

Disciples - St. Andrew

SERVICE & SPIRITUALITY

St. Andrew walks quietly through the Gospels. He is named less often than his brother, speaks less often than Peter, and leaves behind no epistle. Yet the Church remembers him as Protokletos — the first-called — and as the one who brought his own brother to Christ. In this lesson we learn from a servant who labored without the spotlight: a man of spiritual desire, of supple obedience, and of quiet influence. His story is good news for the many of us who will never stand on a great stage. We can still bring one person to Jesus. We can still say, with the simplicity of our Lord Himself, 'Come and see.'

The First-Called

The earliest title the Church gave to St. Andrew is Protokletos, 'the first-called.' Before Peter was called from his nets, before James and John left their father in the boat, before anything that looks to us like the beginning of the Twelve, there is a quiet scene on the far side of the Jordan. The Baptist is standing with two of his disciples. Jesus passes by. The Baptist lifts his hand and says a single sentence that will split a life in two.

"Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, 'Behold the Lamb of God!' The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, 'What do you seek?' They said to Him, 'Rabbi' (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), 'where are You staying?' He said to them, 'Come and see.' They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour). One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother." John 1:35–40, NKJV

One of those two was Andrew. The Gospel does not pause to explain him. It simply records what he did: he heard, he followed, he stayed. When we think about our own calling, we sometimes expect something dramatic — a voice, a sign, a moment we could later describe to others. Andrew's calling was quieter. A pointing finger, a sentence about a Lamb, a half-day in the place where Jesus was staying. That was enough. The Lord does not always speak to us in thunder. Sometimes He speaks in a single sentence heard at the right hour, and the door of our life swings open.

The Byzantine tradition holds his title gently, not as a competitive rank over the other apostles, but as a testimony that the Lord's call reaches the hidden first, before the world notices. There is comfort here for every servant who wonders whether any of this began well. It began, for Andrew, not with a platform but with a willingness to walk a few steps and ask one question: 'where are You staying?' — and to accept the Lord's answer: 'Come and see.'

“What meaneth, 'Come and see'? He knew that they had not as yet clearly perceived the whole, and He reveals Himself to them by signs. For nothing is equal to experience and personal trial... and therefore He invites them to dwell with Him, as knowing that His very words would kindle in them a divine love.” St. John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Gospel of John XVIII.1

Chrysostom notices something tender about that first invitation. Our Lord does not argue with Andrew. He does not recite doctrine. He opens His door and lets the young disciple stay. This is often how the Lord still calls us. He lets us sit with Him — in the liturgy, in a quiet reading of Scripture, in a conversation with a servant whose life has been shaped by Him — and the nearness does its own work.

The Brother Who Brought His Brother

Having stayed with Jesus for the remainder of that first day, Andrew does the most natural thing in the world for a man whose heart has just been moved. He goes looking for his brother.

“He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.” John 1:41–42, NKJV

This is the sentence that carries Andrew's whole ministry in miniature. He does not gather a crowd. He does not wait until he has mastered the teaching. He does not even make sure he himself is ready. He simply goes to the person closest to him and tells him what he has seen. Notice the word 'first' — 'he first found his own brother.' Before anyone else, he thought of Simon. Among the servants we will one day teach, the most difficult mission field will often be our own home: the brother we grew up beside, the sister who remembers our childhood, the parents who watched us stumble. Andrew went there first.

And he did not bring Simon to a sermon. He brought Simon to a Person. 'He brought him to Jesus.' This is the whole grammar of discipleship. We are not gathering followers for ourselves; we are gathering brothers for Christ. The work Andrew did that day changed everything that comes afterward in the Gospel. The man he brought became Peter. The sermon that Peter preached at Pentecost drew three thousand souls. Andrew is not credited in that number. He does not need to be. The Lord keeps a ledger of His own, and in that ledger the whole preaching of Peter rests in part on a brother's sentence spoken on a quiet afternoon in Galilee.

For our own service we learn two things. First, the fruit of what we do may not appear under our name. That is a hard truth for our pride and a beautiful truth for our peace. Second, the Lord works through proximity. He gave Andrew a brother; He has given each of us someone. A child to catechize patiently, a friend who is ready to hear, a cousin who is circling. 'He first found his own brother.' Perhaps our first work is the person already near us.

“Andrew, after having stayed with Jesus and having learned much... did not keep the treasure to himself, but hastens and runs quickly to his brother, to impart to him the good things which he had received. Mark how, from the very beginning, he shews the

fruit of a true friend, and of one who rightly loveth his brother.” St. John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Gospel of John XIX.1

A Spiritual Hunger That Lasted

Long before Andrew was a disciple of Jesus, he was a disciple of the Forerunner. That one detail tells us something about the shape of his heart. He was already a man who went where the word of God could be heard. He stood in the wilderness, he listened to the stern preaching of repentance, he accepted baptism. When we meet him at the beginning of the Fourth Gospel, he is already formed as a seeker. He has not arrived at Christ by accident; he has spent months, perhaps years, positioning himself where God was speaking.

