

My journal entry for July 16, 2026.

Today's journal entry concerns Maria's vision of St. Perpetua and her martyrdom. Reading the lives of the saints and martyrs is not the same as seeing their martyrdom. Watching tells me everything, more than what a movie could tell. I'm shown the person, the honest, living reality of their life's choice and the why that can only be explained by that mis-appreciated, mis-assigned thing, love.

Where are the Perpetuas today? It seems that woman is no more; woman's love has been lost; the mothers' love has been lost; the wife's and daughter's love has been lost. Watching and hearing Perpetua's love burst forth in all its simplicity and purity restores the ideal I want for everyone, especially myself. I want to hope and believe like that.

And what happened to that gladiator that made the final thrust? I want to know... I think I understand how Rome was converted if it met real Christians, face-to-face, when life matters. Where is that today? I think it's hiding, waiting for its moment of truth again. Let's find it, let's live it...

I am *Anonymous*

The Notebooks 1944

March 1

At about 5 p.m. Jesus says to me:

"It was not my intention to give you this vision this afternoon. I intended to have you live through another episode in the 'gospels of faith.' But a desire has been expressed to Me by someone deserving to be heard. And I am complying. In spite of your pains, see, observe, and describe. Give your pains to Me and the description to your brothers and sisters."

And in spite of my *very intense* pains -- whereby it seems to me that my head is clasped in a bite starting from the nape of my neck, coming together on my brow, and moving on down my spinal column, a terrible ache because of which I thought meningitis was about to erupt, and then I fainted -- I am writing. This is

very intense even now. But Jesus allows me to manage to write so as to obey. Afterwards... afterwards what will be will be.

I assure you, in the meantime, that I am going from surprise to surprise, for, first of all, I am facing some Africans, or at least Arabs, whereas I always thought these saints were Europeans. For I didn't have the slightest idea of their social and physical condition or their martyrdom. I knew about Agnes' life and death. But as for these! It is as if I am reading an unknown tale.

As an initial illustration, before I fainted, I saw an amphitheater more or less like the Coliseum (but not in ruins), which was at the moment not occupied by a crowd. Only a very beautiful Moorish girl was standing upright in the middle, upraised from the ground, radiant with a beatific light issuing from her dark body and dark clothing covering her. She seemed to be the angel of the locality. She looked at me and smiled. I then fainted and saw nothing more.

Now the vision is being completed. I am in a building which, with its lack of any and every comfort and harsh appearance, I see must be a fortress being used as a jail. It is not the Tullianum dungeon I saw yesterday. Here there are little rooms and superelevated corridors. But they have so little space and light and are endowed with so many bars and iron doors covered with bolts that the trace of superiority they possess as regards their position is canceled out by their severity, which negates even the slightest idea of freedom.

The Moorish girl I saw in the amphitheater is sitting on a wooden board which serves as a bed, chair, and table. Now she is not emitting light, but only great peace. She is holding a baby a few months old on her lap and giving him milk. She rocks him and cuddles him with an act of love. The baby plays with his young mother, rubs his very swarthy face against his mother's dark breast, and clings to and separates from it with impetuous milk-filled chortles.

The girl is quite pretty. An even, rather rounded face, with large, very lovely velvet-black eyes, a small, tumid mouth filled with very white, even teeth, and black, rather curly hair which is nevertheless held in place by tight braids coiling around her head.

Her skin color is olive brown, not very dark. Even among us Italians, especially in southern Italy, you see that color, only a little lighter. When she gets up to put the baby to sleep, going back and forth across the cell, I see that she is tall and graciously curvaceous. Not excessively buxom, but quite shapely. She looks like a queen with her dignified bearing. She is wearing a simple dress almost as dark as her skin which falls in soft folds over her lovely body.

An old man who is also a Moor comes in. The jailer lets him enter by opening the heavy door. And he then withdraws. The girl turns and smiles. The old man looks at her and weeps. They remain like this for a few minutes.

