(eight month pregnant),
Saturninus and Secundulus,
and with them Vibia
Perpetua, a newly married
woman of good family and
upbringing**

Her mother and father were still alive and one of her two brothers was a young convert like herself.


She was about twenty-two years old and had an infant son at the breast.

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a light-colored sleeveless top, is sitting on a wooden bench in a prison cell. She is looking down at a small open book or diary in her lap, with her right hand resting on her chin in a thoughtful or distressed pose. The background is a rough, stone wall. The lighting is dim and focused on the woman.


VIBIA PERPETUA

— *PRISON DIARY*

**This is the prison diary of
a young woman martyred
in CARTHAGE in 203 AD.**



(Now from this point on the entire account of her ordeal is her own, according to her own ideas and in the way that she herself wrote it down.)



BAPTISM AND ARREST

**During these few days I was
baptized, and I was inspired
by the Spirit not to ask for
any other favor after the
water but simply the
perseverance of the flesh.**

**A few days later we were
lodged in the prison; and I was
terrified,**



**as I had never before been in
such a dark hole.**

What a difficult time it was!

With the crowd the heat was stifling; then there was the extortion of the **soldiers; and to crown it all,**

I was **tortured with worry for my baby (then the baby was not with her in prison).**

These were the trials I had to endure for many days. Then I got permission for my baby to stay with me in prison.

I nursed my baby, who was faint from hunger.

**At once I recovered
my health, relieved
as I was of my
worry and anxiety
over the child.**

**My prison had
suddenly become a
palace, so that I
wanted to be there
rather than
anywhere else.**

HER FATHER

**While we were still
under arrest (she said)
my father out of love
for me was trying to
persuade me and
shake my resolution.**



**'Father,' said I, 'do you see
this vase here,**



**for example, or water pot or
whatever?'**

**'Yes, I do', her father
replied.**

And I told him: 'Could it be called by any other name than what it is?'

And he said: 'No.'

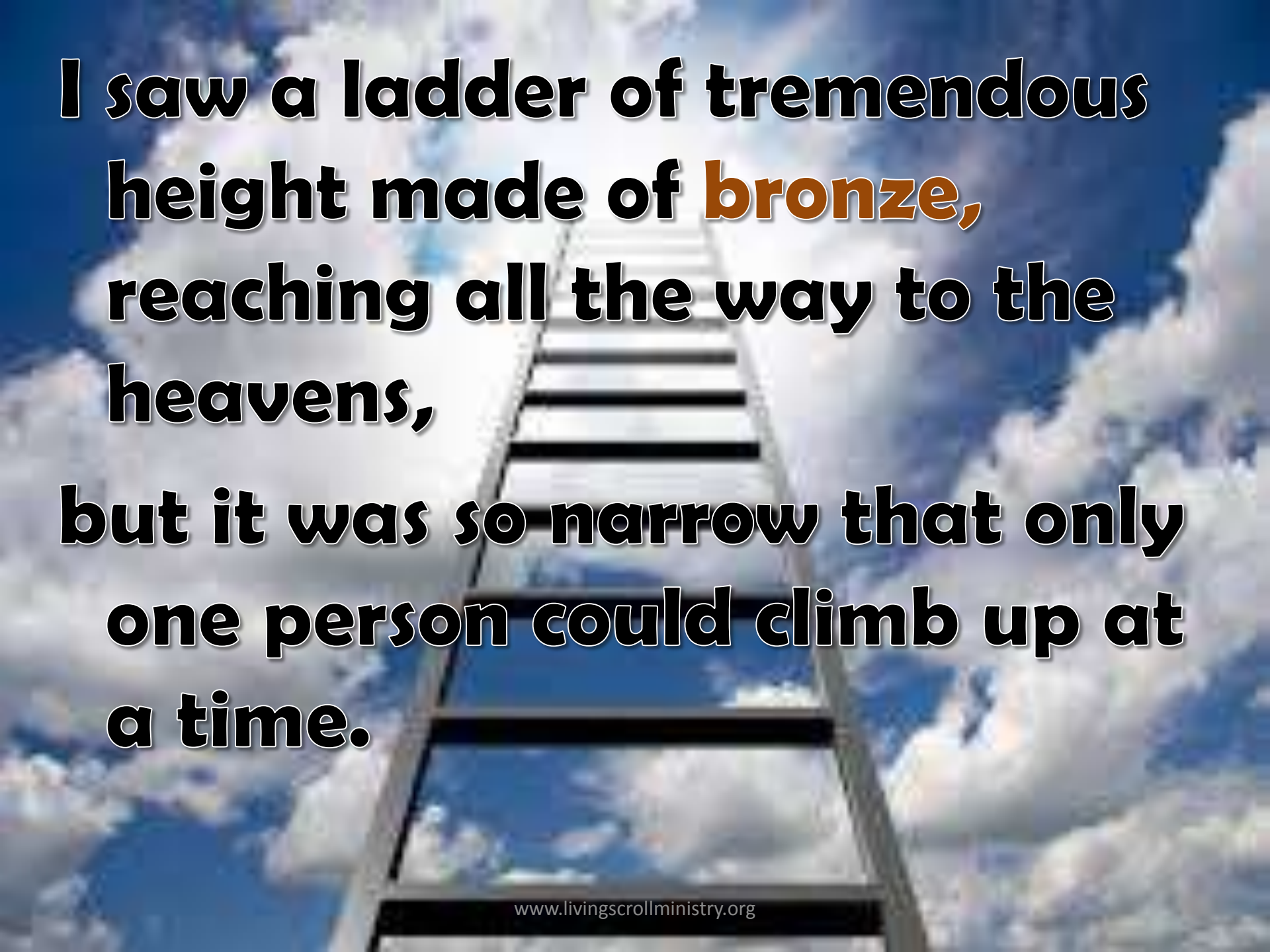
'Well, so too I cannot be called anything other than what I am, a Christian.'

