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# Climbing the Dragon's Ladder: The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas

*Andrea Lorenzo Molinari*

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**Climbing the Dragon's Ladder: The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas** Andrea Lorenzo Molinari Perpetua was a martyr (d. March 7, 203), a mystic and, interestingly enough, the first known woman Christian writer. She left behind a diary that outlined her personal experiences, feelings and visions as she languished in prison, awaiting her execution. Sometime after her death, a Christian eyewitness to these brutal events edited her journal and appended additional relevant materials such as a vision recorded by one of her companions and a 'blow by blow' account of the martyrs' final moments in the arena. This work is known as the Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas. Climbing the Dragon's Ladder, is a fictional attempt to expand on the Martyrdom account in a way that is historically, theologically and culturally sensitive to the early third century A.D. For example, the scene that depicts an early Christian baptismal ceremony is directly dependent on Tertullian's treatise, On Baptism (ca. A.D. 205) and the ancient Christian liturgical source, Apostolic Tradition (ca. A.D. 215). Tertullian, a theologian and Church father, lived in Carthage during the exact period in which Perpetua's life and death took place. Apostolic Tradition represents the first extant baptismal ritual of the Christian Church and agrees in many ways with the information found in On Baptism. In short, this novel presents actual historical events - both the events of Perpetua and her companions' life and martyrdom and those of the larger historical period - and weaves a believable back-story of ordinary men and women who are caught up in events that test their faith in God, their commitment to Christ and their relationships with those around them. This is a story of faith under fire, of courage in the face of terrible loss and deprivation and of the human will to hope, even when things are at their darkest.

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