



## *Saint Andrew Fool-for-Christ*

*October 2/15*

By birth a Scythian, he was bought as a slave by Theognostus, a rich man in Constantinople, in the time of the Emperor Leo the Wise, son of the Emperor Basil the Macedonian. Andrew was a handsome young man, both in body and soul. Theognostus took a fancy to him and allowed him to learn to read and to write. Andrew prayed fervently to God and attended church services with great devotion, and, in obedience to a heavenly revelation, resolved on the asceticism of folly for Christ's sake.

Once, when he went to the well for water, he cast off his clothes and cut them to pieces, feigning madness. Saddened by this, his owner Theognostus put him in chains and took him to the church of St. Anastasia the Deliverer from Bonds, that prayers be read for him. But, as Andrew did not recover as far as his owner could see, he was freed as being sick in mind.

After that Saint Andrew lived in the streets of the capital going around hungry and half-naked. Most people shunned him, some would mock and beat him up. Even the beggars to whom he gave his last coins would despise him. But Saint Andrew endured all his sufferings humbly and was praying for those who hurt him.

Holy Andrew feigned madness all day and spent the nights in prayer. He lived without a roof over his head, spending the nights in the open and going about half-naked in a single, tattered garment and eating a little bread when kindly people shared theirs with him. Whatever he received, he gave away to beggars, and when he gave it to them he would mock them to avoid their thanks, for holy Andrew looked only for the reward from God.

Therefore great grace from God abode in him, and he was able to discern men's secrets, see angels and demons, drive demons from men and turn men from sin.

Yet, it was not always that Andrew pretended to be insane; talking to his spiritual father or to his disciple - a wealthy young man Epiphanius - Saint Andrew would remove the mask of folly, and then his holy wisdom and extraordinary spiritual beauty would be revealed. For the life of deepest humbleness and spiritual purity, God endowed Saint Andrew with the gifts of discernment and prophecy. Epiphanius learned a lot from his saint fool-for-Christ teacher who also predicted that with time Epiphanius would become an Archbishop and a famous preacher. The prophecy came true.

Once Saint Andrew, like the Supreme Apostle Paul, was taken to the third Sky and heard the unspoken words there that cannot be heard by people (1Cor. 2:9). There he had the honor of seeing Lord Jesus Christ himself, angels and many Holy Saints. He was surprised not to see the Most Holy Virgin. He had a most wonderful vision of Paradise and the exalted powers of heaven; He asked where the Holy Virgin was and they told him that She went down to the world of many sufferings to help people and to console those in sorrow.

Some time later Saint Andrew was also blessed with the vision of Most Holy Theotokos in the Vlahern church of Constantinople. This significant event of Her appearance is commemorated during the feast of the Protection of Holy Theotokos. When Saint Andrew and Epiphanius were praying in church, all of a sudden the dome of the church seemed to be opened and Saint Andrew saw the Holy Virgin surrounded by many angels and Saints. She was praying and extending Her homophor over those in prayer. "Do you see the Sovereign Lady of all?" - Andrew asked his disciple as if he could not believe his eyes. "I do, holy father and I am awed" - said Epiphanius.

Andrew, the fool-for-Christ, went into rest at the age of 66 in the year 936. His life was described by the presbyter of Saint Sofia church, who was a spiritual father to Saint Andrew and his disciple Epiphanius.

### **Troparion, Tone 1**

Hearkening to the voice of Thine Apostle Paul saying: "We are fools for Christ's sake," Thy servant Andrew became a fool on earth for Thy sake, O Christ God. Wherefore, honoring his memory now we entreat Thee O Lord: Save Thou our souls!

### **Kontakion, Tone 4**

Feigning foolishness of thine own will, thou didst hate the beauties of this world and didst cause the carnal thoughts to wither away through fasting and thirst, the heat of day and freezing cold, rain and snow; and unbowed by any of the vagaries of the weather, thou didst purify thyself like gold in a crucible, O blessed Andrew.



## **Foolishness for the Sake of Christ**

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One form of the ascetic Christian life is called foolishness for the sake of Christ.

The fool-for-Christ set for himself the task of battling within himself the root of all sin, pride. In order to accomplish this he took on an unusual style of life, appearing as someone bereft of his mental faculties, thus bringing upon himself the ridicule of others. In addition he exposed the evil in the world through metaphorical and symbolic words and actions. He took this ascetic endeavor upon himself in order to humble himself and to also more effectively influence others, since most people respond to the usual ordinary sermon with indifference. The spiritual feat of foolishness for

Christ was especially widespread in Russia.

The Lord blessed Orthodox lands by sending unto them many ascetics, righteous men and women who instructed the people in struggle, patience, and submission to the will of God. The Orthodox peoples endured their hardships with patience and hope in the mercy of God. Thus the long-suffering and humble soul of the Orthodox nation was cultivated and given the strength for the most difficult, heroic labors in the name of righteousness and love of God.