



The Passion of the Holy Virgins: Hope, Faith, Charity, and their Mother, Wisdom Passio Sanctarum Virginum: Spei, Fidei, Karitatis, et Matris earum Sapientiae

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Introduction to the Source

This twelfth-century martyrdom narrative is found in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 462, ff. 136r-142v. The complete manuscript can be viewed online at <https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/sn284rv5537>.



"The Passion of the Holy Virgins: Hope, Faith, Charity, and their Mother, Wisdom"
"Passio Sanctarum Virginum: Spei, Fidei, Karitatis, et Matris earum Sapientiae"

Incipit passio sanctarum virginum: Spei, Fidei, Karitatis, et matris earum Sapientiae [kal. Aug.]

Mulier quedam nomine Sapientia de genere primo ualde diues, Romam aduenit cum filiabus suis. Hae decorissime nimium fuerunt. Et cum ibi essent, cucurrerunt accipere signum Domini nostri et saluatoris Iesu Christi. Erudite enim a matre fuerunt iam pridem, ut Christianitatis nomen firmiter tenerent. Quae instructae a matre sanctis monitis, et Christi edocte eloquiis, proficiebant et crescebant cotidie in Dei timore. Gaudebat quoque mater earum et exultabat in Domino: orans semper Dominum nostrum Iesum Christum, ut ampliorem fidem et tolerantiam daret paruulis eius, et in multa uirtute tolerantie proficerent.

Rudem enim agebant aetatem, prophetarum quoque uerba in corde semper tractantes, et Deo psallentes erant. Euntibus uero illis ad aecclesiam suam, haec in corde suo cogitabant, ut pro Domino paterentur. Et dum frequenter ad aecclesiam orandi causa irent, quidam maligno spiritu incitatus, uenit ad imperatorem et dixit ei, "Mulier quaedam cum tribus puellis nescio unde huc aduenit, et nostris matronis persuasit, ut colerent unum Deum et filium eius Iesum Christum, et fraudauit nos a matrimoniali coniugio. Nam ad cibum atque ad potum, iam nolunt, cum conuenire paeniter nolunt."

Audiens haec Adrianus, mox praetores misit qui eas exhiberent. Ibant Dei uirgines, cum matre sua gaudentes. Ut autem appropinquarent ad palatium regis, signauerunt se signaculo Christi. Erat uero gratia Christi, confirmans eas. Intransibus itaque eis in palatium, Adrianus intuebatur eas, et uidens earum facies gloriosas, obstupuit propter excellentem gloriam Dei, quibus respondere non potuit. Post paululum autem uocans matrem uirginum, interrogauit eam dicens, "Cuius dignatatis es, uel quae circa te sunt? Ex corde enim fecistis haec in Romanorum ciuitate dominatores deos negantes, qui uniuersam urbem fabricauerunt; nomen uero tuum qui uocetur expone." Quae dixit, "Christiana." Adrianus imperator dixit, "Interrogo nomen commune secundum homines."

Illa respondit, "Primum quidem ineffabili nomine Christiana sum; a parentibus uero nomen quod accepi,

Here begins the passion of the holy virgins Hope, Faith, Charity, and their mother Wisdom (Kalends¹ of August)

A certain woman by the name of Wisdom, who was very wealthy and of a most noble family, came to Rome with her daughters. They were exceedingly beautiful. When they had arrived, they ran to receive the sign of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for they had already been taught by their mother in such a way that they held on firmly to the name of Christianity. Indeed, instructed by their mother in sacred counsels and educated through the sayings of Christ, they advanced and grew each day in their fear of God. Their mother also rejoiced and exulted in the Lord: she constantly prayed to our Lord Jesus Christ that he would give her little ones greater faith and endurance, as well as that they themselves would make great progress in the virtue of endurance.

Although they were young, they always turned over the words of the prophets in their hearts and sang psalms to God. They thought about these things as they went to church, so that they could open themselves to the Lord. While they often went to church to pray, someone incited by an evil spirit went to the emperor and said to him, "There is a certain woman with three daughters. I don't know from where she has come to this place, but she has persuaded our married women to worship one God and his son Jesus Christ and has thus cheated us out of our marital rights². For now our wives take interest in neither food nor water, and completely reject intercourse."

Hearing these words, Hadrian immediately sent praetors to summon them. The virgins of God came along rejoicing with their mother, and when they approached the palace of the emperor, they crossed themselves with the sign of Christ, whose grace was indeed present and gave them strength. Therefore, as they entered into the palace, Hadrian watched them and saw their faces, which were full of glory. He was struck dumb by the extraordinary glory of God and had no response for them. However, after a short time he called the mother of the virgins and questioned her, saying, "What is your rank, and who are these girls around you? For you have all intentionally committed these deeds, denying the gods in the city of the Romans, although they have made the whole city. Well, tell us the name by which you are called." She said, "Christian." The emperor Hadrian said, "I am asking for your common name as is customary among men.

She responded, "I am indeed first and foremost known by that unutterable name of 'Christian', but as for the name



dicor Sapientia; de genere primo quod eminenti existens Italie. Misericors uero et pius Dominus meus Iesus Christus. Perduxit me in Romanorum ciuitatem, et donatas mihi ab ipso paruulas meas in castitate custodiens; efferam eas ei munus." Audiens Adrianus sermones hos, iussit eam ad quendam primum ciuitatis Romanorum usque inquisitionis certamen consistere.

