

Second Sunday after Epiphany 19 Jan 2014 John 1:29-42

The top corner of our flag shows the red cross of England, a diagonal red cross of Ireland, but crushed under these potent heavyweights is the blue-white saltire, the cross of Andrew of Scotland.

Today, Andrew asked Jesus “Where are you staying?” which translates as “What makes you tick?” to which Jesus answered, “Come and see. I can show you what you are looking for.” Andrew, the first disciple called, became captivated, hooked on Jesus. Excited, he had to share the good news. He brought his brother, Simon, to Jesus, who, at once, saw foreman material in him and called him Peter, “Rocky.” Alas, from then on, Simon Peter became the focus of all attention.

Was Andrew ever Kermit-frog-green at Peter’s elevation to eminence? No. Did Andrew bleat “Fair crack of the sauce bottle, Jeez, I brought that blustering, blundering braggart brother to you. You can see he suffers from *foot-in-mouth* disease.”

It must be so hard to live in the shadow of a larger than life elder brother. But Andrew never stunted himself, bemoaning having to play second fiddle to Simon Peter in Jesus’ orchestra. And Peter did mess up hugely. In Gethsemane Grove, he led the rush of deserters to the gate. Later, Peter the Rock, upon whom Jesus built his Church, was reduced to a remorse-filled blubbing baby as his cocksure confidence and impulsive thoughtlessness drained and died when Simon Peter denied his Lord.

In bringing Peter to Jesus, Andrew could be called the *first home missionary*. Andrew was also the *first foreign missionary*. One day, a group of Greeks asked disciple Philip could they meet Jesus? The dull as dishwater disciple dithered. Approachable Andrew simply said, “Come and see,” and introduced the delegation to his Lord. These first converts were the trickle of an in rushing tide of Eastern Orthodox humanity would become half the Christian Church. And Andrew began it all.

Andrew was *the first disciple, the first home and foreign missionary*. On the day the guts growled in 5000 famished folk, and, when worn-out whippersnappers whined and whimpered weary with hunger, and there was no 7:11 nearby, Andrew again rose to the challenge. Jesus had said to his team “You give them something to eat.” Where was leader Peter? He had no ready answer how to feed so many, so, once again, he went conveniently missing like a Stubbie short of a six-pack. Only Andrew seemed to be a people-oriented person. Only Andrew seemed to know the crowd, through a genuine interest in people. He ferreted out the one lad, one lad in a crowd of 5000, who had a knapsack of loaves and fish, with which Jesus miraculously fed the mob. With inconspicuous unobtrusive excellence, Andrew became involved. When we are asked to help, when we are asked to do the impossible, do we stand around saying, “That’s not my strength, not my gift. Somebody else better qualified will take care of what must be done.”

Later this year, your parish reps will reduce their time in Purgatory by attending synod. They will sit to be swayed by the stirring, self-promoting speeches from colourful, competent clerics and laity. Some electrically

charged dynamos, these Peters are the ones who once wrote the epistles or who stepped out of boats to walk on water at Jesus' call. Among all these pontificating Peters, I may think, with the contentedness of a Carnation cow, that the most important work in the Church was being done here. Well, bunnies to that illusion!

In truth, God's real work is being done by the unassuming, un-showy Andrews and Andrew Sisters, whose hearts reach out to a waiting, needy world. (The Andrew Sisters? That dates me.) The men and women Andrews are the unsung, uncatalogued saints whose great works for God are oft unknown but to God, but, without whom, little would be accomplished in the Church. The Peters may be extraordinary, but the Andrews are *THE* ordinary, and God must especially love the ordinary, as God made so many of them.

The Andrews are the self-effacing folk, who, ungifted with degrees in social work, pastorally visit shut-ins, to give heart-of-solid-gold-comfort to the frail aged and lonely, from whose life the bottom has fallen by grief or illness, and, for whom, the future is unknown and uncertain, who would otherwise be left to face their sadness alone. The Andrews spend precious time with those nervous over their soul's salvation. They strive to show them a God of love, and not let them be transfixed in fear of the poet's lie "God was above me frowning through, and God was terrible and thunder blue."

There is every chance that none of these Andrews will be singled out for Australia Day honours among the flannelled cricket fools, the muddied football oafs nor the Canberra polly-waffles, because the Andrews are not stars, yet are necessary extras. The Andrew sisters are our mums or the mums who are often taken for granted repeatedly by thoughtless children and friends; Mums, who when raising a thankless brood, would love to invite "a half-hour of King Herod let loose on my lot;" Mums, whose careless spouse spends long hours hovering over the bar with his glassy-eyed mates of the drinking brotherhood; Mums who mutter "Murder, yes; divorce, no."

Then there are you Andrews, who chose to remember your parents in their riper years, who chose to care for your seniors, who may have been wearied with old wails and new woes, who sometimes struck out with bitter testy-ness and intemperate tongue and sharp nails, in spite of your self-sacrificing kindness.

Our baptismal covenant calls us all to be Andrews, to choose to live life at the constant call of the King, to whom we are immeasurably indispensable. It is by choosing to be examples of quiet, welcoming witness, that we preach a sermon of our life, that folk will see and hear and wonder (as Andrew asked Jesus today) "What makes you tick?" Then, perhaps, they may be attracted to the Christian way.

We don't have to drown visitors to our parish with gallons of tea or cup cakes, but we should spend time to get to know them with genuine friendship, that's if we believe our Jesus is worth sharing. Then and only then, they may choose

to get to know the genuine friendship of Christ Jesus and be personally committed to him.

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The original Andrew mother lost two sons crucified. Peter was nailed upside-down, while Andrew died on a saltire-shaped cross. A fourth century missionary fled Middle-East persecution, carrying Andrew's bones to Scotland, where he was invoked in time of battle as patron and his saltire became the Scottish flag.

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