

BE AN ANDREW
Deacon Barbara's Sermon 1/19/20

John the Baptist walked along the bank of the Jordan River, thinking about the events of the past two days. Just two days ago, he had been standing in the Jordan, preaching to the crowd and baptizing anyone who wanted to repent and begin a new life. Person after person waded into the muddy waters to be baptized. Then time seemed to stand still as a man no one had seen before walked towards John and began to wade into the water. This man was Jesus, and he asked John to baptize him. John suddenly realized that Jesus was the One who was to come, the One that John had said he was not fit to untie his sandals. "No, Lord," John said, "I need to be baptized by you." "No, John," Jesus replied, "Let it be so now, for it is proper for us to do what God desires." And so Jesus was baptized by John.

Now it is two days later, and John is walking with two of his disciples when they see Jesus coming towards them. John points to Jesus and says, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" And immediately the two disciples leave John and follow after Jesus to learn more.

The Gospel tells us that one of those disciples was named Andrew. We know that Andrew was called by Jesus to be one of the original twelve disciples, but beyond that, there is really very little more that we know about him. In fact, Andrew's name is mentioned in only twelve verses in the New Testament, compared to Peter's 153 verses! Andrew is just a little better known than Thaddeus and Bartholomew, two disciples who are almost anonymous! But what do we know about Andrew, and what message does his life have for us today?

First of all, we know that he was Peter's brother, and that they lived in Capernaum and Bethsaida, and that they were fishermen. We know that he was a disciple of John the Baptist before he decided to follow Jesus. We know that he was present in the Upper Room when Jesus appeared to his disciples after his resurrection. And we know that he took part in the election of Matthias to replace Judas as one of the Twelve. But after the first chapter in the Book of Acts, there is no further mention of Andrew. We know he was martyred around 60 AD, but we don't know if he ever wrote a book or a letter, or if he traveled to preach in other places. There are legends and traditions about Andrew which have come down through the years, but there is no way of knowing which are true.

No, we don't know much about Andrew, but there are three stories about him in the New Testament which give us an idea of the kind of man he was. Three stories which point to the kind of people we can be as followers of Jesus.

The first story takes place in today's Gospel reading. After spending the whole day with Jesus, listening to him and learning from him, Andrew realized that Jesus was the One that they had been waiting for. We don't know what was said that day, but something happened inside of Andrew, and he was transformed. So Andrew ran to find his brother Peter to tell him, "We have found the Messiah!" And he brought Peter to Jesus, introduced him, and let Jesus do the rest.

Now the second story. It is the story of two Greek travelers. Jerusalem was on a major highway that connected Rome to Egypt. So people from all over the world were constantly passing through Jerusalem on their way to one place or the other. It so happened that two Greeks were there one day. They had heard a lot about this rabbi named Jesus, so they approached Philip and said, "We would like to meet Jesus." So Philip went to Andrew and said, "Would you take them to Jesus?" Andrew introduced those two Greek people to Jesus, and let Jesus do the rest.

Are you beginning to see a theme here?

And now the third story. One day, Jesus was talking to a great crowd of people on a hillside. It was late in the day when Jesus finished speaking, and the 5000 or so people who were there were getting hungry. "Jesus," the disciples said, "how are you going to feed all these people?" "You feed them," Jesus replied. The disciples must have looked at each other in confusion--this was impossible! Then Andrew said, "There is a boy here with five loaves of bread and two small fish, but I don't see how that is going to help." But Jesus said, "Bring him to me." Well, you know the rest of the story. The point for us this morning is that, once again, it is Andrew who is introducing someone to Jesus. It was Andrew's ministry to bring people to Jesus, to introduce them, and then let Jesus do the rest.

It is our ministry as well. We may not be called like Peter to preach wonderful sermons and convert three thousand people in one day. We may not be called like James to be a great leader of the Church in Jerusalem. We may not be called like John to write a Gospel which has touched the lives of so many. We may not be called like Paul to go to distant lands and preach the Good News.

But we are called to be like Andrew. We are called to be like Andrew in the everyday activities of our lives. We are called to be like Andrew and take Jesus with us wherever we go and introduce our friends and family and neighbors to him. Because, like Andrew, we have met Jesus, and we know that he is the Messiah of God. Because, like Andrew, we have the joy of knowing Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. And, like Andrew, we should be willing and even eager to share our Lord with those we know.

Think back over your own life. Who has been an Andrew to you? Who was it that introduced Jesus to you, or made him better known to you? In my own life, I can think of at least three Andrews. One was a high school friend named Janet, who invited me to a Youth for Christ meeting, and helped me to realize that I could have a personal relationship with Jesus. Another was a college friend named Rick, who introduced me to Jesus in the Eucharist. And the third was a priest named Bill, who helped me to realize that Jesus was a friend and brother, as well as Lord and Savior.

Who has been an Andrew to you?

And who can you be an Andrew to? Who is it in your family, or your neighborhood, or your workplace, who is waiting to be introduced to Jesus? Who is it that you may be just the right person, maybe the only person, who you can be Andrew to? Who is it that perhaps sees Jesus in you and wants to know more?

Knowing how to do this is a difficult thing! It's not easy to walk up to someone and say, "Let me introduce you to Jesus." It's not easy to be bold and wear your faith on your sleeve. But, it is still possible to make opportunities and then be ready when those opportunities bear fruit.

You will have to find the ways which work in your family, or your office, or your neighborhood. One thing we all must do, is to pray for guidance in finding ways to introduce people to Jesus. Something else we all can do is to let the light of Christ shine through us so brightly that, "others will see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven."

One day when I was still teaching, I was walking down the hall humming a favorite praise song, when another teacher stopped me and said, "You really look happy!" "I am," I replied. "Why are you so happy?" Okay, Barbara, I said to myself, here's your chance. I took a deep breath and said, "I'm happy because my heart is so full of the love of the Lord, that I just can't keep it inside!" He looked at me closely to see if I was

sincere, and then he said, “So that’s what makes you different. I really like your brand of Christianity.”

This is one way to be an Andrew we all can do-- to take advantage of situations which occur in conversations with other people. An article I read a while ago called this “throwing out spiritual lures.” That’s when you throw out a fishing line in a conversation, saying something like, “I thank God that my mother is doing better,” or, “The Lord has really blessed our business.” A spiritual lure shows your friend that you have a personal relationship with God and that He works positively in your life. You may not ever have a deeper conversation with this person, but he heard, and he knows where you draw your strength from.

Public school teachers are somewhat limited in their ability to share the good news with others. It didn’t stop me, however, because there are other ways to introduce people to Jesus other than by talking. When I was teaching, a Bible, a copy of *Forward Day by Day* and a Christian coffee mug sat on my desk. On the door of my closet I taped a little card on which was written my favorite Bible verse. No words said! No actions taken! But those things were in plain view, and I know they were effective, because teachers and students sometimes came to me to talk about a problem, to ask for prayer, or to ask more about my faith.

The point I’m trying to make is that you don’t have to be Mother Theresa, or Billy Graham, or even a member of the clergy to introduce people to Jesus. There are a hundred little ways that God can use you to bring His Son into your business, or your neighborhood, or your home.

So, my challenge for you today is to look for ways that you can let your friends and family and coworkers know that Jesus is important in your life. And then, when the opportunity presents itself, step out in faith. Be an Andrew, and introduce that person to Jesus. It may be the best introduction you have ever made in your life. Amen.