Morantibus quoque his in domo Palladii cuiusdam sublimis, caepit beata Sapientia mater uirginum renouare filias suas in spiritu sancto, dicens eis, "Filiae meae, erudiui uos optimis litteris, nec autem custodite eas. In quem enim spem uestram posuistis, ipse uos ad certamen fidei uocat. Nolite ergo etatem uestram rudem attendere, sed Domini armis munite uos, meque uestram matrem conorate de uestro agone, ut liberetis me ab eo quod me onerauit peccato. Si enim praemisero uos ad militiam ueri regis, magne iam legate praecedite me perfecte, et per uestram certamen etiam et ego innouata efficiar in regno caelesti, et aduocabunt me ad uos ii qui Deo placuerunt, et ego commorans uobiscum ero in aeternum. Ita filiae meae et uiscera mea miseremini uestrae matri, et certate aduersus artifices maligne artis excitantes uobis tormenta. Confitemini patrem Deum, eique unigenitum filium omnipotentem Iesum Christum Dominum nostrum, qui reddet coronam et praemium patientiae uestrae."

His autem sermonibus seminatibus a matre in cordibus uirginum, spiritu parentalis sapientiae et uirtutis crescebant. Signo autem crucis per omnem horam non obliuisciebantur semper signari, orabant enim ut perfecte coronarentur, et praemium suae certaminis acciperent. Et ille animo uiuaces dicebant matri suae, "Domina mater nostra, gaudens et exultans perduc nos ante tribunal Adriani imperatoris, et uidebis fortissimum certamen nostrum, et confessionem fidei nostrae. Saluator enim noster Iesus Christus, cuius castis eloquiis erudite sumus; ipse de caelo uidens finem et patientiam nostram, adortans nos dabit ad interrogationem responsum." Mater uero earum dicebat, "Filiae meae, ego quidem uos genui, sed nichil est uitae huius mundi temporalis, quae ad modicum paret, postea uero exterminabitur. Nunc sustinentes temporales penas, hereditabitis uitam aeternam, et ego exultans sequar uos, perfectas hostias uos offerens Domino."

Tribus itaque diebus transactis, iussit imperator

which I received from my parents, I am called Wisdom, and descended from the most noble family which presides over Italy. However, my merciful and pious Lord is Jesus Christ. He led me into the city of the Romans, and keeps my daughters, whom he gave to me, in a state of chastity. I shall present them as a gift to Him." Hearing this speech, Hadrian ordered her to stay in the home of a certain noble of the city of the Romans until the interrogation.

While they were staying in the house of a certain high-ranking Palladius, the blessed Wisdom, mother of virgins, began to renew her daughters in the Holy Spirit, saying to them, "My daughters, I have given you the best literary education, but do not hold on to this knowledge, for He Himself, in whom you have placed your hope, is now calling you to a test of faith. Do not therefore pay heed to your young age, but guard yourselves with the weapons of the Lord, and crown me, your mother, through your agony, so that you may free me from that sin which burdened me. For if I should send you ahead of me to the service of the true king, then go before me in perfection as great legates. Through your struggle, I shall also be made new in the kingdom of Heaven; those who have pleased God will call me to you, and I shall stay with you for eternity. In this way should you, my daughters and my hearts³, have mercy upon your mother, and fight against the practitioners of evil arts as they torture you. Trust in God your Father, and in His only begotten son, the all-powerful Jesus Christ our Lord, who shall bestow a crown and prize upon you for your patience."

When their mother had planted the seeds of these words **had been planted** into the hearts of the virgins, they grew in spirit with her wisdom and virtue. However, they did not forget to constantly make the sign of the cross throughout every hour, while they prayed that they should be crowned perfectly and accept the prize of their struggle. Energetic in spirit, they said to their mother, "Our lady mother, be joyful and exultant as you lead us before the court of emperor Hadrian, and you will see our extremely brave struggle and the confession of our faith. After all, our savior is Jesus Christ, and we have been educated in his chaste sayings; He will watch our death and suffering from Heaven and will speak for us when we are judged." In turn, their mother said, "My daughters, whom I bore, the life of this temporary world is nothing; it appears for only a short while and is exterminated afterwards. By now enduring temporary punishments, you shall inherit eternal life, and I shall follow you exulting, offering you as perfect sacrifices to the Lord."

When three days had passed, the emperor Hadrian ordered



Adrianus adduci eas, et cum ducerentur, sequebatur eas mater gaudens et exultans. Ut autem ingresse sunt Palatium, Adrianus imperator dixit ad eas, "O infantule sacratae; uideo uestram pulchritudinem, et compatio uobis. Rogo ergo uos, misereamini uestrae matri, et florem uestrae etatis nolite perdere. Credite mihi tamquam filie patri, et sacrificate dominatoribus totius orbis. Et si in hoc consenseritis mihi, filias uos appellabo et in deliciis eritis, et erit magna gloria adolescentiae uestrae, si imperatoris filiae uocemini. Uocabo prefectos, et locorum principes, duces, et senatum omnem, et militiam meam totam, legibus et uoluntatibus adoptionis filiarum exhibens haec omnia. Si uero non credideritis mihi, multis uos tormentis subitiam, et spem uestram et delicata ac parua uestra membra male et pessime consumam. Et quod superfuerit de membris uestris, canibus in escam periciam. Credite itaque mihi, priusquam incipiam excitare aduersus uos tormenta."

