

Friends

This Sunday is St. Andrew's day. Andrew is the patron saint of Scotland, but how did that come to be? According to early Christian writers, Andrew conducted missionary journeys in Scythia. The Scythians were a nomadic people from Eastern Europe who eventually migrated throughout Europe some ending up in Scotland where according to the 1320 document, the Declaration of Arbroath, they settled and became the modern day Scots. It is certain that Picts and Gaels continued to live alongside them, but the writers of the declaration were making the case for Scotland's independence and claim that the Scottish people in their entirety were now descended from Scythians. By noting the separate ethnicity, the writers were furthering their claim to independence, and by confirming the link with Andrew, they were allying themselves with the Papacy and its link to Andrew's brother Peter in the hope that the Pope would rescind his excommunication of Robert the Bruce and legitimise their fight with the English.

Scotland's link with Andrew had been in place for nearly 500 years already, when in a similar experience to that of Constantine, the Pictish King Oengus II saw a white, X-shaped cross against a blue sky before his army was to fight a much larger Anglo-Saxon horde, and vowed to make St. Andrew the patron saint if his army was victorious. The legend dates the initial adoption to 832, but it was the 1320 declaration that confirmed it.

Like many of our stories of connections with saints and the apostles, the truth of the story may never be told, but out of warfare and difficulty came something which offered hope and faith to people who were struggling. We too need stories that remind us that God is with us and in a 24-hour news cycle that is all too depressing, we need to look for these stories in our own lives. One of the long-held

traditions of the Church, and a part of the Methodist Diaconal Way of Life, is the daily examen, where we replay the day in our minds in a prayerful way, asking the question "Where was God in that?" and giving thanks for the answers. If it is not currently a part of your prayer life, why not try it for a few days and see where it leads.

God bless, Vicci