

"Will the Real Andrew Please Stand Up?"

I will always remember the cartoon that hung in the break room at Seminary that showed a young man being examined on the floor of his governing body for ordination. He was grasping the pulpit in fright and his hair stood on end as if he had stuck his finger in an electrical socket. Sweat was pouring down the sides of his face. The folks gathered had a look of pure pity on their faces and one whispered to the other, "Someone asked him the Trinity question!"

Last week we celebrated Pentecost – the day that the promised Holy Spirit came down and rested on the disciples as they worshiped together after Jesus' ascension. What is so important about Pentecost is this: while many times we read in the Old Testament that the Spirit of God rested on or with someone, we also read that the Spirit left. But on that Pentecost Day, the Holy Spirit came down and stayed! Indeed, the Holy Spirit is here, even now, completing the three in one person of God.

That is why today is recognized as Trinity Sunday on our Christian calendar. But I must confess that after being in church all of my life, graduating from Seminary and being a minister for 16 years, I am still not sure I can accurately describe the Trinity. And perhaps that is as it should be. A holy mystery that we just accept. Having said that, I came across a simple but beautiful description of the Trinity in Ellsworth Kalas' book [The Thirteen Apostles](#). (1)

God loved the world and gave us his Son. God's Son our Lord loved us and gave his life for us. The gift of God's love in Christ has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. And when you hear it that way, it seems very simple. It is all about love. But this explanation begs the question, "What do we do with the Spirit?" Well, I believe Oscar Hammerstein may have

said it best when he wrote: "Love in your heart isn't put there to stay. Love isn't love till you give it away." So, we are called to give the Holy Spirit away or, in other words, to share it.

That is why Paul reminded us in his first letter to the church at Corinth that the Spirit gives each of us gifts for the common good. The Triune God sets the example of giving and loving and then pours the Spirit into us so that we, as the body of Christ on earth, can give those gifts away.

I thought about the people in the Bible who were known for sharing their gifts of the Spirit and that *same* Spirit directed me to, of all people, Andrew. That is the disciple Andrew, better known as Peter's brother.

In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, Andrew's name only appears in the lists of the twelve. In other words, in the Synoptic Gospels, he is seen only as one in a crowd of many. But the Gospel of John, the Gospel which many scholars think is the only eyewitness account of Jesus' life and ministry, makes special mention of Andrew. And he does it three times.

The first time is in the beginning when John the Baptist is preaching. We are told that John was preaching about the Lamb of God. Andrew overheard the preaching and went and told his brother, Peter to come and see. And on the spot, they both became disciples of Jesus. No mention is given of Jesus' reaction to Andrew but when he encounters Peter the very first time, and is told that his name is Simon, Jesus said you shall be called Peter, meaning stone in Greek or Cephas, meaning rock in Aramaic, Jesus' native tongue.

Jesus immediately saw something special in Peter, whom he would entrust the beginning of the church to before his death. But Andrew was, well, apparently just Peter's brother. But what if Andrew had not brought Peter in the first place? Well, the more we learn about Andrew, the more we understand that this was just so characteristic of him. Andrew was seeking

something more in life. And when he found it, he could not keep it to himself. He shared it, as a good brother does.

The third time we meet Andrew is in the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of John when some Gentiles are searching for Jesus. They approach Philip, probably because he has a Gentile name, who then goes to Andrew and the two went together to let Jesus know what was going on. But why did Philip go to Andrew? Everyone knows that Peter, James and John were the inner circle. Wouldn't it have made more sense to go to one of those men? Well again, Andrew apparently had the reputation for being a brother, if not by blood then in Spirit. He must have been by nature a helpful person, the kind of person who would run a small errand or fix something that was broken.

But our Scripture lesson this morning deals with the second mention of Andrew in the Gospel of John. It is John's account of the feeding of the 5,000. Which, by the way, is the ONLY of Jesus' miracles found in all four Gospels.

We all know the story well. People had followed Jesus and his disciples down to the Sea of Galilee because he had become well known for his teaching, preaching and healing. Apparently it had gotten rather late and when Jesus looked up and realized the number of people who were there he turned to Philip and asked, "Where are we going to buy bread to feed all these people?"

Some commentaries claim that Philip was the quartermaster, the one who supervised provisions and supplies. Philip states the obvious – that six months wages would not buy enough bread for this many people. And even if they had that much money, I have been to this area of Tiberias and there is no evidence of a village nearby that would have even HAD that much

bread. It would be like stopping at a roadside vegetable stand and hoping to buy enough tomatoes to make BLTs for all of students at Dorman High School.

But once again, Andrew steps up to the plate. He happened to notice a small boy with five loaves of bread and two fish. Those who lived in the midst of the story probably thought to themselves, "Well that is a stupid thing to say! What good would such a small amount do in such a mob of people?" But WE live on the other side of the story, and we know that Andrew's idea was the very basis of Jesus' most well-known miracle.