The old man's affliction then bursts out. He anxiously begs his daughter to have mercy on his suffering. "It is not for this," he says, "that I begot you. I have loved you from among all my children, the joy and light of my home. And now you want to destroy yourself and your poor father, who feels his heart dying from the pain you are causing him. Daughter, I have been begging you for months. You have wanted to resist and have experienced jail -- you that were born in the midst of comfort. By bowing down to the powerful, I obtained the possibility for you to continue in your house, though as a prisoner. I promised the judge I would sway you with my authority as a father. He now mocks me because he sees you don't care about that authority. This is not what the doctrine you say is perfect ought to teach you. What God is the one you are following, then, who tells you not to respect the man who begot you, not to love him, for if you loved me, you would not cause me such pain? Your obstinacy, which not even pity for that innocent man has overcome, has brought you to be torn away from that house and locked in this prison. But now there is no longer talk of prison, but of death. And an atrocious one. Why? Who for? Who do you want to die for? Does your God need your and our sacrifice -- my own and that of your child, who will no longer have a mother? Does his triumph need your blood and my tears to be fulfilled? How can this be? The wild beast loves her offspring, and the more she holds them to her breast, the more she loves them. I was hopeful about this, too, and therefore got you permission to

be able to feed your child. But you don't change. And after having fed and warmed him and made yourself a pillow for him to sleep on, you now reject him and abandon him with no regret. I am not asking you for myself. But on his behalf. You have no right to make him an orphan. Your God has no right to do this. How can I believe He is better than ours if He wants these cruel sacrifices? You make me detest and curse Him more and more. Oh no, oh no! What am I saying? Oh, Perpetua! Forgive me! Forgive your aged father driven mad by sorrow. Do you want me to love your God? I will love Him more than myself, but remain among us. Tell the judge that you give in. You will then love whichever of the gods on earth you wish to. You will then turn your father into whatever you like. I no longer call you a daughter. I am no longer your father, but your servant, your slave, and you are my lady. Dominate, command, and I will obey you. But have mercy, have mercy. Save yourself while you still can. There is no more time to wait. Your companion has given birth to her child -- you know, and nothing is holding back the sentence any more. Your son will be snatched from you. You will no longer see him. Maybe tomorrow, maybe this very day. Have mercy, daughter! Have mercy on me and on him, who can't speak yet, but you see how he looks at you and smiles! How he is pleading for your love! Oh! Lady, my lady, light and queen of my heart, light and joy of your child, have mercy, have mercy!"

The old man is on his knees and kisses the hem of his daughter's dress and embraces her knees and tries to take her hand, which she rests on her heart to quell its human agony. But nothing sways her.

"It is because of the love I have for you and for him that I remain faithful to my Lord," she replies. "No earthly glory Will give your white head and this innocent child so much dignity as my death will. You will arrive at Faith. And what would you then say about me if, out of a moment's cowardice, I renounced Faith? My God does not need my blood and your tears to triumph. But you need them to arrive at Life. And this innocent child does to remain in it. For the sake of the life you gave me and the joy he has given to me, I obtain for you the Life that is true, eternal, and

blessed. No, my God does not teach a lack of love for fathers and children, but true love. Sorrow is now making you rave, father. But later the light will shine in you, and you will bless me. I will bring it to you from heaven. And it's not that I love this innocent child less, now that I have let myself be emptied of blood to feed him. If pagan ferocity were not against us Christians, I would be his most loving mother, and he would be the aim of my life. But God is greater than the flesh born of me, and the love which should be given to Him is infinitely greater. Not even in the name of motherhood can I subordinate love for Him to love for a child. No. You are not the slave of your daughter. I am still your daughter and obedient in all things except in this: to renounce the true God for you. Let men's will be carried out. And if you love me, follow me in Faith. There you will find your daughter, and forever, for the true Faith confers Paradise, and my holy Shepherd has already welcomed me into his Kingdom."

And here the vision changes, for I see other people entering the cell: three men and a very young woman. They kiss and embrace one another. The jailers also come in to take Perpetua's child away from her. She wavers as if stricken by a blow. But she recovers.

Her companion comforts her: "I, too, have already lost my child, but that child is not lost. God was good to me. He granted that I might beget my child for Him, and that baptism is adorned with my blood. It was a girl... and as beautiful as a flower. Your child is beautiful, too, Perpetua. But to have them live in Christ these flowers need our blood. We shall thus give them a twofold life."

Perpetua takes her baby, whom she had placed on the couch, filled to satiety and content, and hands him to her father, after having given him a light kiss so as not to awaken him. She also blesses him and traces out a cross on his forehead, hands, feet, and chest, wetting her fingers with the tears falling from her eyes. She does everything so gently that the child smiles in his sleep as if being caressed.

Then those condemned go out and are taken in the midst of soldiers into a dark cavea in the amphitheater to await martyr-

dom. They spend the hours praying and singing sacred hymns, exhorting one another to be heroic.

