

The Story of Andrew [the Ordinary]

1. The return of the native; the shock of seeing so many choices. (Do you need some new pants?) Have you ever stood in a Baskin-Robbins and asked for vanilla? Would you worry about someone who did?
2. Sometimes, you can look at the incredible variety around you (buffet vs. a snack machine) and wonder if you aren't the Saltine Crackers in E4. When you look at TV you see people who don't look like most of us. You wonder if you are the plain one.
3. The same thing can happen when you look at church people. There are the stars – (name the most famous/best preachers among us). You can try to copy them, but that never works. So do you sit back and say, "Not me. I'm the vanilla one"?
4. Let me tell you the story about a vanilla man. Andrew. He was born in Bethsaida on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. His dad's name was Jonah, a traditional name for fishermen. The prophet Jonah had been born fairly nearby. Andrew seemed to be more a thinker than a fisher (not that fishing is a bad thing... but a sport?). He left his nets to follow John the Baptist.
5. Just as John the Baptist introduced the world to Jesus, Andrew introduced his brother Simon Peter to Jesus. Later, he would introduce Philip to Jesus. Andrew followed Jesus to the wedding feast at Cana, down to Jerusalem where Jesus cleansed the temple. Sometime after that Andrew went back to his nets and fished; for how long, we don't know.
6. Jesus found them there and called for them to follow Him and become fishers of men. We know that Peter, James and John responded, but so did Andrew. While we think of Peter being a fisher of men, the difference between them was simple – Peter worked en masse and Andrew worked on individuals.

7. It was Andrew who thought to introduce the boy with the fish and loaves to Jesus at the feeding of the 5000. He was at the Feast of the Passover where he introduced others to Jesus. He asked Jesus about the end of time and the taking of Jerusalem – showing he was not an intellectual superior. And that is the last thing we know of him from the NT.
8. What happened next? Interesting historical fact: when little is known about some name in the Bible, there will be tons of legends filled with tons of details about their lives. What is true and what isn't can be very difficult to determine for, said often enough, even a lie seems true.
9. Most legends place him in southern Russia, around the Black Sea, in the area known as Scythia. Others put him in Greece. One strong one puts him in Asia Minor, around Turkey and Kurdistan. Perhaps he went to all three since Asia Minor forms a link between the two.
10. It seems that Andrew was crucified on an X shaped cross. That is why that shape is still known as Saint Andrew's Cross. His bones were venerated, as were many bones which may or may not have belonged to holy people. Some of those bones were said to have been taken to Scotland in the late 4th or early 5th century by a man named Regulus. The place they were buried is called St. Andrews to this day.
11. Because of stories like this, he is the patron saint of Scotland, Russia and Greece (where he probably died). But he still isn't known for much other than introducing people to Jesus, one at a time. Even the legends about him (other than a strange medieval forgery) are sedate... plain. Vanilla.
12. But think about this for a moment: think of the most talented, most beautiful, most famous, richest people you can think of. Now – think of them one moment after death. What do they have?
13. Think now about a vanilla person. A plain one. Nothing special. But they have Jesus. Jesus takes their little gifts and

works with them. One moment after death, what do they have? What did it matter?

14. Jesus has given us many blessings, but one of the greatest is the way he chooses the plain, the broken, and odd, the not-very-impressive and makes something of them.
15. Would we have ever heard about Peter, or Philip, or the feeding of the 5000 without Andrew? Would there have been a Peter in the first place? Think back to those religious stars you conjured up a moment ago. Who converted them? Do you know? Do you really care? (my father's conversion after a vanilla man pressed a tract in his hand)
16. But Andrew was a man of tremendous faith, you say? Not really. Even when he introduced the boy to Jesus, he said, "But what are these when there are so many people?" Just take what faith you have and let him work with it. Take what talents you have and see what he can do with it.
17. You might be plain vanilla. But it seems that vanilla is one of God's favorite flavors. No real ambition, no need for others to think highly of him. He just wanted to be near Jesus. And Jesus wanted Andrew just as he was.