Beatae autem uirgines quasi ex uno ore dixerunt regi, "Nobis tales promissiones non sunt necessariae. Uocantem enim nos nouimus, qui et suscipiet nos tamquam filias perfectas. In hoc enim arma ueritatis suscepimus, ut totius uersutiae tuae machinis resistere possimus, et eius qui ad caelos est ascensus ianuas apertas ingrediamur. Ergo si qua habere te existimes tormenta admoue, ut per ea discas uirtutem quae in nobis est Domini nostri Iesu Christi, et saluatoris nostri." Repletus autem furore Adrianus imperator, uocans matrem uirginum dixit, "Secundum profectum crescentium: dic nomina filiarum tuarum." Quae respondens dixit, "Prima filiarum mearum dicitur Spes, tempus uero etatis eius anni sunt duodecim. Secunda quidem annorum est decem, nomen uero eius est Fides. Tertia autem filia mea Caritas dicitur, anni autem eius sunt nouem."

Tunc imperator uocans Spem, dixit ad eam, "Immola magne et sacre Diane." Spes uero respondens ait, "O insipientia cecitatis humane. Derelinquere me iubes Dominum qui fecit uerbo uniuersa, et adorare idola sine anima, et lapides insensatos."

Audiens imperator hos sermones, ira repletus, iussit eam expoliari et uirgis caedi, donec consentiret immolare. Et duodecim centurionibus mutatis, tactus plagarum in corpore eius non parebant. Et iussit gladio amputare mammas eius, tunc omnes qui ad spectaculum uenerant, uidentes eius aetatem rudem,

that the virgins should be summoned, and their joyful and exultant mother followed them as they were led forth. When they had entered the palace, the emperor Hadrian said to them, "O sacred little children! I see your beauty and feel sorry for you. Therefore I ask you to have mercy upon your mother, and choose not to destroy the flower of your youth. Believe me, just as daughters believe their fathers, and make sacrifice to the rulers of the whole world; and if you should consent to me in this, I will call you my daughters and you will be among my treasures. You will be glorious young women indeed⁴ if you are called the daughters of the emperor. I shall summon the prefects, the local nobles, the leaders, and the entire Senate, not to mention my whole army, and show them all the things which indicate that you have been adopted as my daughters both by the laws and by my wishes. However, if you do not believe me, I shall subject you to many tortures, and destroy your hopes and your tiny tender limbs in evil and horrible ways. Moreover, I shall throw to the dogs, as food, what remains of your limbs. Hence believe me, before I begin to torture you."

However, the blessed virgins said to the king as if with one voice⁵: "We do not need such promises, for we know that he who is calling us will also receive us as perfect daughters. We have taken up the arms of truth in Him, so that we might resist the all the devices of your cunning, and enter the open doors of He who has ascended into Heaven. Therefore, if you think that you have any tortures, apply them, so that in the process you shall learn the virtue of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, which is within us." Filled with anger, the emperor Hadrian addressed the mother of the virgins and said, "Tell us the names of your daughters from the eldest to the youngest." In response, she said, "The eldest of my daughters is called Hope, and she is twelve years of age. The second is ten years old and her name is Faith. My third daughter is called Charity and she is nine years old."

Then, the emperor called Hope and said to her, "Sacrifice to mighty and sacred Diana." Hope answered, saying, "O foolishness of human blindness! You order me to leave the Lord, who made all things with His word, and to adore lifeless idols and senseless stones."

Upon hearing these words, the emperor was filled with rage; he ordered her to be stripped and beaten with switches, until she agreed to make the sacrifice. However, even though twelve centurions were swapped out for one another, the imprints of the blows did not appear upon her body. Hadrian then ordered her breasts to be amputated with a sword. Then



et eminentem pulchritudinem, aliquanto quidem cesam, aliquanto ferro percisam, clamabant populi et dicebant, "Quid enim mali aliquid gesserunt puella, ut tale sumant paenam?" De loco uero unde mammae fuerant percise, lactis fons pro sanguine defluebat.

Spes uero dicebat imperatori, "Hae sunt minae tuae antiquissime? Ecce tot ac tantis centurionibus fatigatis torquendo me; nichil sensit caro mea plagarum tuarum. Nec uirgarum tactus in corpore meo est. Membra mea amputasti, sed uide inique pro sanguine lac in terram defluere. Existimas autem, quod per haec tormenta transferre possis propositum quod in Christo est fidei, et confessionis meae. Unde audi tiranne et scelerate, quia et si uultis mea membra amputare, nec sic confundar. Ego enim solidata sum in Christo, et non negabo meum dominatorem."

