

John 1:35–42a
Wed. of Ad Te Levavi
Kaiserslautern Ev. Luth. Ch.
November 30, 2022

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dearly bought hearers by the blood of Jesus Christ,

This Advent season, we will be focusing on the saints of Advent during our midweek services. The season of Advent is punctuated by various saints' days, which can help direct our attention to the coming of Christ: as a baby 2,000 years ago, today in the Word and in the Sacraments, and at the end of the world when our Lord returns in glory. St. Andrew's Day, November 30, is the traditional start of the Advent season. Whatever Sunday falls closest to St. Andrew's day becomes Ad Te Levavi Sunday, the first Sunday of Advent. During the second week of Advent we'll celebrate the day of St. Nicholas, which is where many of our most popular Christmas traditions come from. During the third week of Advent we'll consider St. Lucy, who is important for the Christmas festivities in Scandinavian countries. Finally, during the fourth week of Advent, we'll consider St. Thomas, whose feast day falls on December 21st.

In the Greek Church, St. Andrew is designated, Πρωτόκλητος, the "first-called." Protos means "first," and Klhtos means "called." St. Andrew is famous for being the first of Jesus's disciples. That's what we learn from our reading this evening. Andrew was a fisherman and a disciple of John the Baptist. Andrew and another disciple heard what John the Baptist said about Jesus: "Behold, the Lamb of God!" and so they followed Jesus. They knew Jesus was the real deal, the coming-one John was only preparing the people for.

Jesus would make these fishermen into fishers of men, and so we see that like any good fisherman, Andrew got an early start. "He first found His own brother Simon and said to him,

‘We have found the Messiah (which means Christ).’ Andrew then brought Simon to Jesus. Jesus changed Simon’s name to Cephas, which means Peter, and as you know, Peter became the chief spokesman of the apostles. Talk about a big catch! Andrew was a fisher of men. He brought his brother, Peter, to Jesus and so changed the course of (church) history.

And Peter wasn’t the only one Andrew brought to Jesus. There are two other examples in John’s Gospel where Andrew reels in a catch for the Lord. In John 6, Andrew brought to Jesus the boy with five barley loaves and two fish. In John 20, there were some Greeks at the Passover celebration. The Greeks came to Philip saying: “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” Philip went and told Andrew and Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Andrew truly was a fisher of men, snatching people from the sea of sin and bringing them to our Lord.

In Romans 10, the Apostle Paul says: “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?” Andrew, like the other disciples, was sent out into the world to preach God’s Word of Law and Gospel. Andrew was sent to preach, that others might hear, believe, and call upon the name of the Lord and so be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

According to a number of traditions in the church, St. Andrew ended up preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Scythia, which today is where Romania, Ukraine, and Russia are located. Apparently Andrew preached along the Black Sea and then went as far as what is today Kiev, Ukraine and from there to what is today Novgorod, Russia. You might recall seeing images of St. Andrew’s church in Kiev on the news this past Spring as the city came under attack. The church is built on a steep hill where St. Andrew is said to have foretold that place as

the cradle of Christianity in the Slavic lands. Interestingly, the “Order of St. Andrew the First-Called” is the highest order conferred by the Russian Imperial family and the Russian Federation. So St. Andrew figures prominently in the piety of both Ukrainians and Russians; a figure who unites them.

Like all the other Apostles, except John, St. Andrew suffered a martyr’s death similar to the death of Jesus. It is said that Andrew died on a cross in the shape of an X. This X-shaped cross has come to be known as the St. Andrew’s Cross, and is the basis of the flag of Scotland, where Andrew also came to be recognized as a patron saint early in the Middle Ages. When threatened with the cross, Andrew said joyfully: “If I feared the punishment of the cross, I would never have preached the mystery of the cross.” Upon seeing the cross where he would die, Andrew said: “Hail precious cross, you who were dedicated by the body of Christ; may He receive me through you, who redeemed me through you.” Andrew truly left everything, including his earthly life, to follow Christ, and so He becomes an example to us.

During Advent, we repent of our sins and deny ourselves as we prepare to receive our Savior, Jesus Christ. We take up the crosses our Lord places upon us, knowing the LORD has already born our burdens on His cross. With this joyful message of salvation, we too, like Andrew, bring others to Jesus and to the new life found in Him and Him alone. In the name of Jesus, Amen.