This is an often overlooked feature of Andrew's calling. Grace is sovereign, but grace also tends to find people who are already standing near a means of grace. The fisherman who has been listening to John the Baptist is the fisherman who is ready to follow the Lamb of God. The child who has been brought faithfully to the liturgy is the child whose heart is soft when the Lord finally speaks. Spiritual desire does not begin at the moment of our dramatic conversion. It begins, quietly, in all the places we chose to be near God when nothing dramatic was happening at all.

“As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” 1 Peter 2:2–3, NKJV

Peter — the brother Andrew brought — will one day write that line. It is possible that some of it was learned in the school of Andrew's patient longing. Peter knew what it looked like for a man to desire the word of God like a hungry infant, because he had watched his own brother do it.

“For as fire, when placed near tinder, quickly sets it aflame, so also the soul that has received the Word of God kindles the souls that draw near to it with the love of God.”
St. Macarius the Great, Spiritual Homilies XVIII.7

Macarius's image is lovely and precise. Andrew did not set his brother on fire by the force of his personality. He set him on fire because he himself was already burning. A servant who is quietly hungry for God will find that other hungers gather around the warmth. We do not first have to become eloquent. We have to become honest. Are we still desiring God the way a small child desires milk? If the answer is yes, we will find that we are bringing people to Jesus almost without trying.

The Disciple Who Counted the Loaves

The second scene in which Andrew speaks is one of the most famous in the Gospels, but he himself is easy to miss in it. A great crowd has followed Jesus. Our Lord turns to Philip with a question meant to stretch Philip's faith: 'Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?' Philip does the arithmetic; he knows that two hundred denarii will not feed so many. And then, in the middle of the calculation, Andrew speaks.

“One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, 'There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?'"

John 6:8–9, NKJV

His sentence is a little awkward. It ends with a question that answers itself — 'what are they among so many?' He is not sure what he is doing. But he is doing something none of the other disciples in the scene is doing: he has noticed a small boy, and he has spoken about him to Christ. Philip counted the money. Andrew counted the loaves. The difference matters. When we carry a need to the Lord, we can bring Him our arithmetic of scarcity, or we can bring Him the small offering that is actually in our hands. Andrew does the second, even while he is not sure it will be enough.

Our Lord took the loaves. He multiplied them. Thousands ate and were filled. And the quiet miracle beside the great miracle is this: a nameless boy carried his lunch home in a story that the whole Church would tell for twenty centuries, because a discreet apostle noticed him in the crowd. When we think we have nothing worth bringing, let us remember Andrew. He did not hand Christ a solution. He handed Christ a boy.

There is a posture here for our service. Much of what we do will feel like Andrew's sentence — uncertain, half-formed, not quite adequate. We will bring a student whose faith is wavering and not know the right thing to say. We will offer a small prayer group, a visit to a sick parishioner, a hand-written note, and wonder whether any of it matters. The Lord does not ask us for adequacy. He asks us to hand Him the loaves we actually have. The multiplication is His work.

The Bridge for Those Who Came from Afar

The third Johannine scene in which Andrew speaks is even more quietly revealing. It is Holy Week. Greeks — that is, Gentiles who had come up to worship at the Passover — approach the disciple Philip and ask an astonishing thing.

“Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.' Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus.” John 12:20–22, NKJV

Notice the chain. The Greeks go to Philip. Philip does not go to Jesus by himself; he goes first to Andrew. And then Andrew and Philip together bring the request to our Lord. Why does Philip need Andrew? Something in the tradition of the Twelve had established Andrew as the one who knew how to bring strangers close. Perhaps it was because he had already done it for his own brother. Perhaps it was because he had done it for the boy with the loaves. Whatever the reason, when a Gentile seeker first appears in the Gospel of John asking to see Jesus, it is Andrew's name that the Holy Spirit gives us as the bridge.

This is the ministry of the discreet servant in a single sentence: 'we wish to see Jesus' — and a brother who will walk the request into the presence of the Lord. Many of the people who come to our churches will come that way. They will not announce themselves as seekers. They will approach a servant they

trust with a question that sounds practical, and underneath the question will be the ancient hunger of the Greeks at the feast. 'We wish to see Jesus.' Andrew's work is to hear that hunger and to make the introduction — not to become Christ for them, but to bring them to Him.

There is also a beautiful note for our own moment in history. The early Church remembered Andrew as the apostle who carried the Gospel beyond the familiar world — traditionally to Scythia, to the northern shore of the Black Sea, to places the other apostles had not yet reached. The disciple who first brought one Gentile to Christ at the feast later brought whole peoples. The pattern holds. The servant who has learned to welcome one stranger is the servant the Lord can send far.

The Quiet Leader

It is worth dwelling on the simple fact that Andrew is almost always introduced as 'Simon Peter's brother.' The evangelists are not being cruel; they are describing accurately. In the world's memory, Peter is the louder brother, the more visible figure, the rock. And yet the Fathers have always insisted that Andrew's discreet place is itself a grace, and that most of the Church's servants are actually called to live there.

