

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Nov 30th 2018

Feast of Saint Andrew, Apostle

Today we celebrate the Feast of Saint Andrew, one of the twelve apostles. He is what I call a shadow apostle. You know he is there but that is about it. Andrew is mentioned in the Gospels but his only mention in the rest of the New Testament is in the list of the apostles in the Book of Acts. And he is not mentioned in the Gospels very often.

Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist. When the Baptist pointed out Jesus, the Lamb of God, Andrew followed Jesus. Perhaps his greatest work for God at this time was that he introduced his brother, Simon, to Jesus. In this regard he is also a shadow apostle because he lives his life in the shadow of his big brother, Simon, the one Jesus re-named Peter, Cephas, the Rock. In today's Gospel, Jesus calls Peter and Andrew to follow him and they both do. Yet, the focus is almost always on Peter and not on Andrew.

We assume that Peter is his older brother, although we do not know this for certain. However, Peter has the personality of an older brother type. Andrew seems to be just the opposite. He could have been older age-wise but he definitely comes off as a younger brother type. I am the mid-kid in our family. I have two older sisters. One of them acts like an older sister. One is a younger sister type. I have a younger brother who is truly a younger brother type. My baby sister is eight years younger than me and fourteen years younger than my oldest sister but you would think, as personalities go, that she is older than all of us. Jesus needed older brother types like Peter and Paul to take the lead in this new movement. But the Andrews of the world are the salt of the earth. How many older brother types do we need? I once was told by the choir director where I became Catholic that he was happy to have me in the choir, since I sing tenor. He said, "A choir only needs one good tenor." He paused and then said, "I don't know if we could handle more than one, frankly." He himself sang tenor so he was mostly joking but there is truth in there. How many leaders can a group handle? The Church needed those first, dynamic, older brother types but it would not have survived without the Andrews who quietly, behind the scenes, in the shadows, lived and died for Jesus.

In the listing of the apostles, Andrew is always mentioned as one of the first four. He is a highly influential apostle. There was a time when Phillip wanted to introduce some people to Jesus. He asked Andrew to do it. Andrew was in the inner circle of Jesus. Andrew, like the other apostles, became a missionary. Tradition tells us that he was crucified during the reign of Nero. Instead of nailing him to the cross, they tied him to it with ropes so as to lengthen the suffering. Andrew lived a faithful Christian life.

Peter, Andrew, James, and John.... They were all different. They were all needed. Some in the spotlight gave themselves as a sacrificial offering to God. Some in the shadows did the same.

The Church will never be worthy of the Andrews who bring the light of Christ into the shadows. Saint Andrew, apostle in the shadows, pray for us.

