

Homily based on the readings from May 11, 2026 (Acts 16.11-15; John 15.26-16.4a)

As you have probably noticed, ever since Easter we have steadily been making our way through the Acts of the Apostles. Today's reading marks an important transition, though, that one could easily overlook. The narrative up to this point has all been in the third person – *they* travelled, *they* stood up, *they* preached. Now, for a few verses, the description shifts to the first person – *we* set sail, *we* went outside the city, *we* sat and spoke. Although there are a few different interpretations, most scholars view this change as an indication that Saint Luke – the author of Acts of the Apostles – was physically present at this point. Luke does not portray himself as a major participant in the ministry of Paul and Silas – but nevertheless he *is* a firsthand observer. His language is a subtle reminder that the stories contained in the New Testament are not “cleverly devised myths,” but actual historical events, which took place at a particular time, in a particular place, with particular people in attendance.

The other noteworthy aspect of today's reading is the description of Lydia – the “dealer in purple cloth” – and her conversion to the faith. What is remarkable about Lydia, however, is that there is *nothing* especially remarkable about her at all. All we hear is that the Lord “opened her heart” and that she decided to be baptized – which is essentially the story of *every* Christian convert. In fact, if Saint Luke had not encountered her personally, it is likely that her name would *never* have been recorded at all.

The fact that Lydia is *unremarkable*, though, does not make her *unimportant* – in fact, quite the contrary. In contrast to giants of the faith such as Peter, John, Stephen, and Paul, we see somebody who is more ordinary – more like the rest of us. Except for the time and place in which she lived, Lydia's story is basically our own. She may not have made much of a mark on history, but she certainly affected the people around her. We hear that “her household” was baptized along with her – and so presumably *their* children were raised as Christians,

and their children's children, and so on for many generations. Although it is easy to focus on the monumental accomplishments of the few and the famous, much more is achieved by the everyday activities of the many and the unknown.

By my reckoning, only eighteen individuals who ever lived in the United States have either been beatified or canonized. Nevertheless, there are more than fifty million Catholics in the country right now – to say nothing of the untold millions who came before us. Most of us will never be known beyond our families and our communities – and that is perfectly fine. Not many of us are destined to be world-famous humanitarians or Doctors of the Church. All that matters is that we fulfill whatever mission the Lord has entrusted to us, regardless of how humble or how exalted it may be. Our names may wind up being lost to history, but we know – with absolute certainty – that our resurrected Savior will *always* remember his good and faithful servants.