Furens uero Adrianus imperator iussit afferri craticulam, et subter poni flammam ignis ualidam nimis, ita ut craticula similis fieret igni, et sic sanctam Dei uirginem proieceret super eam. Spes uero non curabat ignis incendia, sed requiescebat in craticula tanquam nauis in tranquillitate maris, non illi appropinquantibus undis. Exclamatur autem uoce magna dicens, "Domine Iesu Christe respice ancillam tuam, et ne facias minui terrores ignis, ut possim resistere aduersus machinationes tyranni istius, et dissolue eius temporalem uirtutem." Transactis autem horarum trium spatiis, ignis non tetigit eam. Adrianus uero imperator iussit tolli eam a craticula et poni in sartagine, et praecepit picem, ceram, et bitumen in unum commisceri, ut feruor intolerabilis de sartagine ascenderet. Spes autem respiciens in caelum, et inuocans omnium saluatorem, proiecit se in sartagine, et sic super eam requiescebat, quasi in rore de caelo descendente.

Adrianus uero imperator merens effectus est, pro eo quod non posset persuadere ei, ut immolaret, neque perdere eam in his penis quas exquirere potuit. Cogitabat autem qua pena eam consumeret, postea uero consilium habuit, ut eam gladio perderet. Audiens beata Spes terminum aduersus se a rege difinitum, gaudens deprecabatur matrem suam ut oraret, ut imminem sibi prospectum efficaciter consequeretur, dicebatque sororibus suis, "Scitis unice meae sorores cui consociatae et a quo signate sumus, et ipsa mater nos genuit, quam nunc uidemus

everyone who had come to see the spectacle, perceiving her young age and her outstanding beauty – though she had been somewhat mutilated by the blade and beaten – cried out, saying, "What evil have these girls done, that they should endure such a punishment?" From the very place where her breasts had been cut off, a spring of milk flowed out instead of blood.

Hope said to the emperor: "Are these your threats from before?"⁶ Look, even though so many and such great centurions have exhausted themselves in torturing me, my flesh has felt nothing from your blows, nor have the switches left imprints upon my body. You have cut off my breasts, but look: unusually, milk flowed instead of blood onto the earth. Yet you think that through these tortures you can divert away the faith I have placed in Christ along with my confession. Listen therefore, O wicked tyrant, that even if you wished to cut off my limbs, I would not be thus disturbed, for I have been strengthened in Christ, and I shall not deny my ruler."

Incensed, the emperor Hadrian ordered that a stove should be brought in, and that an exceedingly strong flame should be lighted underneath, so that the stove itself would become just like fire, and the sacred virgin of God could be thrown upon it. However, Hope was not bothered by the inferno of fire, but rested upon the stove just like a ship in a quiet sea, untouched by waves. She cried out in a loud voice, saying, "Lord Jesus Christ, look down upon your handmaid, and do not reduce the horrors of the fire, so that I can resist the machinations of this tyrant and scatter his temporary strength." Even after three hours had passed, the fire did not touch her. Hence, the emperor Hadrian ordered that she be lifted off the stove to be put into a pan, where pitch, wax, and bitumen were mixed together, so that an intolerable heat rose from the pan. However, Hope looked up to Heaven and, invoking the Saviour of all, threw herself into the pan, and thus rested upon it as if amid dew falling from Heaven.

The emperor Hadrian was saddened, because he could neither persuade her to make the sacrifice nor destroy her through the punishments which he was able to devise. He thus thought about a punishment through which he might destroy her, and finally came up with the plan to slay her with a sword. When blessed Hope heard that the end of her life had been ordained by the king, she happily beseeched her mother to pray, that she might easily obtain the prospect which was upon her, and said to her sisters, "You know to whom we have been joined, my only sisters, and by whom we have been marked. We now see the very mother who bore



gaudentem in passionibus nostris, ut perfectas nos uideat. Ne ergo contristemus sanctam matrem nostram, quae nos nouem mensibus in utero portauit, et in singulis dolores et parturiones sustinuit, cuius et lac ab uberibus sanctis percepimus, quae erudiuit nos in Domini sapientia, in uitam eternam nos uocans. Ego enim sorores meae quia uado uiam quam Dominus donare dignatus est, hortor ut et uos in illam inuiolate ingrediamini. De cetero dulcissime sorores, rogo per uestigia mea gradiamini, et honoretis in ea fraternitatis cognitionem, ut bona et maxima promissione pariter perfruamur in regno caelorum."

Et haec dicens, complexa est matrem suam et osculata est eam, et postulans orauit, gaudebat autem et exultabat in Domino. Similiter quoque et sorores suas osculata est, et recedens ab eis praeparauit se ad gladium, extendens ceruicem. Mater uero et sorores clamabant dicentes, "Bene domina nostra alacriter accede ad consummationem, ne metuas gladium, sed perfecte bonam uiam uade, ut et nos animequiores effecte; in tuam uiam bonam ambulantes resistamus tyranno, deuincamusque eius uanam fortitudinem, et consequamur te abeuntem in caelis." Cumque futurum esset ut gladio feriretur Spes, attollens manus orauit dicens, "Benedico te Domine Iesu Christe, qui peccatricem ancillam tuam in hoc stadio confortasti. Memento Domine castissime matris, et unius ventris partus, sororumque mearum consumma passiones. Suscipe Domine animam meam, et extollentem se tyrannum ne differas, sed corripe eius furorem et iram." Et haec dicens, gladio percussa est. Mater uero eius complectens osculata est eam, gaudens et benedicens Deum. Haec uenerabili morte consummata est.

