

Holy Apostle Andrew, the First-Called

"We glorify You, Holy Apostle Andrew, the First-Called, and we respect him Your holy memory..."

(celebration of the holiday)

By the grace of God, every country and every nation has an educator in its history. It has been a great honor for many nations to have the disciples of Christ the Savior, the holy apostles, on their land. Rome praises the Apostles, Peter and Paul, India - Thomas, Egypt - Mark, through which the nations, which were in the darkness of ignorance, were enlightened by the light of true knowledge of God.

The Holy Apostle Paul commanded us, "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God; ... and imitate their faith" (Heb. 13:7). Listening to the call of the apostle to the pagans, the Slavs in Ukraine glorify and honor Andrew, the First-Called, who came to our lands with the preaching of the Word of God, from Crimea to Kiev.

The Holy Apostle Andrew, the First-Called, was the first of the apostles to follow Christ, and later brought to Him his own brother, the Holy Apostle Peter.

St. Andrew the Apostle, whose memory the Holy Orthodox Church honors on December 13th, is one of Christ's apostles. He was the first Bishop of the Church of Constantinople. It was the Apostle Andrew who was one of the great companions of Christ.

It should be noted that Andrew, the First-Called, is one of the twelve apostles, disciples of Jesus Christ. A native of Bethsaida, he was a brother of Simon (the Apostle Peter) and a disciple of John the Baptist. He is called the first-called, in the Orthodox Church, because according to the Gospel of John, he was one of the first two inhabitants of Galilee whom Christ called with Him and preached His teaching to them. The name of the second remained unknown, and Andrew is further said to have told Jesus about his brother Simon and brought him to Christ. However, the Gospels of Matthew and Mark present a different version, that Jesus Christ was the first to meet both Peter and Andrew.

Because of these differences in biblical texts, Catholics unequivocally recognize Peter as the first and foremost among the apostles (as the eldest among the first two disciples-brothers), and in the Orthodox Church the Apostle Andrew enjoys special respect.

One of the manifestations of such special respect is that the origin of Kiev, the city from which the Orthodox faith spread to all of Kievan Rus, our ancestors associated with the name of Andrew, the First-Called. According to the chronicle, almost two thousand years ago, the Apostle Andrew, during his third journey with Christian preaching in the land of the Scythians, visited the slopes of the Dnieper, where Kiev later emerged, and consecrated the place by erecting a cross there. Andrew, the First-Called, foretold the glory and greatness of the land, "Do you see these mountains? The Grace of God shines on these mountains, and a great city must be here, and God will

build many churches." These words of the apostle, spoken by him to his disciples, were brought to us by the monk of the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra Nestor the Chronicler in "The Tale of Past Years."

The way of life of the Apostle Andrew, the First-Called, until the end of the ages, will be a model for the believer and for those who seek their true purpose on earth.

The first-called apostle endured much suffering and torment from the Gentiles. He was driven out of the cities and beaten. He was stoned, but undeterred, the faithful disciple of Christ continued to preach tirelessly to the people about the Savior.

His works gave rise to Christian churches, where he supplied bishops and priests.

The last city where the first-called apostle came from, and where he had to suffer for Christ, was the Greek Patras. In this place, the Lord performed many miracles through His disciple. The sick were healed and the blind saw. The fiery words of his sermons illuminated the light of the true faith of almost all the locals. However, among the pagans, there was still the ruler of the city, who ordered the crucifixion of the apostle, which meant to humiliate the sermons of the Holy Apostle Andrew the First Called, because he constantly glorified the power of the Cross of the Lord.

The Apostle Andrew was crucified on the Cross in the form of the letter "X." Since then, this type of cross is called the Andrew's Cross.

During this cruel execution, the apostle glorified the Lord and did not stop preaching. After two days of suffering, St. Andrew praised God and said, "Lord Jesus Christ, receive my spirit." Then the bright radiance of the Divine light illuminated the cross and the martyr crucified on it. When the radiance disappeared, the soul of the Apostle Andrew, the First-Called, had already departed to the Lord.

The martyrdom of the Apostle Andrew became a natural result of the whole life of the holy apostle, his carrying of the cross and imitation of the Divine Teacher.

The seeds of faith sown by the Holy Apostle Andrew were generously sprouted thanks to the efforts of the pious Prince Vladimir. Kievan Rus enjoyed Holy Baptism. Having accepted the Byzantine faith, whose bishops inherit from the Apostle Andrew, the Church of Kiev received another gracious connection with the Holy Apostle. Since then, the memory of the Apostle Andrew, the First-Called, has been especially revered in the Ukrainian Church.

One of the most famous streets in Kiev - Andrew's Descent is named after him. On the descent rises a monument of Ukrainian Baroque architecture - St. Andrew's Church.

In Ukraine, the memory of the Holy Apostle Andrew, the Exalted, is very majestically and reverently honored, as he is considered the founder of the Ukrainian Church. It was his holy sermons that were heard here to our ancestors, and called to believe in Jesus Christ.

Therefore, we will all honor the memory of the Holy Apostle, crying out, "Holy Apostle Andrew, pray to God for us."