

Bennoch church: 19th January 2020

Did you know that St Andrew is not just the patron saint of Scotland. Do you know where else he is patron saint of? He is the patron saint of Greece, Russia, Italy's Amalfi and Barbados. As well as other countries. He is also the patron saint of singers, spinsters, maidens, fishmongers, fishermen, women wanting to be mothers, gout and sore throats.

The story of our patron saint is shrouded in the mists of history. It is difficult to separate fact from myth. Did St Andrew ever come to Scotland. I doubt it. It is said he was crucified at Patras in Greece, on an X-shaped cross and this is represented by the diagonal cross, or 'saltire', on Scotland's flag.

His remains were then preserved at Patras. According to one legend, Saint Regulus (Rule), who was a monk at Patras, was advised in a dream to hide some of Andrews bones. Shortly thereafter, most of the relics were taken to Constantinople, now Istanbul in Turkey, but, Regulus was said to have had a second dream, in which an angel advised him to take the hidden relics "to the ends of the earth" for protection. And wherever he was shipwrecked, he was to build a shrine for them.

The story goes, St. Rule set sail, taking with him a kneecap, an upper arm bone, three fingers and a tooth, of Andrew. He sailed west, towards the edge of the known world, and was shipwrecked off the coast of Fife, Scotland. However, the relics

were more probably brought to Britain in 597AD and then in 732AD to Fife, by Bishop Acca of Hexham, who was well-known collector of religious relics. However it happened, some of the bones came to Scotland.

For Andrew, it all began with a transfer of allegiance. He was originally a disciple of John. Now, it seems that the guys were just hanging out. It doesn't say where, nor does John tell us who the other disciple was. It was the day after Jesus baptism, and so, I suspect that was probably the topic of their conversation. *"That was amazing, you'll never believe what happened. Were you there. Did you see me baptising Jesus? I tell you, he is the one. He is the Son of God"* .

Was it by chance that Jesus just happened to go by, or were they hoping to bump into him, to see what he would say or do. Have you ever done that? You really want to meet someone. I'll wait here, just in case. knowing fine well that's the way they would come. On my part, this is all just speculation. Trying to fill in the parts of the story that are frustratingly not recorded.

The story then literally takes a different direction , when John says to the two disciples, *"There is the lamb of God"*. I think it must have been part of a wider conversation, about what had happened, the baptism, and who Jesus was, for why else would these two men just up and leave John, and begin to follow Jesus.

Now, this is story of big hitters. For Andrew's brother, was none other, than Simon Peter. "*You will be called Cephas.*" You know the phrase, 'On this rock I will build my church'. In a very real sense this is where it all began. It must have been some conversation. Imagine, having the opportunity, to spend all evening, chatting, with any one you wanted. Who would you choose? One thing's for certain, for these two men, there was now no going back to John. Their path was now firmly set, in a different direction. They were now disciples of Jesus.

"*At once*", note that wee phrase, 'at once', Andrew goes and finds his brother. "*We have found the Messiah.*" He could not have made a bigger claim if he wanted to! This is 'fly on the wall stuff' again. What did Peter say? What was his initial reaction? All we know is this, he came to see Jesus for himself, and the rest, as we say is history. Think of the stories of Peter. First man to declare Jesus as Messiah. Peter the water walker. There on the mount of transfiguration. And yes, the man who denied Jesus three times in the courtyard. Peter came to find out for himself, who Jesus was.

The key phrase in this passage, is, "*Come and see*". I can only imagine that Andrew and his friend were looking for an invitation. Why else would they have said, "*Where do you live*". 'Can we come and talk with you. We have so many questions'.

We might not be hanging around street corners, but the imprint of Jesus baptism is still on us. His words are the same,

"*What are you looking for?*". How many times have we asked ourselves the question, about the purpose of life. 'Why am I here?. What is life all about?' To which Jesus invites us to meet him. "*Come and see*". Let's have a chat about that, and see if the story of Jesus can add meaning to our lives

Whether fact of myth, in St Andrews , just up the road, we have a tangible and historical link to the story of Jesus very first disciples. The bones may have gone, but the spirit, and the words of that encounter still remain and resonate to this day. There is not that big a gap, between the street corners of Jerusalem and the footsteps of Andrew and where we live today. Amen.