Hadrianus uero imperator uocans ad se Fidem deprecari eam cepit et dicere, "Filia crede mihi quasi patri, et adora sacram et maximam Dianam, et salueris incolumis." Fides respondit, "Scito rex, quia nichil proficies in insanis ac uanis uerbis oblectans me. Ego enim sorori subsisto ei, quae consummata est. Ne ergo seducas te ipsum, sed age quod uis. Per uniuersa enim crudelia tua tormenta poteris agnoscere, quia ipsa me et eam quae defuncta est mater una genuit." Adrianus uero imperator audiens sermones hos, sciens eius responsis quia nichil praeualere posset, iussit spoliata eam contundi neruis. Cum igitur cederetur ipsa, et sex mutatis centurionibus atque defatigatis, Fides indeclinanter

us rejoicing in our sufferings, that she might see us made perfect. Therefore, let us not bring sadness upon our holy mother, who carried us in her womb for nine months, and endured pains and labours for each of us, whose milk we accepted from her holy breasts, and who educated us in the wisdom of the Lord, calling us to eternal life. I exhort you, sisters, as I go upon the road which the Lord has deigned to provide, to also walk upon this same path in purity. As for the rest, my most sweet sisters, I ask that you should follow in my footsteps, so that you should honour our kinship through them, and that we may enjoy the good and great things which have been promised to us in the kingdom of Heaven."

Speaking thus, she embraced and kissed her mother, and prayed in supplication while rejoicing and exulting in the Lord. In a similar way, she kissed her sisters, and withdrawing from them she prepared herself for the sword by stretching out her neck. Then did her mother and sisters cry out, saying, "Go quickly and well to the end of your life, our lady, and do not fear the sword, but walk the good path in perfection, and make us calmer; let us resist the tyrant by walking in your good path, conquer his vain courage, and follow you as you depart into Heaven." When Hope was about to be struck by the sword, she raised up her hands and prayed, saying, "I bless You, Lord Jesus Christ, who have comforted your handmaid in this test. Remember, Lord, my most chaste mother as well as those born from the same womb, and end the sufferings of my sisters. Lord, receive my soul, and do not spare the tyrant as he exalts himself, but take away his rage and anger." As she spoke these words she was struck by the sword. Her then mother embraced and kissed her, giving thanks and blessing God: she was made perfect by her hallowed death.

However, the emperor Hadrian called Faith to him, and began to entreat her, saying, "Believe me, daughter, just as a father: adore the sacred and most great Diana, and you will be saved without harm." Faith responded, "Know, king, that you shall accomplish nothing by enticing me with mad and vain words, for I stand on the side of my sister who has been martyred. Therefore, do not lead yourself in circles,⁷ but do what you wish, because you will be able to learn through all your cruel tortures that the same mother gave birth to me as well as to her who has died." Hearing these words, the emperor Hadrian knew that his responses would do no good and ordered her to be stripped and beaten with cords. Faith yielded, but even after six centurions had traded places in exhaustion, she continued to bear the torture unwaveringly.



subportabat tormenta. Mater autem stans ad corpus eius, orauit dicens, "Domine Iesu Christe da tolerantiam filiae meae, ut et ipsam videam beate certantem, et perfectam sicut priorem meam filiam Spem." Et haec matre orante, et multam letitiam percipiente, Fides exclamauit dicens, "Domine Deus meus qui militare me tibi fecisti, da mihi sufferentiam et uictoriam."

Repenteque ad regem respondit, "Tiranne nequissime, odiens homines, si quid putas tormentorum pessimorum habere te infer. Experimento enim scies, quod Dei uirtus est in me." Audiens igitur Adrianus seuebat uehementer, et multum cogitabat qua pena eam posset consumere, et consiliatus cum suis consiliariis, iussit eam in ignem mitti. Cumque ingrederetur Fides in ignem, statim flamma ignis emarcuit, et Fides erat in medio ignis, orans Dominem et dicens, "Ne abicias me Domine ancillam tuam, sed fac in patientia meam animam tuam gratiam possidere, ut misericordiam inuenire possim in conspectu tuo, nequissimum autem tyrannum corripe in sua uoluntate." Haec audiens Adrianus imperator, iussit eam suspensam torqueri, et cum torqueretur, de eius membris decidebant carnes, cum distillatione unguentorum aromatum bene fragrantiam. Subridensque dixit, "Tu quidem tyranne uides me modo cruciari nimis istis paenis; te autem Deus noster in praesenti torquebit, et in aeternum cruciabit. Meam quoque animam nichil tetigit, sed sum salua sicut tu nunc uides."