**At this my father was
so angered by the
word 'Christian'
that he moved
towards me as though
he would pluck my
eyes out.**

**But he left it at that
and departed,
vanquished along
with his diabolical
arguments.**

**For a few days
afterwards I gave
thanks to the Lord that
I was separated from
my father, and I was
comforted by his
absence.**

VISION

A perspective view of a long, narrow ladder extending from the bottom center towards the top of the frame. The ladder is set against a background of a bright blue sky filled with soft, white, and grey clouds. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image, following the curve of the ladder.

**I saw a ladder of tremendous
height made of bronze,
reaching all the way to the
heavens,
but it was so narrow that only
one person could climb up at
a time.**



**I at once told this
to my brother, and
we realized that
we would have to
suffer,**

***and that from
now on we would
no longer have any
hope in this life.***

The Trial



**A few days later there
was a rumor that we
were going to be given a
hearing.**

**The hearing is simple;
deny being a Christian and
then perform a sacrifice to the
welfare of the Emperor (the
Emperor himself was a form
of god then to the people).**

**Refusal to do that is
condemnation to
death – death by wild
animals in an
amphitheater (open
stadium).**

The birthday of the
Emperor son, Geetha,
was approaching,
and to mark that event
Perpetua and her friends
will be thrown to wild
animals

**in an
amphitheater**



**filled with cheering
crowd.**



This was the trial;

**Deny Christ, offer
a sacrifice to the
Emperor and live**

(Saturus their pastor
was not with them at
the time they were
arrested; during the
hearing and trial

**he suddenly appeared
and declared openly
that he was one of
them giving
himself up of his own
accord).**

Perpetua wrote,

*He had been the builder
of our strength,
although he was not
present when we were
arrested.*



My father also arrived
from the city (for the
hearing), worn with worry,
and he came to see me
with the idea of
persuading me.

***'Daughter,' he said, 'have
pity on my grey head--
have pity on me your
father, if I deserve to be
called your father, if I have
favored you above all your
brothers,***

***if I have raised you to
reach this prime of
your life. Do not
abandon me to be the
reproach of men.***

Think of your brothers, think of your mother and your aunt, think of your child, who will not be able to live once you are gone. Give up your pride! You will destroy all of us!

***None of us will ever be
able to speak freely
again if anything
happens to you.'***

**This was the way my father
spoke out of love for me,
kissing my hands and
throwing himself down
before me.**

**With tears in his eyes he no
longer addressed me as his
daughter but as a woman.**

**I was sorry for my
father's sake, because
he alone of all my kin
would be unhappy to
see me suffer. He was in
great sorrow.**

**I tried to comfort him
saying: *'It will all happen in
the prisoner's dock as God
wills; for you may be sure
that we are not left to
ourselves but are all in His
power.'***

**All the others when
questioned admitted their
guilt. Then, when it came my
turn, my father appeared
with my son, dragged me
from the step, and said:
'Perform the sacrifice--have
pity on your baby!'**

Hilarianus the governor,
who had received his judicial
powers as the successor of
the late proconsul Minucius
Timinianus, said to me:

Perpetua,

**'Have pity on your father's
grey head; have pity on your
infant son. Offer the sacrifice
for the welfare of the
emperors.'**

'I will not', Perpetua retorted.

