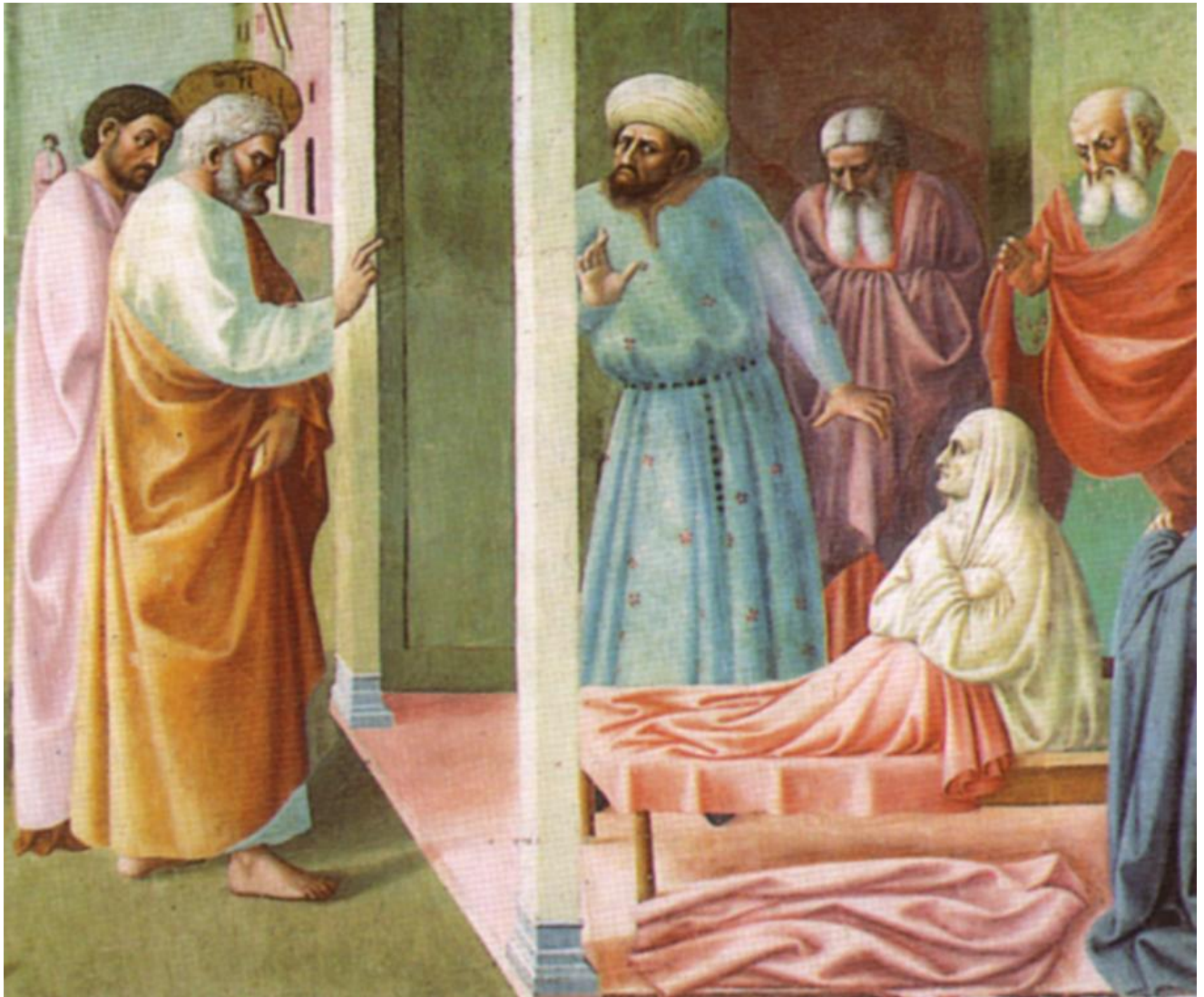


Lydia, Dorcas, and Phoebe, coworkers with the Apostles

Observed 27 January



Peter raises Dorcas from the dead

Lydia, Dorcas, and Phoebe are women who were prominent among the first generation of Christians. Their names are among a significant number of women mentioned in Acts and the writings of Paul. A wealthy merchant in Philippi, Lydia has been described as Paul's first European convert. After her conversion, she became host to the apostle during his time in her city, so that her house became a Christian gathering place, an early church. Dorcas (the Greek equivalent of her Aramaic name Tabitha) was a well-known widow in Joppa, who was renowned for her charitable works. Because she was so beloved, the community was distraught when she

died. In Acts we read about Peter coming and bringing her back from death to the joy of everyone. Phoebe was a leader in a church near Corinth who later went to Rome. Like Lydia, she is remembered with fondness by Paul, who appreciated her ministry. Some people consider her an early example of a woman among the ranks of deacons. Others see her as one of the first in the separate, special order of deaconesses. Together these women represent the important role played by women in the early Church, leading and hosting communities, taking part in the work of serving people in need both within the Church and beyond it.

Lessons Malachi 3:16-18; Psalm 100; Acts 16:11-15; Luke 8:1-3

Collect Filled with your Holy Spirit, gracious God, your earliest disciples served you with the gifts each had been given: Lydia in business and stewardship, Dorcas in a life of charity and Phoebe as a deacon who served many. Inspire us today to build up your Church with our gifts in hospitality, charity and bold witness to the Gospel of Christ; who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.