

Saint Lydia Purpuraria
First Century, Philippi, Macedonia

The first Christian convert in Europe was a Macedonian businesswoman who dealt in luxury goods. Lydia Pururia's surname means "purple seller" and she plied her trade in a city that was famous for its dye works.

Lydia met Paul the Apostle at Philippi. He had already traveled widely through Asia Minor, but the Holy Spirit prevented him from preaching in those regions. One night Paul had a dream in which a Macedonian begged, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." Convinced that God had called him there, Paul immediately sought passage to the Roman province of Macedonia. On arrival, Paul and his companions made their way to Philippi, the most important city in the province. On the Sabbath they went outside the city gate looking for a place to pray. They found a gathering of women and among them was Lydia, who dealt in purple cloth. Paul began to preach to the women.

Lydia listened and the Lord opened her heart to what Paul was saying. Soon, Lydia and her entire household were baptised into the Christian faith. She offered Paul and his companions an open invitation: "*If you consider me a believer in the Lord, come and stay at my home.*" They accepted Lydia's offer and remained with her for as long as they were in Philippi.

The Genius of Lydia Purpuraria:

Lydia opened her heart to Paul's message, and her faith and hospitality enabled him to establish the first Christian community in Europe. She is believed to be part of the group that Paul had in mind when he later wrote, "*[T]hey have struggled at my side in promoting the gospel.*"

Reflection:

"He made from the one whole human race to dwell on the entire surface of the earth, and he fixed the ordered seasons and the boundaries of their regions, so that people might seek God, even perhaps grope for him and find him, though indeed he is not far from any one of us."

Acts 17.26-26

Gallick, Sarah, The Big Book of Women Saints, p. 231