

The Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts

Liturgy and Music Committee
A Proper for

The Feast of Saints Andronicus and Junia, Apostles *May 17*



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Approved by the 223rd Diocesan Convention for extended trial use, 2009-2013,
after earlier Convention approval for 2007 & 2008

At the end of his epistle to the Romans, Paul sends his personal greetings. He particularly asks his correspondents to “Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives and prison companions; they are notable Apostles, and they were in Christ before me” (Rm. 16:7).

In 1 Cor. 15:7 Paul says that the Risen Christ appeared to the Twelve and “all the Apostles.” That is probably when Christ commissioned these Jewish Christians and “sent them out” as Apostles to evangelize in the earliest days of the Church. Although we do not know how they were related to each other, this man and woman ministered together through the years. They are “confessors” because they kept the faith despite suffering imprisonment. Paul deeply valued and defended his own responsibility, standing, and ministry as an Apostle, so it is high praise for him to write that these two Apostles were notable or outstanding.

John Chrysostom wrote about them, praising Junia as a woman and as an Apostle. In about 608 they were canonized by the patriarch of Constantinople, where a church was built in their honor. Since then their feast day has been celebrated on May 17 by all those, Orthodox and Catholic, who follow the Eastern Rite. Throughout the centuries, iconographers have continued to ‘write’ their icons.

In the ninth century St. Joseph the Hymnographer penned a liturgical hymn that includes these words:

With piety we will honor the bright stars and God-inspired
Holy Apostles Junia and Andronicus.
The blessed Paul proclaims you both as truly distinguished
among the Apostles, and blessed in the Church.

Apostles, confessors, and canonized saints-- these titles make an impressive description, but the central fact Paul mentions is that they were *in Christ*: they were baptized disciples. By our baptism we, too, are called to holiness and faithfulness, to work with both women and men in the Church, to take a role in evangelism, and to serve “the least of our brothers and sisters,” following their example.

May 17

[Saints Andronicus and Junia, Apostles]

I Almighty God, whose Son the Risen Christ sent forth thy Apostles Andronicus and Junia to proclaim the Gospel and extend thy reign; send us forth in thy Holy Spirit that like them we, both men and women, may co-operate as faithful witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus Christ; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit in perfect unity, one God, now and forever. *Amen.*

II Almighty God, whose Son the Risen Christ sent forth your Apostles Andronicus and Junia to proclaim the Gospel and extend your reign; send us forth in your Holy Spirit that like them we, both men and women, may co-operate as faithful witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit in perfect unity, one God, now and forever. *Amen.*

Psalm

68:1-11

or 116

or 116:1, 5, 10-17

Lessons

Isaiah 61:1-4

Romans 16:1-2, 7, 16, 25-27

John 17:6, 17-22

Preface of Apostles & Ordinations

[Note that the Psalm number and verse are according to the American *Book of Common Prayer*, and the other Bible chapters and verses are according to the Revised Standard Version, in English. You might need to use slightly different numbering if you specify a different Bible translation.]

Education

Andronicus and Junia are important because they are an example of a man and a woman who cooperated in their ministry of spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ at great personal risk. Furthermore, it is only with recent historical and textual criticism that we have recovered Junia's identity as a woman, allowing her to reclaim her position as the only woman to be named an "Apostle" in the Bible. [Although the NRSV accepts this reading, the English Bible tradition, as well as that of the critical Greek editions, has for several centuries called her by the invented male name, Junias.] This discovery offers scriptural evidence of a woman Apostle and thereby provides a profound and early example of female discipleship and active, official ministry.

A note about the date of the celebration

We would encourage parishes that have weekday services to add the observance of Andronicus and Junia to their calendars. However, if May 17 falls on a Sunday, or on Ascension Day, the commemoration needs to be transferred to a close weekday before or afterwards.

Publicity

Advertising your celebration and making your congregation aware of the distinct history of Andronicus and Junia, through announcements and articles in your weekly bulletin or parish newsletter, is likely to interest people in making this celebration more widespread. You might also consider incorporating stories about Andronicus and Junia into a Sunday School class dealing with Pentecost and the birth and spread of the church.

You may also publicize (and sing!) a newly-written hymn stanza, to be used as the second verse of Hymn 231 or 232 in *The Hymnal 1982*:

Companions in God's service, this woman and this man,
Andronicus and Junia, set out to tell God's plan.
Imprisoned for their witness they shared a cell with Paul.
He called them both "Apostles," sent forth to live God's call.

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For further reading

- A four-page history of Bible translations and commentaries can be found online at <http://www.womenpriests.org/classic/brooten.asp> click on Languages > [?] for additional information.

[in English]

- Eldon Jay Epp, *Junia: First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005)
- Rena Pederson, *The Lost Apostle: Searching for the Truth about Junia* (San Francisco: Josey-Bass, 2006)
- Kathryn Piccard, *The Biblical Apostles Andronicus and Junia: Introducing the History of Their Veneration as Saints*. (2009)

Versions of this leaflet (revised 11/08) in 10+ other languages are available at www.katrinadream.org > [Katrina's Story](#) > [Just Words](#) > [Saints Andronicus and Junia, Apostles](#) > [choose your language].