Tunc Adrianus praecepit afferri haeneum kacabum et mitti in eum picem, adipem, ceram et resinam, et sic succendi. Kacabo autem feruente, et mixtis iis quae in eo erant, cepit ignis accendere. Tunc Adrianus imperator iussit mitti in eum Fidem. Mox ministri praeceptum imperatoris impleuerunt, et cum misissent eam in incendium, statim kacabus ut cera resolutus est. Et ex incendio ignis qui in eo fuit, non pauci inflammati sunt circumstantes infideles. Adrianus uero imperator nec sic formidauit, sed iussit et hanc gladio feriri. Igitur prolatam sententiam Fides audiens, accurrit ad matrem suam et osculata est eam dicens, "Pax tibi mater, uade et memento huius quam tu genuisti filiae." Ad paruulam autem sororem accedens, et complectens eam dixit, "Festina ad nos alacrius. Viam ego uado, quae ducit ad uitam aeternam. Ne ergo fatigeris soror mea Caritas, qui enim caritatem tribuit nobis, ipse est noster protector." Et haec loquens, orauit ad Dominum et

Her mother stood by her body and prayed, saying, "Lord Jesus Christ, give endurance to my daughter, so that I might see her resisting her trials in a blessed manner, as perfect as my elder daughter Hope." As her mother prayed thus and perceived great happiness, Faith exclaimed, "Lord my God, who have made me fight for You, give me forbearance and victory."

Immediately, she said to the king, "You most wicked tyrant, you who detest men, bring in the worst tortures which you think that you have; for you shall learn by trial that the virtue of God is in me." Hearing this, Hadrian was vehemently enraged, and meditated for a long time upon the punishment by which he could destroy her. Having discussed this with his advisors, he ordered her to be sent into a fire. When Faith stepped into the fire, the flames immediately drooped; Faith stood in the middle of the fire, praying to the Lord and saying, "Lord, do not abandon me Your handmaid, but see to it that my soul possesses your grace during my suffering, and that I can find mercy in your gaze; but destroy that most wicked tyrant according to Your will." Hearing these things, the emperor Hadrian ordered her to be hung up and tortured; while she was tortured, the flesh fell from her limbs along with drops of fragrant and sweet-smelling ointment. Smiling, she said, "You see me now, tyrant, being tortured with these excessive punishments, but our God will torture you not only in the present but also for ever. However, nothing has touched my soul; I am just as unharmed as you see now."

Then Hadrian ordered that a bronze pot be brought out and that it should be filled with pitch, fat, wax, and resin, and then set aflame. As the pot seethed hot, and the materials in it were mixed together, the fire began to blaze. Once this had happened, the emperor Hadrian ordered Faith to be placed inside. The servants quickly fulfilled his order, but the pot and the wax shattered as soon as they threw her into the inferno, and quite a few pagans standing about were set on fire. Nevertheless, the emperor Hadrian was not afraid, but ordered that she should also be struck with a sword. Upon hearing this sentence as it was passed, Faith ran to her mother and kissed her, saying, "Peace be with you, mother; go, and remember this daughter whom you bore." She then went to her little sister and, embracing her, said, "Hurry quickly to us. I am going on that path which leads to eternal life. Do not therefore fail in strength, my sister Charity, for He who gave us charity⁸ is our protector." Speaking thus, she prayed to the Lord and said, "Lord my God, who are perfect and true, and my indivisible Father, confirm and receive me."



dixit, "Domine Deus meus, qui et perfectus et uerus, et indiuiduus pater, confirma et suscipe me."

Mater autem gaudens in certamine eius dixit, "Filia mea et uiscera mea et bona Fides mea; animequior esto, et memento mei que te genui." Et hec matre eius dicente, gladio percussa est. Mater uero eius gaudium sumens in eius castissimo egressu, circumdans et complectens eam osculataque dixit, "Duae iam praecesserunt me." Intuens autem paruulam suam filiam gaudebat, uidensque in transitu immutabilem eius intellectum, dicebat, "Caritas filia, animequior esto et uiriliter age, uidens uiam que ducit ad caelos. Ecce enim duarum filiarum coronas uideo sertas, tuam uero in principio sertam. Amplexere ergo eam. Ego autem gaudebo, quia ego perpetuo cursu [et ego] curram. De caetero confortare filia, in nomine Domini nostri Iesu Christi."

Tunc Adrianus imperator et hanc uocans, temptabat uerbis seducere eam, Caritas uero in caritate perfecta loquebatur ad eum et dicebat, "Ignorans quoniam ipse quae consummatae sunt animae, mea sunt uiscera quae idem seminauit pater, eademque genuit mater, eademque eruditae sumus doctrina, ipsas quoque uirtutes retinentes, in quibus sancte fuimus conuersantes.

Imperator uero audiens hos sermones tanquam in insania conuersus et uiscera immisericordiae possidens, in impetu abiit in eius quae aduersus eum erat cruciatus, iussit eamque in eculeo suspendi, et per malarum artium argumenta extendi praecepit, ita ut in ligno suspensa, nimiumque extensa per partes exmembraretur.