**'Are you a Christian?' said
Hilarianus.**

**And I said: 'Yes, I am a
Christian.'**

**Hilarianus angrily retorted,
'your own mouth condemned
you!'**

**When my father
persisted in trying to
dissuade me, Hilarianus
ordered him to be
thrown to the ground
and beaten with a rod.**

**I felt sorry for father, just
as if I myself had been
beaten.**

**I felt sorry for his pathetic
old age.**

**Then Hilarianus passed
sentence on all of us: we were
condemned to the beasts
(to die by wild animals in the
amphitheatre), and we
returned to prison in high
spirits.**

**But my baby had got used to
being nursed at the breast
and to staying with me in
prison.**

**So I sent the deacon
Pomponius straight away to
my father to ask for the baby.**

But father refused to give him over. But as God willed, the baby had no further desire for the breast, nor did I suffer any inflammation; and so I was relieved of any anxiety for my child and of any discomfort in my breasts....

Puden

Some days later, a prison warden named Pudens, who was in charge of the prison, began to show us great honor, realizing that we possessed some great power within us.

And he began to allow many visitors to see us for our mutual comfort.

Puden was overwhelmed by the strong faith and conviction of the prisoners that himself became a Christian.

VISION

**Perpetua had a second vision.
When she awoke, she wrote;**

***“I realized that it was not with
wild animals that I would
fight but with the Devil, but I
knew that I would win the
victory”***

**So much for what I did
up until the eve of the
contest. About what
happened at the
contest itself, let him
write of it who will.**

**[Here Perpetua Diary
ended as the martyrs
march to the
Amphitheatre.]**

**Puden, the
prison
warder that
became a
Christian
completed
the story]:**



Felicitas

As for Felicitas, she too enjoyed the Lord's favor in this wise. She had been pregnant when she was arrested, *and was now in her eighth month.*

**As the day of the spectacle
drew near she was very
distressed that her
martyrdom would be
postponed because of her
pregnancy; for it is against
the law for women with child
to be executed.**

**Thus she might have to
shed her holy,
innocent **blood**
afterwards along with
others who were
common criminals.**

**Her comrades in martyrdom
were also saddened; for
they were afraid that they
would have to leave
behind *so fine a
companion to travel alone
on the same road to hope
(martyrdom).***

**And so, two days before
the contest to mark the
birthday of the
Emperor's son, they
poured forth a prayer to
the Lord in one torrent
of common grief.**

**And immediately after
their prayer the birth
pains came upon her.**

**She suffered a good deal in
her labor because of the
natural difficulty of an
eight months' delivery.**

**Hence one of the
assistants of the
prison guards said
to her
(reproachfully):**

**'You suffer so much now--
what will you do when you
are tossed to the beasts?
Little did you think of
them when you refused to
sacrifice *(to the welfare of
the Emperor).*'**

**'What I am suffering now',
Felicitas replied, 'I suffer
by myself. But then
another will be inside me
who will suffer for me, just
as I shall be suffering for
him.'**

And she gave birth to a girl; and one of the sisters took the baby from prison and brought her up as her own daughter.

One commentator said,

**“Thus Felicitas left the
bloodshed of
childbirth to another
bloodshed of the
Amphitheatre.”**

The Arena – Amphitheatre

the day of their victory



**The day they were to be
thrown to the wild
animals, the martyrs call
it *the day of their victory***

**The day of their victory
dawned, and they
marched from the prison to
the amphitheatre joyfully
as though they were going
to heaven, with calm faces,
trembling, if at all, with
joy rather than fear.**

**Perpetua went along with
shining countenance and
calm step, as the beloved
of God, as a wife of
Christ, putting down
everyone's stare by her
own intense gaze.**



**With
them
also was
Felicitas,**

**glad that she had safely
given birth two days ago,
so that now she could fight
the beasts, going from one
blood bath to another
bloodbath,**