“Andrew was the first fruit of the apostolic company. He led Peter to Christ. Let us then, brethren, imitate him. For if he, being the first, did not keep back for himself the grace of teaching, but brought others into the kingdom, much more ought we who are after him to labor earnestly for the salvation of our brethren.” St. John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Gospel of John XIX.2

Chrysostom's point is pastoral. Most of us will not be Peter. We will not stand before crowds of three thousand. We will not write Gospels. Our parishes will not carry our names. But we are not therefore less fruitful. The measure of our service is not the size of the hall; it is the faithfulness of the bringing. A servant who, over a lifetime, has brought even one 'Peter' to the feet of Christ has spent his life well.

“He that wins souls is wise.” Proverbs 11:30, NKJV

Andrew's quiet leadership is also a leadership without rivalry. He stands beside a brother whose voice will always be louder, and there is no evidence in the Gospels of a sharp word, a competing claim, an attempt to rebalance the credit. He is a servant who has been freed from the need to be seen, and that freedom is itself a form of holiness. Many a servant has been undone not by persecution but by the slow acid of comparison — watching another servant be noticed, be praised, be promoted, while the Lord seems to pass us over. Andrew gently teaches us a different way to stand. The Lord saw him. The Lord named him. That was enough.

“Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.” Ephesians 6:5–6, NKJV

The Legacy of a Discreet Life

Tradition tells us that Andrew was crucified on an X-shaped cross in Patras of Achaia, and that from the cross he preached for two full days before he gave up his spirit. The cross that bears his name is not the cross on which his Lord died; it is a smaller, slanted cross, as befits an apostle who never sought to occupy the same space as his Master. The story moves us precisely because it is of a piece with everything else we know about him. He found Christ quietly. He brought his brother quietly. He counted the loaves quietly. He introduced the Greeks quietly. And at the end, he suffered for the Name quietly, though for two full days his mouth did not stop preaching the Savior he had spent his life bringing to others.

The fruit of a discreet life is almost always larger than the life itself could have imagined. The Patriarchate of Constantinople counts Andrew as its founder. Nations far from Galilee remember him as their apostle. And in every parish of our Church, every time a servant turns to a brother and says 'come and see,' Andrew's work is being quietly continued.

We finish, then, with a small and practical question. Who is the Peter in our life? Who is the brother, the classmate, the parent, the cousin, the friend standing close enough that the Lord may be asking us, not to preach to crowds, but to find that one person and bring him to Jesus? Andrew did not wait to feel qualified. He did not wait until his theology was tidy. He went and he found his own brother.

"Come and see." John 1:39, NKJV

May the Lord who first said those words to Andrew at the tenth hour of a quiet afternoon say them again through us this week — in our homes, in our classrooms, in our parishes, in whatever hidden corner He has placed us. May He give us Andrew's hunger, Andrew's willingness to move, Andrew's freedom from comparison, and Andrew's simple love for the brother beside him. And may the Protokletos, the first-called, pray for us, that we who are called after him may bring to our Master the few loaves we carry, and watch Him multiply what we could never have multiplied ourselves.

Review Questions

1. Why is Andrew called Protokletos, and what does that title teach us about the way the Lord often begins His work in a life?
2. Andrew's first act after meeting Jesus was to go and find his own brother. Who are the people closest to us — at home, at work, in our parish — whom the Lord may be entrusting to our 'first' care?
3. Before Andrew ever met Jesus, he was already a disciple of John the Baptist. What does this tell us about the habits and places that prepare a servant to recognize Christ when He comes near?
4. In the feeding of the multitudes, Philip counted the money and Andrew counted the loaves. Where in our own service are we tempted to calculate scarcity instead of bringing to Christ the small offering already in our hands?

5. When the Greeks said, 'We wish to see Jesus,' Philip went first to Andrew. What qualities in a servant make others bring their seekers to him? How can we grow in those qualities?
6. Andrew lived his whole ministry in the shadow of a more visible brother without any sign of rivalry. What disciplines of the heart are needed so that comparison does not undo our service?
7. Reflect on the invitation 'Come and see.' How might we speak a version of those same words this week — to a student, a friend, a family member — without pressure, without argument, simply as a door opened to Christ?

Books & References

Scripture: Scripture in this lesson is quoted from the New King James Version (NKJV) unless otherwise noted.

Further Reading:

- The Holy Bible, New King James Version (NKJV). Thomas Nelson.
- St. John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Gospel of John, XVIII–XIX. Translated in the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series I, Vol. 14.
- St. Macarius the Great, Spiritual Homilies. Translated by A. J. Mason. SPCK, 1921.
- The Synaxarium of the Coptic Orthodox Church, commemoration of the martyrdom of the Apostle St. Andrew (4 Kiahk).
- H. B. Swete, 'The Apostle Andrew,' in The Expositor, 7th series, Vol. 2.
- Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty, Patristic Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John (chapters 1, 6, 12). St. George's Coptic Orthodox Church, Sporting, Alexandria.

Patristic texts are cited in widely available English translations; where sense required, phrasing has been lightly modernized without altering meaning.

Lesson Notes