Et cum diu suspensa atque extensa fatigata uideretur, depositam iussit uirgis cedi. Caritas uero attollens in celum oculos dixit, "Quid in uanum tyranne laboras? Ego autem propter Dominum meum non sentio tuas paenas." Imperator uero Adrianus uidens suas adinuationes dissolui ab ea et per fortem ualidum confessionem superari se, iratus iussit fornacem praeparari. Tribus uero diebus transactis, fornax eousque succensa est, ut igni similis fieret. Adueniens autem imperator Adrianus et uidens, dicebat Caritati, "Dic tantum magna est Diana, et dimittam te." Caritas respondit, "Stulte et cece et insipiens, quid uerbosaris adhuc haec mihi dicere audens?" Furens Adrianus iussit ut mitteretur

Her mother rejoiced in her trial and said, "My daughter and my heart and my good Faith; be calm, and remember me, for I bore you." As her mother said these words, she was struck with the sword. Her mother derived happiness from her chaste demise; enfolding, embracing, and kissing her, she said, "Already two [of my daughters] have gone before me." Moreover, she was glad as she observed her youngest daughter, for she saw that her mindset was unchanged even at such a pass. She said, "Daughter Charity, behave calmly and courageously, keeping your eyes on the path which leads to Heaven. Look, I already see the garlands which have been woven for my two [elder] daughters, but yours has now just begun to be woven; therefore take hold of it. I shall rejoice, for I will run through an eternal course. As for the rest, daughter, comfort yourself in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Then, the emperor Hadrian summoned her and tried to lead her astray with words; however, Charity spoke to him with perfect charity and said, "You do not know that my flesh is the same as that of those who have been martyred; the same father provided our seed and the same mother bore us. We were educated by the same principles, and we cling on to the same virtues through which we have always behaved in a holy manner.⁹

Hearing these words, the emperor, as if driven to insanity and possessing a merciless heart, acted impetuously in designing torments for the girl who stood against him: he ordered her to be hung upon the rack, and as a proof of his wickedness he commanded that she be stretched, so that as she was dangling from the wooden frame, she would be over-stretched and dismembered limb by limb.

After she had hung for some time and appeared exhausted, he ordered that she should be taken down and beaten with switches. However, raising her eyes towards Heaven, Charity said, "Why do you labour in vain, tyrant? I do not feel your punishments because of my Lord." The emperor Hadrian perceived that she had rendered his machinations futile and that he himself was being overcome by her brave and strong confession; as a result, he angrily ordered an oven to be prepared. After three days had passed, the oven was aflame to such an extent that it was similar to fire. The emperor Hadrian came and, seeing it, said to Charity, "Say only that Diana is great, and I shall release you." Charity replied, "O stupid, blind, and foolish man, why do you still dare to chatter in this way to me?" In a rage, Hadrian ordered her to be sent



in fornacem. Caritas uero signaculum Christi faciens, ingressa est in fornacem, et cum introisset, exiens ignis de fornace circumibat et concremauit idolorum cultores hominum numero sex milia. Sancta uero Caritas erat in fornace deambulans et glorificans Deum, quod non ualuisset aduersus eam Diabolus.

Adrianus seuiens per superbiam suam stupebat ad factum, iussitque protectoribus ut eam de fornace eicerent. Uenientes autem uiderunt in fornace tres uiros pariter deambulantes cum Caritate, quorum indumentum candidum super niuem, et aspectus illorum sole splendidior, et caput eorum fulgens sicut aurum. Et obstupefacti ceciderunt in faciem, et uocantes eam dixerunt, "Ueni egredere ancilla Dei, imperator te uocat." Exiens uero uenit ad tribunal Adriani imperatoris. Imperator uero et ipse conustus fuit ab incendio, et ulterius non ualens in aliquo uincere Dei puellam, iussit et hanc gladio interfici. Caritas uero glorificans Domino, dixit, "Gratias tibi ago Domine, quoniam in sororum mearum societate dignatus es me annumerare, et replesti me deliciis paradisi. Iustifices rogo sanctam matrem meam Sapientiam, ut cum pace et gaudio triduum uitae suae post nostrum abscessum peragat, et sepulturam nostram caelebranti nobiscum ei requiem condones, ut in aeternum pariter te laudemus."

Statim autem et mater orauit Dominum, ut et hanc consummato cursu ad se perduceret dicens ad eam, "Animequior esto filia mea, bonam uiam uades. Hoc semper orabam, ut tres sponsas Christo offerrem munus. Video enim et tuam coronam plenissimam textam." Et cum haec mater eius diceret, gladio percussa est. Mater eius Sapientia circumplectens paruulam suam ornauit sepulture ornamento, sed et filias suas omnes pretioso unxit unguento, et iungens currum super imposuit eas, et abiit in miliario uicesimo secundo a Roma et ibi eas posuit, in quo loco rogauit ut a Christianis aecclesia fabricaretur, quod et factum est. Conuenerunt autem cum ea primarie ciuitatis mulieres, portantes unguenta ualde pretiosa, et immiserunt ubi reliquiae sanctarum erant, et remearunt Romam, laudes referentes Domino omnium regum Deo. In tertio autem die uenit mater earum, celebrare solennia Domino. Conuenit quoque cum ea turba mulierum multa.

Ueniens uero beata Sapientia, et requiescens super monumentum earum dicebat, "Filiae meae perfectae et coronatae, accipite et me uobiscum." Et haec

into the oven. However, Charity made the sign of Christ as she entered the oven, and once she had gone in, the fire rushed out of the oven; it encircled and burned to ash six thousand idol-worshippers. Meanwhile, holy Charity walked about in the oven and gave glory to God, since the Devil had not overcome her.

