

**Did you know . . .**

### **Blessed Among Us: St. Lydia**

Lydia Purpuraria (1<sup>st</sup> century), “Worshiper of God”, was born at Thyatira (Ak-Hissar), a town in Asia Minor famous for its dye works.

When St. Paul and Timothy ventured onto European soil, they ventured to the city of Philippi in Macedonia. There the missionaries went to the river where they thought there was a place of prayer (a synagogue). Their audience turned out to consist entirely of women, including Lydia, “a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God.” These details suggest she was a dealer in expensive purple-dyed fabric and a “God-fearer”, a Gentile who respected Jewish religious law.

“The Lord opened her heart to give heed to what was said by Paul.” [Acts 16:14] And she was baptized along with her entire household, the first Christian converts in Europe. In turn she pressed Paul to remain in her house: “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there. And she constrained us.” [Acts 16:14-15]. Thereafter, Paul made his home with her while in Philippi. As a successful business women, she probably had a home spacious enough to welcome guests and to use her home as a Christian Center, where others would gather for Mass and prayer. Paul and Silas, when released from prison, went immediately to Lydia’s house to see and encourage those who were gathered there for prayer.

Sources regarding the role of women in the early Church are limited. Those women, such as St. Lydia, singled out for particular mention, provide some hint of a wider, forgotten history. [Blessed Among Us, p. 444]

In his 1995 *Letter to Women*, St. John Paul II wrote, “In this vast domain of service, the Church’s two-thousand-year history , for all its historical conditioning, has truly experienced the ‘genius of women’; from the heart of the Church there have emerged women of the highest caliber who have left an impressive and beneficial mark in history.” St. Lydia is certainly considered one of them.

St. Lydia is remembered as one of the founders of the Church in Europe. She is the patron saint of dyers. Her feast day is August 3.

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