

A SERVICE OF HEALING

PERPETUA AND FELICITY

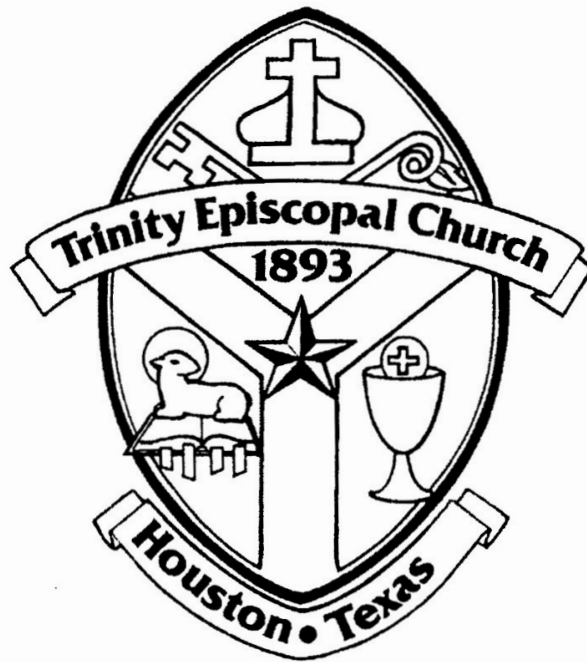
MARTYRS

202

VIGIL

MARCH 6, 2024

6:00 p.m.



The Reverend Hannah E. Atkins Romero, Rector
The Reverend Dale Klitzke, Priest Associate

Alex Jones, Organist and Choirmaster
April Sloan-Hubert, Co-Director of the Trinity Jazz Ensemble
Pelayo Parlade, Co-Director of the Trinity Jazz Ensemble

***Making God's Presence Real
By Sharing Christ's Life-Changing Love***

A Public Service of Healing

Perpetua and Felicity

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The Word of God

Presider: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

People: And also with you.

Presider: Let us pray.

After a period of silence, the Minister then says the following Collects.

Gracious God, we commend to your loving care all who suffer, especially those who come here seeking your healing grace for themselves and for others. Give them patience and hope in their distress; strengthen and uphold them in mind and body; and grant, by your intervention, that all your people may be made whole according to your desire, through Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

O God, the King of Saints, who strengthened your servants Perpetua, Felicity, and their companions to make a good confession and to encourage one another in the time of trial: Grant that we who cherish their blessed memory may share their pure and steadfast faith, and win with them the palm of victory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

First Lesson

Deuteronomy 2: 1-2, 5-9

Moses said: So now, Israel, give heed to the statutes and ordinances that I am teaching you to observe, so that you may live to enter and occupy the land that the Lord, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. You must neither add anything to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of the Lord your God with which I am charging you.

See, just as the Lord my God has charged me, I now teach you statutes and ordinances for you to observe in the land that you are about to enter and occupy. You must observe them diligently, for this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!" For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is whenever we call to him? And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today?

But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 124

- 1 If the LORD had not been on our side, *
let Israel now say;
- 2 If the LORD had not been on our side, *
when enemies rose up against us;
- 3 Then would they have swallowed us up alive *
in their fierce anger toward us;
- 4 Then would the waters have overwhelmed us *
and the torrent gone over us;
- 5 Then would the raging waters *
have gone right over us.
- 6 Blessed be the LORD! *
he has not given us over to be a prey for their teeth.
- 7 We have escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowler; *
the snare is broken, and we have escaped.
- 8 Our help is in the Name of the LORD, *
the maker of heaven and earth.

Second Lesson

Hebrews 10: 32-39

But recall those earlier days when, after you had been enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to abuse and persecution, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion for those who were in prison, and you cheerfully accepted the plundering of your possessions, knowing that you yourselves possessed something better and more lasting. Do not, therefore, abandon that confidence of yours; it brings a great reward. For you need endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. For yet "in a very little while, the one who is coming will come and will not delay; but my righteous one will live by faith. My soul takes no pleasure in anyone who shrinks back." But we are not among those who shrink back and so are lost, but among those who have faith and so are saved .

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

The Gospel

Matthew 29: 9-14

Jesus said, "They will hand you over to be tortured and will put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of my name. Then many will fall away, and they will betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come."

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

A Litany of Healing

The Celebrant introduces the Litany with this bidding

Let us name before God those for whom we offer our prayers.