Hadrian, rendered furious by his pride, was struck dumb by this deed. He ordered his guards to take her out of the oven. As they came forwards, however, they saw three men walking together with Charity. Their clothing was whiter than snow, their appearance was more radiant than the Sun, and their heads shone like gold. In shock, the guards fell prostrate and said, calling out to her, "Come out, handmaid of God; the emperor summons you." Thus departing, she came to the court of the emperor Hadrian. However, he himself had been singed by the fire, and so, not being able to conquer this virgin of God in any other way, he ordered her execution by sword. Giving glory to the Lord, Charity said, "I give you thanks, Lord, since you have deigned to count me in the company of his sisters and filled me with the delights of Paradise. I ask that You should do justice to my holy mother Wisdom, so that she should spend the three days after our deaths in peace and joy, and then that You should allow her to rest with us while she is celebrating our burial, so that we can all praise You for eternity."

Immediately, her mother also prayed to the Lord that He would bring the girl to him in a perfect journey. She said to Charity, "Be calm, my daughter, and walk on the good path. I have always prayed, that I would be able to offer three brides as a gift to Christ. I see that your garland is now fully woven." After her mother had said these words, Charity was struck by the sword. Her mother Wisdom embraced her little daughter, and dressed in her in the accoutrements of burial, while also anointing all of her daughters with costly ointment. She placed them upon a chariot which she had hitched, and went out twenty-two miles from Rome. There, she buried them, and asked that a church should be constructed there by the Christians; this was immediately completed. The most noble women of city joined her, carrying extremely costly ointment, which they put in the place where the saints' remains lay. Then they returned to Rome, giving praise to the Lord God of all kings. On the third day their mother came to celebrate the solemnities of the Lord, and a large group of women came with her.

As blessed Wisdom came and rested upon the monument of her daughters, she said, "My perfect and garlanded daughters, accept me among you." Speaking thus, she fell



dicens in silentio requieuit in pace. Mulieres uero quae cum ea simul uenerant deposuerunt eam in eodem monumento in quo filiae eius positae erant, et perfectae simul cum matre ad Dominum praecesserunt. Adrianus uero in captiuitate detentus, ab Anglis cruciatur. Pupille enim oculorum eius decidebant, et carnes eius ab ossibus defluebant, ita ut ossa eius a conpage dissoluerent, et manus eius ab articulis exciderent. Ex ore uero eius plenitudo putredinis cum uermibus decidebat, et in extremis positus uoce magna dixit, "Domine Deus trium uirginum, et earum matris, uelocius meam animam educ de corpore. Scio enim quia propter ipsas haec omnia mala uenerant super me." Et haec cum dixisset, in magno eiulatu exclamans crepuit, et dissipatae sunt carnes eius et ossa, et comminutus est secundum sanctorum prophetia.

Passe sunt autem sanctae Dei uirgines, Spes, Fides, Caritas, et earum mater Sapientia die Kalendarum Augustarum Rome sub Adriano imperatore. Regnante in perpetuum Domino Nostro Iesu Christo, cui est honor et gloria et potestas in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

silent and rested in peace. The women who had come along placed her into the same monument, in which her daughters had been buried; these martyrs went to the Lord along with their mother. In contrast, Hadrian was detained in captivity and tortured by the English. The pupils of his eyes fell out, and his flesh melted off his bones, so that his bones also broke away from his skeleton and his hands slipped off his wrists. From his mouth, a large quantity of rotten material emerged along with worms, and reduced to this extreme condition, he said in a loud voice, "Lord God of the three virgins, and of their mother, lead my soul from my body more quickly; for I know that all of these evils have befallen me on account of them." Once he had said these words, he cried out with a great shout, and his flesh and bones scattered; he was thus pulverised according to the prophecies of the saints.

The holy virgins of God, Hope, Faith, Charity, and their mother Wisdom were martyred on the Kalends of August at Rome during Hadrian's emperorship. Our Lord Jesus Christ reigns forever; to Him are the honour, the glory, and the power unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Critical Notes

- 1 The Kalends fall on the first day of the month.
- 2 A "*matrimoniali coniugio*" is more literally translated as "our marital bond".
- 3 "Viscera mea" in Ps. 102:1 is typically translated as "all that is within me"; as viscera can refer to any of the internal organs, however, the modern English term of affection, "my heart", is most evocative of Wisdom's maternal love.
- 4 "*Erit magna gloria adolescentiae vestrae*" literally means, "It will be a great glory to your adolescence".
- 5 "*Ex uno ore*" is more literally translated as "with one mouth".
- 6 "*Antiquissime*" is either a feminine plural nominative adjective agreeing with *minae*, as translated here, or – in my view less likely – a vocative denoting Hadrian: "Old man".
- 7 "*Ne...seducas*" might more literally be translated as "Do not lead yourself astray".
- 8 The wordplay arising from "Charity...gave us charity" is intentional. Here, "charity" does not have philanthropic connotations but instead means "Christian love".
- 9 The text here is corrupt; after *retinentes* the scribe suggests a variant reading, in *hisque consummare properamus*, which would change the clause to: "We cling on to the same virtues in which we now hurry to achieve perfection".