

“He gave some as apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers, to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Eph 4:11-12). Today we celebrate the Feast of Saint Luke the evangelist, the author of both the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles.

Luke worked closely with the Apostle Paul. From Paul’s letters we learn a little about this disciple. In the Letter to the Colossians, Paul tells us “Luke the beloved physician sends greetings” (4:14). “Ancient traditions also acknowledge Luke as the founder of Christian iconography, making him a patron of artists... Tradition credits him with painting several icons of Christ’s mother, and one of the sacred portraits ascribed to him – known by the title “Salvation of the Roman People”-- survives to this day in the Basilica of Saint Mary Major”ⁱ

Our knowledge of Luke is limited, but to his credit, his gospel paints the most vivid picture of Jesus. “Educated as a physician in the Greek-speaking city, Luke was among the most cultured and cosmopolitan members of the early Church. Scholars of archeology and ancient literature have ranked him among the top historians of his time period, besides noting the outstanding Greek prose style and technical accuracy of his accounts of Christ’s life and the apostles’ missionary journeys.”ⁱⁱ

Luke’s writing tells us more about the Blessed Virgin than any other gospel. From Luke we have the five Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary: the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Incarnation, the Presentation, and the finding of Jesus in the temple when he was a boy of twelve. Luke is “the only evangelist to incorporate the personal testimony of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose role in Christ’s life emerges most clearly in his gospel.”ⁱⁱⁱ

The parable of the Good Samaritan paints a picture of how we are called to be disciples and to reach out to the suffering. The Prodigal Son helps the words of the Lord’s Prayer come to life and teach us how we are to forgive others rather than hold onto grudges. The mercy extended to the Good Thief from the cross reminds us that there is always hope, there is always a chance if we but put forth a little effort.

With Luke’s Acts of the Apostles we also learn much about the Apostle Paul. Paul’s conversion is told 3 different times, each account adding a little bit more to the story. “After St. Paul’s conversion, Luke accompanied him as his personal physician-- and, in effect, as a kind of biographer, since the journeys of Paul on which Luke accompanied him occupy a large portion of the Acts of the Apostles.”^{iv} Luke was faithful to the end, present in Rome during Paul’s imprisonment and martyrdom.

Today’s Gospel speaks of the Lord sending out 72 disciples to all of the towns and villages he intended to visit. “The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest” (Lk 10:2). As we continue to pray for vocations to the priesthood and religious life, we also need to recognize God is calling each one of us ... some as apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers.

ⁱ catholicnewsagency.com/saint/st-luke-the-evangelist-23

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} Ibid.