

Saint of the Month for October 2014

(A monthly series compiled by Tom Quinlan)

Saint Luke, Evangelist
Saturday, October 18

Saint Luke is well known to all Christians, but it is still valuable to reflect on his life and work. He is known much more for that work than for many details of his life. He is considered to be the author of two important and (relatively) lengthy books of the New Testament, *The Gospel according to Saint Luke* and *The Acts of the Apostles*; these works give us a special insight into the life and teachings of Jesus and the life of the early Church.

Many scholars consider Saint Luke's books as a two volume set (Luke-Acts), the only such in the New Testament. Several authors wrote more than one book (Saint Peter, two letters; Saint John, a *Gospel*, three letters, and *The Book of Revelation*; and Saint Paul, more books than anyone else), but Luke's pair is really a single work with a pause at the time of the Ascension. (The Ascension is mentioned very briefly at the close of his Gospel, and given more space at the start of *Acts*; *Acts* then goes on to talk about the early Church, the election of Matthias, and especially, Pentecost, and then the work of Peter, John, and at greatest length, Paul.)

The Gospel according to Saint Luke contains some of the best known stories in the Bible, and has the only account of two of the most famous (and meaningful to me and many others)- the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan. His work is considered the most literary- it was written in Greek, as were all the canonical books of the New Testament, but not all the books had such good Greek. Luke shows evidence of a classical education and considerable attention to detail.

In his Gospel, Luke emphasizes the universality of salvation, a very good thing for us without Jewish heritage. Saint John Paul II called Luke's Gospel the "Gospel of Mercy."

The Acts of the Apostles tells of many who preached the Good News, but features Peter and John in early chapters and Paul in most of the book. We probably know more about those three apostles' work than that of any other if we combine what we learn from *Acts* with the letters of Saint Paul.

Luke was probably a physician for part of his life, and, after conversion to the Christian faith, was a faithful companion of Saint Paul (along with Silvanus, Timothy, Titus, Barnabus, and others, although not all at the same time, nor for as long). It is likely he went with Paul to Greece and Macedonia (about 51 A.D.) and went with Paul on his last trip to Jerusalem (about 58 A.D.). Finally, he seems to have gone with Paul to Rome when he was under arrest; Paul was beheaded there about 66 A.D.

There is very little other information about Luke that remains, but several early Church writers mention him as a man from Antioch, Syria who died at the age of 84 in Boeotia, Greece.

The commemoration is given the rank of Feast. (**Daily Roman Missal, Third Edition** (Scepter Publishers); **Magnificat**, October 2014; **Encyclopædia Britannica, 15th Edition**)

Collect from the Mass of Saint Luke:

Lord God, who chose Saint Luke
to reveal by his preaching and writings
the mystery of your love for the poor,
grant that those who already glory in your name
may persevere as one heart and one soul
and that all nations may merit to see your salvation.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. (**Roman Missal, Third Edition**)

Saint Luke spent much effort preaching the Good News and writing enough that others who never heard him preach might believe in Jesus, understand the Kingdom of God better, and the beginnings of the Church founded by Jesus. Saint Luke, pray for us!