The People audibly name those for whom they are interceding. A Person appointed then leads the Litany

God the Father, your will for all people is health and salvation;

We praise you and thank you, O Lord.

God the Son, you came that we might have life, and might have it more abundantly;

We praise you and thank you, O Lord.

God the Holy Spirit, you make our bodies the temple of your presence;

We praise you and thank you, O Lord.

Holy Trinity, one God, in you we live and move and have our being;

We praise you and thank you, O Lord.

All you Holy Angels, Archangels, and bodiless powers of heaven;

Stand beside us to guide and guard us on our way.

Holy Mary, Mother of God;

Pray for us and the people of the world.

For all who grieve the death of family, friends, and citizens;

Give them courage and strength to meet the days ahead, O Lord, and the consolation of your love.

Pour out your healing grace on all who are sick, injured, or disabled, that they may be made whole;

Hear us, O Lord of life.

Grant to all who seek your guidance, and to all who are afraid, anxious, or overwhelmed, a knowledge of your will and an awareness of your presence;

Hear us, O Lord of life.

Give peace, courage, and hope to all who suffer in body, mind, or spirit;

Hear us, O Lord of life.

Restore to wholeness whatever is broken by human sin, in our lives, in our nation, and in the world;

Hear us, O Lord of life.

Bless physicians, nurses, and all others who minister to the sick and suffering, keep them safe and healthy, and grant them wisdom and skill, sympathy, and patience;

Hear us, O Lord of life.

Open our eyes to see that you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth and that our life and death are with each other;

Hear us, O Lord of life.

Give us compassion for those in need, patience in this time of distress in our country, and love for our neighbors;

Hear us, O Lord of life.

Let our hearts be not afraid;

Hear us, O Lord of life.

You are the Lord who does wonders:

You have declared your power among the peoples.

With you, O Lord, is the well of life:

And in your light we see light.

Let us pray:

A period of silence follows.

God of all power and love, we give thanks for your unfailing presence and the hope you provide in times of uncertainty and loss. Send your Holy Spirit to enkindle in us your holy fire. Revive us to live as Christ's body in the world: a people who pray, worship, learn, break bread, share life, heal neighbors, bear good news, seek justice, rest and grow in the Spirit. Wherever and however we gather, unite us in common prayer and send us in common mission, that we and the whole creation might be restored and renewed, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Confession of Sin

The Celebrant says

Let us confess our sins to God.

Silence may be kept.

Minister and People:

God of all mercy,

we confess that we have sinned against you, opposing your will in our lives.

**We have denied your goodness in each other, in ourselves,
and in the world you have created.**

**We repent of the evil that enslaves us,
the evil we have done,**

and the evil done on our behalf.

**Forgive, restore, and strengthen us
through our Savior Jesus Christ,
that we may abide in your love
and serve only your will. Amen.**

The Priest, stands and says

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through the grace of Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life.
Amen.

Prayers for Healing

*The minister may invite each person to give her or his name and any particular request for prayer.
The minister then prays silently, then prays aloud using one of the following forms or similar words.*

I lay my hands upon you in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ, praying you will be strengthened and filled with God's grace, that you may know the healing power of the Spirit. *Amen.*

After all are anointed

May the God who goes before you through desert places by night and by day be your companion and guide; may your journey be with the saints; may the Holy Spirit be your strength, and Christ your clothing of light, in whose name we pray. *Amen.*

Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

Blessing

May God the Father bless us, God the Son heal us, God the Holy Spirit give us strength. May God the holy and undivided Trinity guard our bodies, save our souls, and bring us safely to his heavenly country; where he lives and reigns for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Dismissal

Officiant Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
People **Amen.**

Perpetua and Felicity, Martyrs

Vibia Perpetua, born in 181, was a young widow, mother of an infant, and owner of several slaves, including Felicity and Revocatus. With two other young Carthaginians, Secundulus and Saturninus, they were all catechumens preparing together for baptism.

Early in the third century, Emperor Septimius Severus decreed that all persons should sacrifice to the emperor. Many Christians, confessing faith in the one Lord Jesus Christ, believed that they could not do this. Perpetua, Felicity, and the other catechumens were arrested and held in prison under miserable conditions. At the public hearing before the proconsul, Perpetua refused even the entreaties of her aged father. Pointing to a water pot, she asked him, "See that pot lying there? Can you call it by any other name than what it is?" Her father answered, "Of course not." Perpetua responded, "Neither can I call myself by any name other than what I am—a Christian."