And again, it is so characteristic of Andrew. While the other disciples were busying themselves with more important work, Andrew evidently took the time to chat with a small boy. We can almost picture him patting the boy on the head and asking if he caught the fish or if his mother bought them at the market. Andrew, the brother, who would express a personal interest in someone who seemed insignificant.

So when we look at Andrew, he is JUST the kind of person that keeps a church moving in the right direction. He is just the kind of brother that we all need or wish we had – one who can be counted on, no matter what. Now this is not to say that the Peters of the world aren't vital to the body of Christ. In today's church, Peter would be a Deacon or an Elder. Peter might even be a minister. And Nazareth Presbyterian Church is blessed to have wonderful leaders who truly have the best interest of God and God's church at heart. It has been a real privilege for me to work with them.

But what REALLY keeps the church on an even keel are the Andrews of our churches. By this I mean that all churches need a quiet servant, working behind the scenes, willing to do what no one else will. The kind of person who cares more about others meeting Christ and knowing the truth than he or she does about getting any attention for themselves. The brother

who wants to share what he knows but does it in a way that almost goes unnoticed. The sister who realizes that, while many strive for the limelight, most of the *REAL* work is done in the shadows.

And I would like to mention one more attribute of Andrew. The gift of constancy – of always being present. When I served as Chaplain at Presbyterian Community, I had a resident committee that helped with the Spiritual needs there. At one of our meetings, Jane complimented Bill on what a good job he does when he introduces a guest speaker. "I could never do that!" she added.

I quickly agreed that Bill does a great job but reminded Jane of the beautiful flower arrangements that she makes. Jane then pointed out how lucky we were to have Barbara who played the piano. Then Barbara lifted up Neil for going to get residents in Healthcare and before he could say anything, Nancy spoke up for herself and said proudly, "I sit in the pews!"

She meant it as a joke but, where would we be if, after all the sermon preparation and all the choir practice and all of the effort in putting together a service and a bulletin or a Sunday School lesson, no one was here!

So this morning, I would like to ask some of our Andrews to stand up. I would like to begin with Tommy and Frances Lynch. Tommy and Frances are moving soon and though they won't be far away and will still come to church, the church would like to recognize you for all that you have contributed to our family here. Tommy and Frances both have a great deal of Peter in them. They have served in many leadership roles over the years. But when Frances plans a luncheon for the Friendship Club she brings in decorations and flowers and other special touches. Tommy, I am told, used to be at church more than he was at home – fixing things and helping the church run smoothly. And so many people have told me how the two of you made a

special effort to welcome them when they were visitors or assimilate them into the life of the church after they joined. (Ask to stand)

But there are many other Andrews here. For years, Karen Holmes has come in faithfully to count money on Mondays morning. (ask to stand) If you have ever helped count money, will you please join Karen? Karen's husband Chuck can be counted on to come to church anytime something isn't running smoothly, whether it is a light or a toilet. (stand) If you have ever fixed something that was broken, burned out or plugged up, please stand.

Debbie Ritzo faithfully sends cards to people when they have a birthday or anniversary. Her husband John locks and unlocks the building almost every Sunday he is here. (stand) If you have ever sent cards to a church member or visitor or helped open or close the church, please stand.

Amelia Senn proofs our bulletin and our newsletter. Lenny Senn faithfully welcomes people every Sunday and hands out bulletins. (stand) If you have ever proofed the bulletin, the newsletter, been an usher or a greeter, please stand. Joan Houghton and Gayle Mason change out our bulletins boards each month. (stand) If you have ever helped with a bulletin board, please stand.

Now listen carefully and stand and remain standing, if you have done one or more of the following: played an instrument in church or been a choir member; set up or cleaned up for Communion. Set up or cleaned up for a meal, coffee hour, or any other event. Served on a Committee. Helped set up, move and/or transport the bell tables. Helped with the Time for Children. Taught Circle or Sunday School. Visited a shut in or sick church member. Fixed a meal for someone in the church. Helped on a clean up day at the church. Helped in the nursery. Served as a liturgist during worship. Chaperoned a youth event. Put flags on the graves.

Bought supplies or paper goods. Been a listener to someone who needed it. Worked on one of our church sponsored Missions such as Carpenter's Table or the Soup Kitchen. Collected the papers on the Friendship pads. Rang the bell out front! Turned on the sound system. Prayed for someone who needed it.

And if you have ever attended worship, Sunday School, Bible Study, Circle, Men of the Church, Youth Group or Vacation Bible School PLEASE STAND UP!

Friends, look around at all the Andrews. The men, women and children who are loved by the Lord, who know that Jesus gave his life for them, and who have received the gifts of the Holy Spirit, only to give them away.

The sign outside of our church reads CELEBRATING 250 YEARS, STILL HERE, STILL GROWING. This sign stands because of the gift of the Holy Spirit which has been poured into our hearts for over 250 years. That same Spirit will enable the sign to continue to stand because of the willingness of all of these Andrews who give the Spirit away. Thanks be to God. Amen.

- (1) With special recognition to J. Ellsworth Kalas and his research on Andrew in The Thirteen Apostles, Abingdon Press, 2002, pages 9-16.