

<i>Date Preached</i>	22-Nov-2020	<i>Date Initiated</i>	09-Nov-2020
<i>Where Preached</i>	SAK	<i>Appointed Readings</i>	St Andrew (all years)

" 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!' "



Today we celebrate the major feast of our parish's patron, St Andrew. A very happy St Andrew's Day to you! We are not alone in these festivities, for in addition to the nine—count them: *nine!*—churches named after this Apostle in the Diocese of Connecticut alone, Andrew is also the patron saint of Russia, Ukraine and Romania; of Scotland; and of the western Greek city of Patras. That's a fairly odd assortment of geographies, isn't it?

Well, as it turns out, there are historical reasons for this peripatetic reach of this somewhat obscure apostle. We have basically no written or archaeological evidence of what became of Andrew after Jesus' Ascension. In this vacuum, however, the Church's 'tradition' ... legend and folklore that, in a pre-modern and largely pre-literate age, became accepted fact ... concerning Andrew blossomed. One branch of his tradition says that he traveled to Patras, on the coast of the Ionian Sea, to evangelize there, but met his death at the hands of quote-unquote "angry pagans." (As an aside, the legend that Andrew chose to be crucified on an X-shaped cross or *saltire* because he didn't feel worthy of dying on the same cross as Jesus did not arise until well into the tenth century. Early artistic depictions of Andrew's death show him on a Latin cross.) Another branch of the Andrew legend says, no, he actually traveled to Scythia—what is now Ukraine, southern Russia, the western Urals and Kazakhstan—and, presumably died there: cause of death unknown. Still another, 'minority' legend about Andrew has him traveling to Ethiopia.

The Patras branch of the Andrew tradition seems to have had more 'legs,' as they say, but it was other parts of Andrew's body that soon became of interest after his death. The story goes that to soothe mighty Constantinople's smarting over its dearth of saintly relics, when Rome had *both* Peter's *and* Paul's, parts of Andrew's remains were transferred to Constantinople. But far from finding eternal earthly rest along the Bosphorus, many centuries later, at least part of his remains were re-transferred to the Amalfi Coast in Italy ... before they were still later transferred to Rome, to find a *proper* resting place, it was thought, with those very relics of Sts Peter and Paul. (In 1964, Pope Paul VI returned Andrew's remains to the cathedral in Patras.)

And finally, there is the story that in the eighth century, St Regulus transferred some *other* of Andrew's remains to Fife, in Scotland, where their venerable presence led to the founding of both the historic cathedral and the city that bear Andrew's name to this day. The various and garbled stories of our patron's Scottish journey are, in the assessment of modern historians, "irreconcilable," but once caught, a saint is rarely released, no matter how tenuous his provenance. Thus, Andrew became the patron saint of Scotland, which eventually took as its national flag the saltire upon which he never actually died.

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Whatever the truth *versus* the embellishment *versus* the pure fictionalization present in Andrew's tradition, it is clear that the Church very early on came to see him as a type of model missionary ... as one who, both in life and in death, carried the word of God, the Gospel of Christ, far and wide. This is evident in our lectionary's choice of readings for his feast, and especially St Paul's letter to the Romans: Salvation, says Paul, is available to all who call upon the Lord. But you can't call if you don't believe, and you can't believe if you haven't heard. And you can't hear unless someone is willing to tell you the Good News. We need messengers to tell out the Word to the far reaches of the earth, and whether or not he's aware of it, this is mission Andrew accepts when he forever drops his nets on the shores of Galilee in response to Jesus' call.

We do not, however, have to rely on traditions outside the Bible to know our patron as a model missionary. Although Matthew, Mark and Luke do little more than include his name in various lists of the twelve apostles, St John gives us three brief glimpses of Andrew as what we might call a 'domestic' missionary: carrying the Word not to people who live across oceans or in very different cultures ... but to the people who are right at-hand ... the people whom we encounter each day. For they, too, cannot believe what they haven't heard.

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Right at beginning of John's gospel, Andrew is introduced to Jesus by John the Baptist, and after spending an afternoon and evening with him, Andrew goes to fetch his brother Simon. He tells Simon he has found the long-awaited Messiah – think about this: Jesus hasn't even worked His first miracle! – and that Simon must come to meet Him. Simon does, whereupon Jesus renames him Peter; the very Peter who will become the preeminent apostle and the image of Christian faith. This episode passes quickly and Peter is its clear focus, but still, its missionary lesson is deep. The people whom we're most likely to influence with our faith ... by what we talk about; how we make decisions; what we spend our money on; how we treat and regard others ... are those most well-known to us: family, friends and colleagues who trust, respect and love us and are disposed to at least consider believing what we believe simply because *we* | *believe* it. Like Andrew's, our enthusiasm for Christ will be contagious if we only will share it.

Toward the end of John's Gospel, there is a brief interaction between Andrew and two people John calls "Greeks"—perhaps Jews who speak Greek, rather than the more common Aramaic—who ask to see Jesus. Their timing couldn't be worse. Jesus has just made his triumphal final entry into Jerusalem, after raising Lazarus from the dead. The crowds are thronging around Him, and the religious authorities ... fearful of losing all they have if the Jews start following this charismatic upstart ... are actively seeking His execution. It would be easy ... and also understandable ... for Andrew to rebuff or at least defer the Greeks' ill-timed request, but he doesn't. In the midst of chaos, he makes a point of telling Jesus of these two lowly strangers' heartfelt wish to see Him. Here, too, Andrew, teaches a missionary lesson. As we make our way through the hustle-bustle of this world, attending to all the things *we* think are important, we must keep an eye and an ear open for those who are in need of Christ. Whether we're dashing to our next errand, late for an appointment or just plain eager to get home and relax, the next person we encounter may be someone who is saying to us, in their own way, "I need to see Jesus." Will she break through our chaotic schedules? Will his need rise above our own personal priorities?

And last, my favorite 'Andreas' teaching moment in John, which goes by so fast, we might not even notice it: In the lead-up to the story of the loaves and fishes, Jesus asks His disciples how

they will feed the multitude that has gathered around them. Philip's answer is terse and practical: Six months' wages couldn't buy enough food to give all these people even a bite! Andrew, however, instead notices the possible: a boy carrying five loaves and two fish. Andrew tells Jesus about him, and we all know the feast the ensues.

This is, I think, the most fundamental of Andrew's missionary lessons: Our job, as emissaries of Christ, is not to solve ... or to complete ... or even to get very far. Andrew has no idea *how* this boy's meager rations might feed thousands. But he is able to see in the contents of a boy's arms an opportunity for *Christ* to act ... a moment to invite Jesus' intervention ... to place the situation in His hands. For our single greatest missionary act is ... prayer. As a parishioner wrote to me this week, "Now is a time for all of us 'who are called by His name' to humble ourselves and pray. What can I do *besides* pray?" When we pray for others, we join want to Abundance ... sorrow to Solace ... hurt to Wholeness. We don't solve anything ourselves, but we do become pathways ... conduits ... of Christ's mercy and grace ... one more opportunity for the world to taste the Divine One upon whom we feast continually [*gesture to altar*].

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The legends of Andrew are fun, and I look forward to learning more about them. But as patrons go, how blessed are we to have as ours a saint who wasn't afraid to share Jesus with friend and stranger alike; who didn't let the practicalities of the moment overcome the possibilities of prayer. For the Andrew of the Bible shows us all how to be missionaries ... without ever leaving town.



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