Now I, too, seem to be in the amphitheater I previously saw. It is filled with a mostly dark-skinned crowd. There are also many Romans, however. The crowd in the tiers is rumbling and getting excited. The light is intense, in spite of the curtain extending over the sunny area.

The six martyrs in a row are brought into the arena, where I think some cruel games have already taken place, for it is stained with blood. The crowd whistles and curses. The martyrs, with Perpetua at the head, come in singing. They stop in the middle of the arena, and one of the six turns to the crowd.

"It would be better for you to show your courage by following us in Faith and not insulting the defenseless, who respond to your hatred by praying for you and loving, you. The rods with which you have beaten us, the jail, the tortures, and having torn children away from two mothers do not change our hearts. You liars, who say you are civilized and wait for a woman to give birth so as to kill her afterwards, separating her body and her heart from her child; you cruel people, who lie to kill because you know none of us does you harm, and least of all mothers, who think of nothing but their child. As regards either love for God or love for our neighbor. And we would give up our lives three, seven, or a hundred times for our God and for you. So that you may come to love Him, and we pray for you while Heaven is already opening over us. Our Father, who art in Heaven..." The six holy martyrs are praying on their knees.

A low-level gate opens, and the beasts burst forth; though they are so swift in their race that they look like fireballs, I think they are wild bulls or bison. Like a catapult adorned with pointed horns, they assault the defenseless group. They lift them on their horns, fling them into the air as if they were a bunch of rags, slam them to the ground again, and trample on them. They flee once more like those maddened with light and noise and attack again.

Perpetua, caught like a twig by a bull's horns, is hurled many meters away. But, though wounded, she gets up again, and her first concern is to rearrange the clothing over her breast which

has been torn off. Holding it close with her right hand, she drags herself towards Felicita, who has fallen on her back and is half disemboweled, and she covers and bolsters her, making herself a brace for the wound. The beasts come back to lacerate until the six, barely alive, are lying on the ground. The animal-keepers then take the brutes back in, and the gladiators finish the work.

But, whether out of mercy or inexperience, the one close to Perpetua is unable to kill. He wounds her, but he does not catch the right point. "Brother, here; let me help you," she says with a faint voice and a very sweet smile. And, leaning the point of the sword against her right carotid artery, she says, "Jesus, I entrust myself to You! Thrust, brother. I bless you." And she moves her head towards the sword to help the inexperienced, distraught gladiator.

Jesus says:

"This is the martyrdom of my martyr Perpetua, of her companion Felicita, and of her other companions. Guilty of being a Christian, still a Catechumen. But how intrepid in her love for Me! To the martyrdom of the flesh she joined that of the heart, and Felicita, along with her. If they were able to love their slayers, how must they have loved their children?

"They were young and happy with love for a husband and parents. With love for their children. But God should be loved above all things. And they love Him this way. They tear out their insides in separating from their children, but Faith does not die. They believe in the other life. Firmly. They know it belongs to those who were faithful and lived according to God's Law.

"Law in the law is love. For the Lord God, for their neighbor What greater love than to give one's life for those whom one loves, just as the Savior gave it for humanity, loved by Him? They give their lives to love Me and to bring others to love Me and thus possess eternal Life. They want children and parents, spouses, brothers and sisters, and all those they love with the love of kinship or spiritual love -- their assassins are in the latter group, for I said, 'Love those who persecute you' -- to have Life in my Kingdom. And, to guide them to this Kingdom of mine, with their blood they trace out a sign which goes from Earth to Heaven,

which shines and calls.

"To suffer? To die? What is it? It is a fleeting instant. Whereas eternal life remains. That instant of pain is nothing compared to the future of joy awaiting them. The beasts? The swords? What are they? Blessed be these, which give Life.

"The only concern -- for whoever is holy is holy in everything -- was to preserve modesty. At that moment, they are concerned not about the wound, but about the disheveled clothing. For, if they are not virgins, they are still modest. *True Christianity always provides spiritual virginity. It maintains this beautiful purity even where marriage and offspring have removed the seal which makes virgins angels.*

*"The human body washed by Baptism is a temple of the Spirit of God. It should not be violated, then, with immodest fashions and immodest customs. From the woman -- especially from the woman -- who does not respect herself there can come only profligate offspring and a corrupt society, from which God withdraws and in which Satan plows and sows his torments making you despair."*