**from the midwife to the
gladiator, ready to
wash after childbirth
in a second baptism of
blood.**

**Perpetua then began
to sing a psalm: she
was already treading
on the head of the
Egyptian.**

**Five of them marched in a
victory procession into the
Arena.**

- 1. Perpetua,**
- 2. Felicitas,**
- 3. Revocatus,**
- 4. Saturninus, and**
- 5. Saturus.**

The crowds demanded that they be **scourged before a line of gladiators. And they rejoiced at this that they had obtained a share in the Lord's sufferings.**



**While in prison the
martyrs had discussed
together how each
wanted to **die** and
prayed about it.**

He, who said, *Ask and you shall receive*, answered their prayer by giving each one the death he had asked for. For whenever they would discuss among themselves their desire for martyrdom,

Saturninus indeed insisted
that he wanted to be
**exposed to all the different
beasts,** that his crown might
be all the more glorious



**And so at the
outset of the
contest he
and
Revocatus
were
matched with
a leopard,**



STOCK ↗

**and then
while in
the stocks**



**they were attacked by
a bear.**

SATURUS

– THE PASTOR

As for Saturus, the pastor that joined them on his own accord, he dreaded nothing more than a bear, and he prayed



**to be killed by
one bite of a
leopard so
that he
would not
face a bear.**



LEOPARD



BEAR



**First he was
matched with
a wild boar;
but the boar
only attacked
the soldier
who brought
Saturus to the
theatre.**

The soldier **died a few
days after the contest,
whereas **Saturnus was
not touched** by the
boar.**

**Then when
Saturus was
bound in the
stocks awaiting
the bear, the
animal refused
to come out of
the cages . . .**



**Saturus spoke to the soldier
Pudens in the Arena;**

**'It is exactly', he said, 'as I
foretold and predicted. So
far not one animal has
touched me.'**

**So now you may believe me
with all your heart:**

***I am going in there and I
shall be finished off with
one bite of the leopard.'***

**And immediately as the
contest was coming to a
close a leopard was let
loose, and after one bite
Saturus was so drenched
with blood that as he was
dying the mob joyfully
roared in witness to his
second baptism:**

'Well washed! Well washed!'



Then he said to the soldier
Pudens:

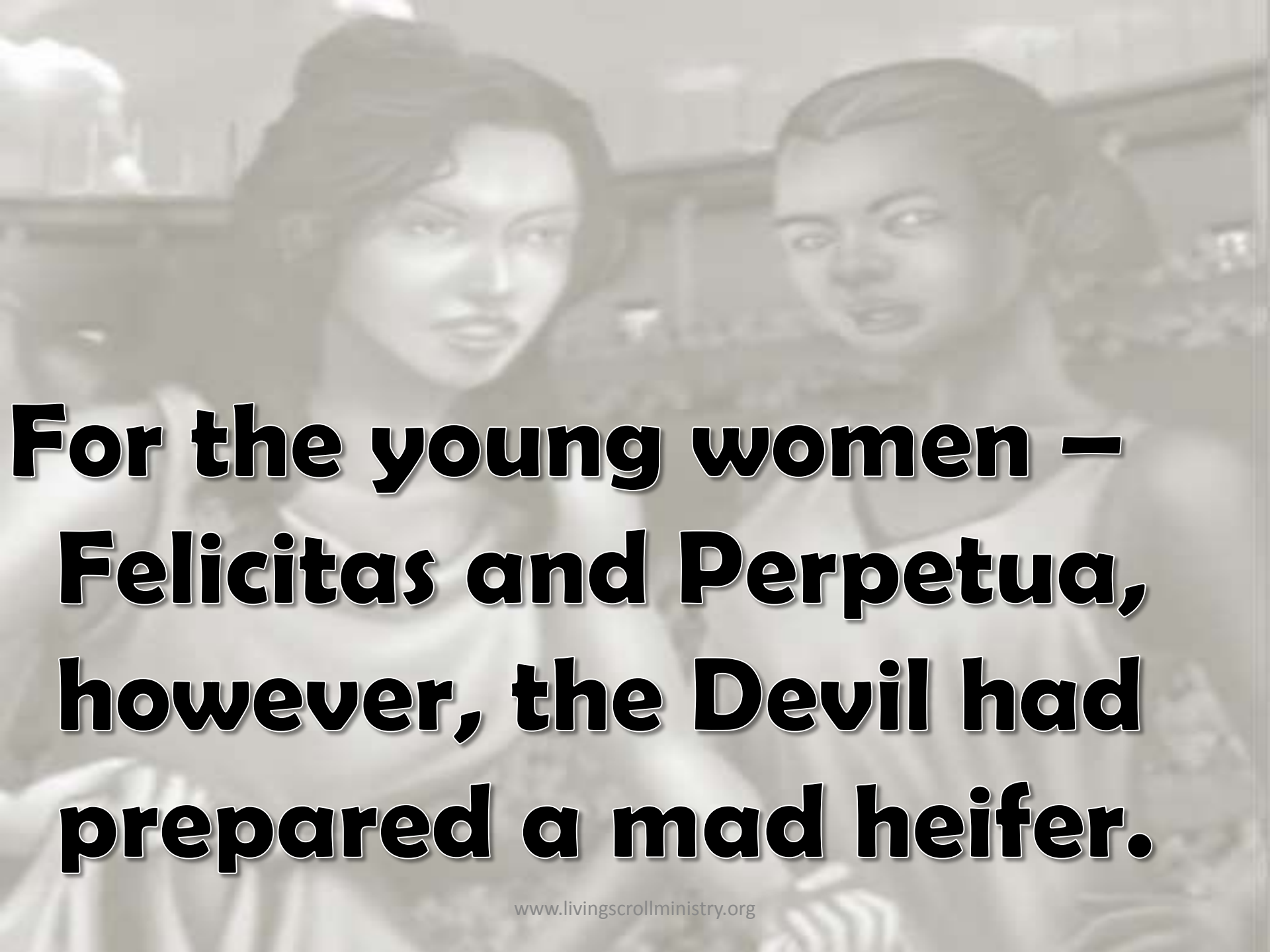
'Good-bye. Remember me,
and remember the faith.
These things should not
disturb you but rather
strengthen you.'

