

WEEKLY MEDITATION

We are fools for Christ's sake (1 Cor 4:10).

Fools and folly are condemned throughout scripture. Folly is the opposite of wisdom. In fact it is dangerous. Folly leads to destruction and the fool inevitably comes to grief.

But in this fallen, topsy-turvy world, folly is often valued as wisdom and fools are very much admired. Thus the truly wise person - one who is godly - appears to be a fool in the eyes of the world - and truly wise words and actions - godly words and actions - appear to be folly.

The Apostle reminds us that the Gospel - the proclamation of the Resurrection of Christ - is folly to the world. Everything that flows from the Resurrection - the moral vision of the Church and the life-style of the believer - is ignored or rejected by non-believers, by the world, as something irrelevant, stupid, madness, immaturity, craziness, altogether foolish in the extreme.

The believer who strives to live in the light and hope of the Resurrection, with faith, hope and love, a life lived in the knowledge that the Kingdom of God must be *taken by force, and violent men bear it away* - that is, that Christian life is a struggle that does violence to selfishness and self-interest - such a person appears to be a fool.

Believers themselves can be lulled into a false sense of security and feel one with and at ease with the world and worldliness. We can feel uncomfortable when active Christian faith challenges our comfort and convenience. We can even become hypocrites, confessing and saying one thing but acting in a contrary manner, as if we were Christians in name only.

From time to time the Lord raises up fools for Christ in order prick the conscience of lazy and half-asleep believers. The quirks and extremes of their lives - a sort of holy insanity - are designed to make us think sharply and critically about what it must mean for us to genuinely be followers of Christ.

Among the multitude of our most beloved fools for Christ are Andrew the Fool-for-Christ of Constantinople (for whom our chapel downstairs is named); Basil of Moscow; John "the Hairy" of Rostov; Maximus Kavsokalyves (Mt. Athos), "Pasha of Sarov" of the Diveyevo Convent; Procopius of Ustiug, Symeon of Emesa; Xenia of St. Petersburg (whose service we often sing).

Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.

(1 Corinthians 3)

~Fr. Andrew

