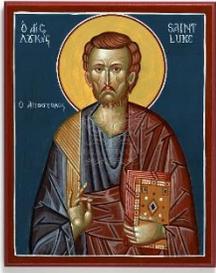




From Deacon Mark Miller's Desk

The Church is beginning a new liturgical year, and with it comes the emphasis on a new Gospel. Until this time next year, the readings at our Sunday celebrations will center on Luke.

Luke is an exciting study. We know some things about him, while, at the same time, many aspects of his life are a mystery. We know he was born in Antioch [in modern Turkey], likely close to Christ's birth [around 4 BC]. He died in the year 84 in the city of Boeotia in Central Greece. He was a companion of St. Paul's and traveled with him. Paul mentions him in the Epistle to Philemon, Epistle to the Colossians, and the Second Epistle to Timothy and calls him a physician. Most scholars believe he was a Gentile, but his evident knowledge of the Old Testament suggests to other scholars that he was Jewish.



Luke is the only Apostle to have not known Christ personally; most believe he was introduced to Christ and Christianity by St. Paul. Luke was better educated than the other Gospel writers. He could speak and write Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and Aramaic. His Gospel is well-written and arranged for easy reading. Most importantly is its depth of research and scholarship. Luke was the original "fact-checker," as he explains in Chapter 1: 1-3:

"Since many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as those who were eyewitnesses from the beginning and ministers of the word have handed them down to us, I too have decided, after investigating everything accurately anew, to write it down in an orderly sequence ..."



He addresses his Gospel to "Theophilus" [the name means "Friend of God" or "God-fearing"]. He may have been a high-ranking member of the Roman government [Luke addresses him as "most excellent"] who financed the writing project. Since it's unlikely a Jew would have an important position in the Roman government, it's safe to presume the Gospel is addressed to a Gentile. Scholars suggest that Luke may have intended his Gospel to be distributed more widely with the Theophilus' help.

Luke's wider audience included Gentile Christians living in the Mediterranean world. He also attracted readers from among the Jews living in the region as well as the

Samaritans. Since this Gentile audience wouldn't have understood Hebrew or Aramaic, he substituted more familiar Greek words. He also added explanations of Jewish rites and practices followed by Christ.

The principal theme of Luke is the Gospel of Mercy. He uses the Greek word *eleos* six times – it translates as mercy and compassion. Mercy is the virtue of forgiving founded on compassion [compassion is being aware of and concerned for others' suffering and feeling sympathy for their condition]. The Gospel of Mercy calls us to put into action our emotional connection of sympathy for others. Other themes include:

- Plan of Salvation
- Extending that salvation to the Gentiles
- Role of the Holy Spirit in followers' lives
- Proclaiming the Good News to the poor and marginalized
- Prominence of Mary and the other women disciples
- The Eucharist

Luke presents several faces of Christ:

- Prophet
- King
- God's chosen servant
- Son of Man
- The Messiah
- Son of David
- Son of God

Luke is the only source for the parables of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son. We owe the stories of the Annunciation, Jesus in the Temple as a 12-year-old, and Jesus' Ascension to Luke's careful and deliberate research.

Some of the Church's most beautiful hymns -- the Magnificat, Benedictus, Nuc Dimittis, and the Gloria were preserved solely in Luke's Gospel.



In addition to his role as an evangelist and physician, Luke is also known for his drawings and paintings. Only a few samples exist, unfortunately.

This icon is one of those few.

