

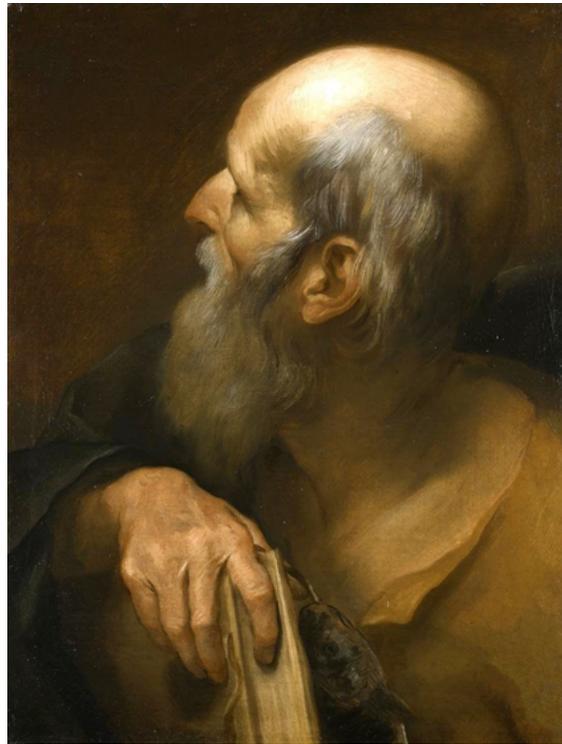
St. Andrew: Apostle of the Ordinary

A TELEVISION commercial some time ago featured a man of very ordinary appearance who looked into the camera and said, “Hello. You don’t know me. My name is Arthur Newman. I am Paul Newman’s brother.” He went on to explain that, despite his lack of fame and good looks, a certain investment company cared just as much for him as it did for his famous brother, Paul.

That commercial reminds me of the story of St. Andrew the Apostle. If there were television in the first century Church, they could have done the same kind of advertising. Another ordinary looking person would have stood before the camera and said, “Hello. You probably don’t know me. My name is Andrew. I am Simon Peter’s brother. I am not a great leader or a public speaker as is my brother, Simon Peter. I am not a theologian nor a writer, but Christ cares just as much for me, and I am just as important to His cause as my more famous brother.” Andrew is not the least known of the Twelve Apostles, but our knowledge of him is scant, at best.

His name appears only twelve times and they don’t tell us anything that he did or said; just that he was a follower of Christ. Jesus began His public ministry by calling to Himself a very ordinary group of men. To many of us, that should be very encouraging.

Jesus doesn’t look upon the conspicuous with anything close to the wonder and admiration that



Saint Andrew by Andrea Sacchi (c.1630)

we might; we get excited about big, imposing things. We rejoice in the extraordinary, but Jesus had a primary place for Andrew among those that followed Him. He wasn’t a giant or a genius. He was not a brilliant theologian, nor an eloquent speaker. He was just a fisherman, a very plain man. Yet Jesus chose to begin His public ministry with Andrew as one of His disciples.

Where did we get the notion that in order to serve Christ and meet the needs of people we must get involved in the big, impressive

things? If we could look into the Lord’s storehouse of valuables, we might be surprised at the insignificance of the things we would see:

There we would find two pennies once belonging to a widow, whom Jesus held up as an eternal example of stewardship. He said, “she gave more than all the rest.” We would find a peasant boy’s lunch of five barley loaves and two fish. Jesus used it to feed a large multitude of people. There would be a broken alabaster jar belonging to Mary of Bethany. She broke it open and poured its contents on Jesus’ head and He said, “Wherever the Gospel is preached, this thing that she did will always be remembered.” Finally there would be a cup of water and underneath would be inscribed, “Even a cup of cold water given in My name will not lose its reward.”

Jesus always gloried in ordinary things and ordinary people. Andrew’s position was perhaps the

most difficult among the Apostles. He was a close associate of three other men: Peter, James and John. They were friends and business partners and maybe even grew up together. All of them became Christ's followers. Then there developed an inner circle of disciples and Andrew wasn't part of it.

When Jesus went into the home of Jairus, shortly after his little girl died, and raised her from the dead, Andrew was not among those who witnessed the miracle. Peter, James and John were there, but Andrew was left out. When Jesus went to the mount of the Transfiguration and spoke with Moses and Elijah, He took Peter, James and John with Him. Again, Andrew was left out. On the night before He died, as He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus took Peter, James and John with Him. Once again, Andrew was left out. Why this was, we don't know, but here is the beautiful part: If Andrew ever suffered the pangs of envy, there is no indication of it in the Gospel.

Andrew lived a beautiful life. He wasn't flashy or showy on the outside, but he had a lot of strength on the inside. He had courage to be himself and do his own work in his own way, the best he could. Three times in the New Testament, we see Andrew in action and each time he is helping someone. Not preaching to great crowds, just helping individuals. The first time he is bringing his brother Simon and introducing him to Jesus. The second time he is befriending a boy and bringing him to Christ. The third time he is reaching across racial boundaries to befriend a group of Greeks who want to see Jesus. He was always doing the simple but significant task with an extraordinary spirit.

Saint Andrew reminds us of the glorious possibilities in ordinary people. We owe much to plain, ordinary men and women who have quietly lived their lives in the cause of Christ. By the grace of God, each one of us can be one of these, just like Andrew the Apostle. ❖