**And with this he asked
Pudens for a ring from his
finger, and dipping it into
his wound he gave it back
to him again as a pledge
and as a record of his
bloodshed.**

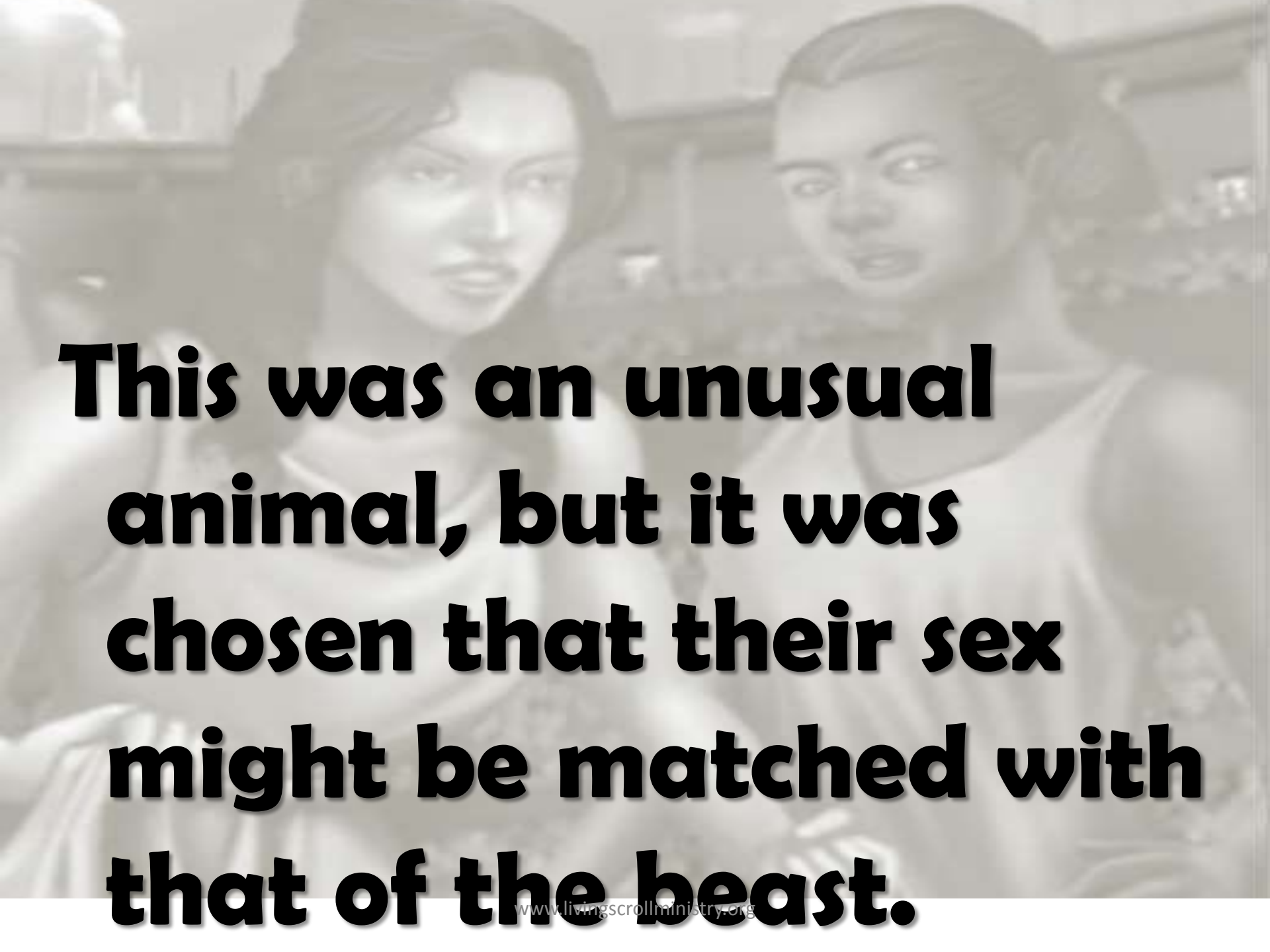


Felicitas and Perpetua





**For the young women –
Felicitas and Perpetua,
however, the Devil had
prepared a mad heifer.**



This was an unusual animal, but it was chosen that their sex might be matched with that of the beast.

So they were **stripped
naked, placed in nets and
thus brought out into the
arena.**



**Even the crowd was horrified
when they saw that one
was a delicate young girl
and the other was a
woman fresh from
childbirth with the milk still
dripping from her breasts.**

**And so they were
brought back again
and dressed in
unbelted tunics.**

**First, the
heifer
tossed
Perpetua
and she fell
on her back.**



Then sitting up she pulled down the tunic that was ripped along the side so that it covered her thighs, thinking more of her modesty than of her pain.

**Next she asked for a pin to
fasten her untidy hair**



**for it was not right that a
martyr should die with her
hair in disorder,**

**lest she might seem to be
mourning in her hour of
triumph and victory**

Perpetua was more
interested in her modesty
than the Amphitheatre
and the beasts – **she**
would meet her glorious
Lord a victorious
princess.

Then she got up. And seeing that Felicitas had been crushed to the ground, she went over to her, gave her hand, and lifted her up. Then the two stood side by side.

**But the cruelty of the mob
was by now appeased,
and so they were called
back from the
Amphitheatre through
the Gate of Life.**

**There Perpetua was held up
by a man named Rusticus
who was at the time a
young convert and kept
close to her.**

**She awoke from a kind
of sleep (so absorbed
had she been in
ecstasy in the Spirit)
and she began to look
about her.**

**Then to the
amazement of all she
said: 'When are we
going to be thrown to
that heifer or
whatever it is?'**

When told that this had already happened, she was shocked! she refused to believe it until she noticed the marks of her rough experience on her person and her dress.

Perpetua felt no pain

**– she was no longer in
this world!**

**Then she called for her brother
and spoke to him together
with the young converts and
said:**

**'You must all stand fast in the
faith and love one another,
and do not be weakened by
what we have gone through.'**



... *THE SWORD*

**Shortly after they were
to all have their **throat
cut**, dead or alive in a
hidden spot.**

**Saturus the pastor had
died, some of them
semi-unconscious from
wounds**

**but Perpetua was
fully alive.**

**But the mob
asked that their
bodies be brought
out into the open
that their eyes . . .**

**• • • might be the guilty
witnesses of the sword
that pierced their
flesh and cut their
throat in the open
before their eyes.**