Felicity was eight months pregnant at the time they were arrested. Because pregnant women could not be executed, she was anxious lest the others be executed apart from her, while she would be condemned to die at another time alone. Two days before the scheduled execution, however, she gave birth to a baby girl, who was adopted and raised by an anonymous Christian woman in Carthage.

A document that is attributed to Perpetua recounts the visions that she had while in prison. One was of a ladder to heaven, which she climbed to reach a large garden; another was of her brother who had died when young of a dreadful disease, but was now well and drinking the water of life; the last was of herself as a warrior battling the devil and defeating him to win entrance to the gate of life. "And I awoke, understanding that I should fight, not with beasts, but with the Devil." On March 7, 203, Perpetua and Felicity, encouraging one another to bear bravely whatever pain they might suffer, were sent to the arena to be mangled by a leopard, a boar, a bear, and a savage cow. Perpetua and Felicity, tossed by the cow, were bruised and disheveled, but Perpetua, "lost in spirit and ecstasy," hardly knew that anything had happened. To her companions she cried, "Stand fast in the faith and love one another. And do not let what we suffer be a stumbling block to you."

Eventually, both Perpetua and Felicity were put to death by a stroke of a sword through the throat. The soldier who struck Perpetua was inept. His first blow merely pierced her throat between the bones. She shrieked with pain, then aided the man to guide the sword properly. The report of her death concludes, "Perhaps so great a woman, feared by the unclean spirit, could not have been killed unless she so willed it.

from *Lesser Feasts and Fasts 2022*, page 126

A HISTORY OF TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Trinity Episcopal Church of Houston has existed as a house of worship and a center of its community for over a century. As such, it has adapted to the changing nature of the city, as Houston grew from a regional town of approximately 40,000 souls to a dynamic metropolitan giant, the fourth largest city in the United States. With a congregation that grew from a few founding members in the 1890s to several thousand parishioners at its peak, Trinity Church is an example of how spiritual people have contended with the challenges presented during a city's most crucial period of urban development.

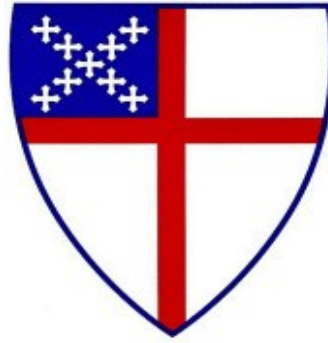
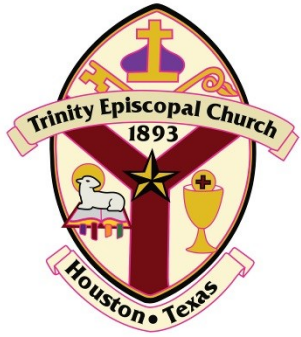
Founded in 1893 as a mission of Christ Church, Houston's first Episcopal church, Trinity located southwest of downtown. After a quarter of a century of existence in wooden buildings, Trinity parish built its present imposing structure (1917 - 1921) in Houston's South End, at the corner of Main Street and Holman Avenue. That structure, designed by Ralph Adams Cram of Boston and William Ward Watkin of Houston became an architectural landmark constructed in the neo-Gothic style with Texas limestone and a 97 foot bell tower.

During the late 1910s and 1920s, Trinity entered an era of explosive growth, paralleling that of the city, and became an important center of the Episcopal faith. The congregation's many youth and adult activities were community events that attracted wide attention among the general populace. An integral part of its city, Trinity likewise maintained special relationships with Houstonians of other faiths. With a membership numbering 1,900 parishioners in 1930, Trinity emerged as the largest Episcopal parish in the Diocese of Texas and one of the largest in the nation.

After World War II, Houston's growth presented Trinity with perhaps its greatest challenge. As the city physically expanded into the new postwar suburbs, Trinity's membership began to decline. Rather than abandon its historic location, the congregation showed itself to be steadfast. Resurrecting itself from this period, Trinity reaffirmed its mission, this time as a beacon in the inner city where it has become a leading institution in the heart of Houston, determined to enhance the quality of urban life for everyone.

While our neighborhood has gone through many changes, the parish has remained steadfast, and actively ministers to a diverse congregation and to the poor in its midst. As the Midtown Houston neighborhood began redeveloping, starting in the early 2000s, Trinity Church has rededicated itself to its spiritual mission, and has become an active part of the Midtown area for music and other creative art expressions.





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