**And so the martyrs got
up and went to the
spot of their own
accord as the people
wanted them to;**

**and kissing one
another they sealed
their martyrdom with
the ritual kiss of
peace.**

**The others took the
sword in silence and
without moving,
especially Saturnus**

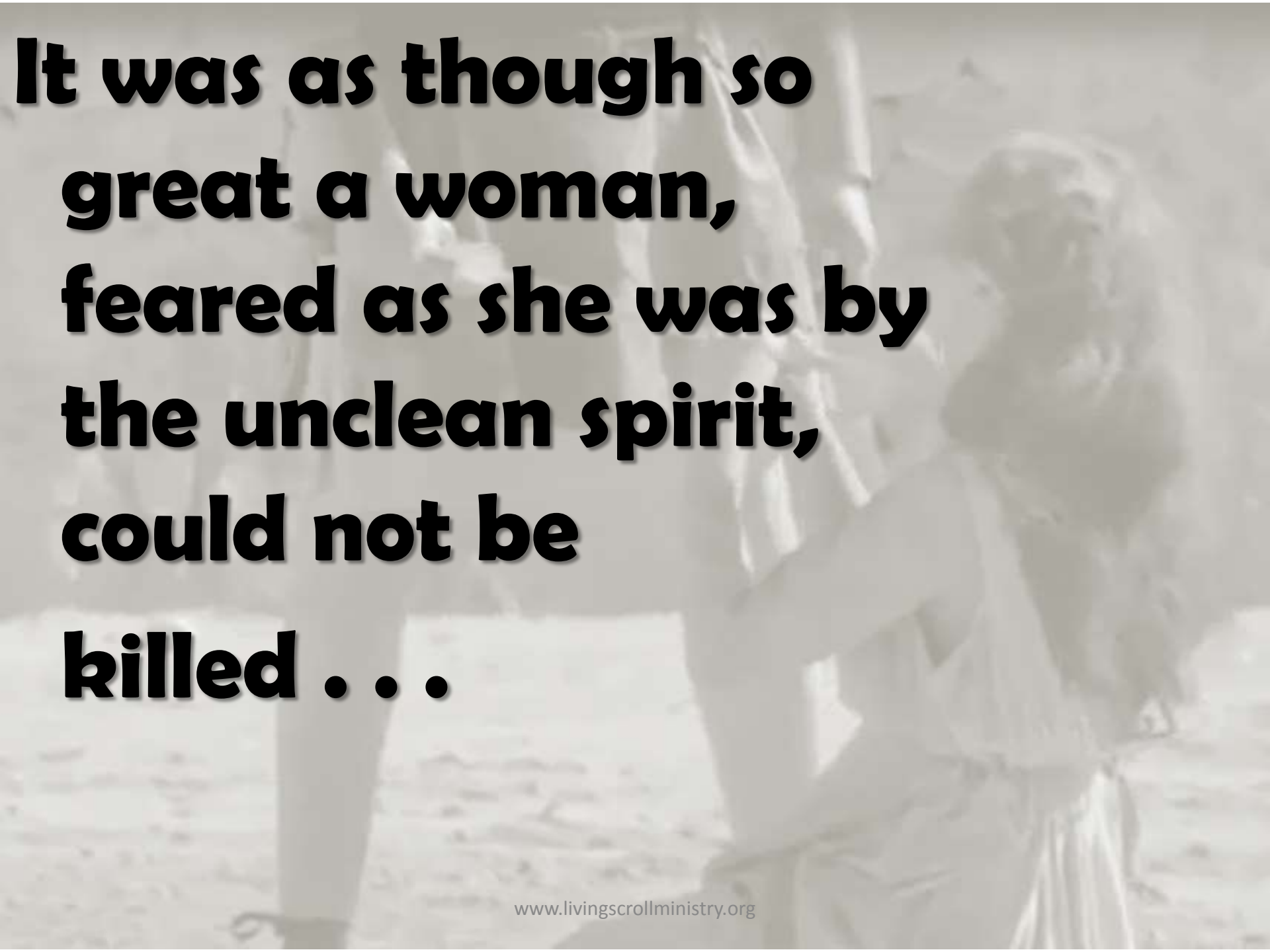
**who being the first to
climb the stairway (in
Perpetua vision) was
the first to die.**

**For once again he was
waiting for Perpetua.**

**Perpetua, however,
had yet to taste more
pain. She screamed
as she was struck on
the bone;**

**then she took
the
trembling
hand of the
young
soldier and
guided it to
her throat.**





**It was as though so
great a woman,
feared as she was by
the unclean spirit,
could not be
killed . . .**

**. . . unless she herself were
willing to die.**



GOD
bless
you!

Source

- 1) Torchlighter series
- 2) t2gospel.wordpress.com
- 3) The Acts of the Christian Martyrs texts and translation by Herbert Musurillo (c) Oxford University Press, 1972

