

## **The Extraordinary Personal Qualities of our Patron St. Luke: What it can mean for you and the Orthodox Church Family?**

As many of you know from my previous book review article on St. Luke, he has had a profound impact on my family. You might remember how Linda and I, upon choosing the name of Luke for our son, came to the church in Olympia Fields, IL. in 1980 to announce it to our Priest, Fr. George Zervos. Fr. George was amazed for he had just got off the phone with Fr. Isaiah, the Diocesan Chancellor, who had advised him that the new Baptistery would be named after St. Luke. “What a joy and prophecy, your Luke will be the first baby baptized there,” said Fr. George. “It surely is the will of God that he be so named!” said Father.

The second event with St. Luke came with the naming of our Church here in Palos Hills, IL. In 1983, in our third visit with Bishop Boris (of Blessed Memory) he indicated that at our next meeting he would name our new Mission. Everyone was excited and gave him names to consider. No one gave the name St. Luke. The night before the meeting I awoke in darkness, after hearing in a dream, that he would name our Mission after the great Apostle Luke!

St. Luke continues to this very day to respond to my intercessory prayer keeping our Parish a healthy and vibrant group in the name of the Lord. A Parish that is “not being (just) hearers of the word only but doers of the word.” (James.1:22)

### **St. Luke “A Painter of Words.”**

The most versatile of all the New Testament writers, St. Luke, is a perfect example of using your talent(s) to build up the body of the Church and the Glory of God. Luke is an extraordinarily multi-talented person. He is a saint with a capital S.

**As a Church historian**, Luke wrote the most in the Holy Gospel of Christ responsible for over 60 pages in the New Testament with his Gospel and the Book of Acts. Some historians claim he wrote much of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Luke’s writings are characterized by his attention to detail via his precise references to local customs and excellent command of the Greek language. He is the only one who gives a full account of the Annunciation of Mary, Mary’s meeting with cousin Elizabeth, the Parable of the Good Samaritan and the Parable of the Prodigal Son. A Greek, he is also the only non-Jewish writer of the New Testament.

While known widely for healing abilities **as a physician**, Luke was the son of Greek slaves to a Roman Tribune named Diodorus in Antioch, Syria. Antioch was noted for producing the ablest masters of the arts and sciences. A warm and loving person, Diodorus, observed the unique brilliance in Luke and assigned him to a teacher of physicians. His mentor sees him as one “touched by divinity.” After Diodorus’ death Luke is appointed his administrator and goes to Rome. There the Emperor, Tiberius Caesar, names him to be Chief Medical Officer. He declines to the Caesar’s amazement, and goes on to serve mostly the poor.

**As an Evangelist**, Luke is the ardent and dedicated disciple of St. Paul. St. Paul mentions him many times as a companion of his travels. He calls him “Luke the beloved physician” (Colossians 4: 14) and “his fellow laborers” (Philemon v.24). Luke first appears in Acts at Troas where he meets St. Paul after Paul’s vision of a man calling him to Macedonia. The leading city of Macedonia is Philippi and Paul leaves Luke there to evangelize them. Later Luke is a companion of Paul’s at Athens, Corinth, Jerusalem and Ephesus. Importantly, Luke stood by Paul in his last days of imprisonment. Writing to Timothy, St. Paul says, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith, ...come to me quickly ...Demas has left me, loving this world.....Only Luke is with me.” (2Timothy 4:7-11) After the martyrdom of St.Paul, Luke is known to have preached in Italy, Dalmatia, Macedonia, Galatia and Thebes in Egypt.

Finally, **Luke is the first iconographer** for he is credited with writing the first icon of the Virgin Mary found in Jerusalem and sent to Empress Pulcheria of Constantinople who placed it in the Hodegorum Church there. Many years later, an inscription found in a vault in Rome says that a picture of the Virgin discovered there was “one of seven painted by St. Luke.”

Many want to know of his death. There are two claims. One is that he died a natural death at age 84 at Thebes since there is a tomb with his name at about that time. This is highly unlikely since the tomb is confused with another Luke surnamed Stiriot, a hermit of that country. The more probable truth is that he died a martyr's death being crucified at Elea in the Peloponnesus near Achaia.

Ancient African Martyrology of the 5<sup>th</sup> century gives him the title of Evangelist and Martyr. In the Emperor Justinian’s time, 6<sup>th</sup> Century, at the church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople three coffins were dug up with the inscriptions of St. Luke, St. Andrew and St. Timothy!!! Some of Luke’s relics are also kept at Rome in the church of St. Andrew and on Mt.Athos.

### **The point is.....use your talent as St. Luke did!**

Properly, we all need to use our God-given talent for His Church. In Ephesians 4, we find that a Priest's job is to equip the saints. He is to be the manager, trainer and coach of his people. He is to find out what talents they have and give them a ministry that fits the talent.

“...to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we reach the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” (Eph. 4:11-13)

What has happened to Orthodoxy Christianity in the past is clericalism. Most congregations today have been reduced to passive spectators of the liturgical services. The priest and choir or chanters are on stage putting on a show. No wonder we have those who say they, “ I can’t get anything out of Liturgy.” Liturgy by its very definition means a “work of the people.” In this sense, liturgy is a community of believers entrusted with

the Faith. If one takes this seriously, they will be active participants in the liturgical service. Fortunately, at St. Luke Church our Fr. Andrew has been a wise “coach” for he has seen to it that all our members have a priestly ministry according to their individual talents. And, our Parish from its inception has encouraged and successfully accomplished congregational singing as the norm.

**Here is what scripture says about the Laity.....the Royal Priesthood :**

**“You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deed of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” (1 Peter 2:9)**

**Yes, we are called to offer sacrifices of praise to God, to do good by our neighbor, to visit the sick, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, help the poor, and bring the word of God and the love of God to all His people on earth. At baptism we received the Holy Spirit to do these priestly functions. Whatever, we choose to do as laborers, engineers, doctors, teachers or financiers, etc. we must do it out in the world and in the name of Christ.**

**“Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? So glorify God in your body. (1Cor. 6:19-20)**

**So you do not have to be of the Ordained Priestly ministry.** They have their responsibility in the church. Everyone else has a responsibility as the Priesthood of the Laity to work for Christ in the family, workplace and out in public sector. You have, by your baptism, “Put on Christ” so begin realizing and using your talent, as our Great Patron St. Luke has so admirably done for the Glory of God and the building up of His Holy Church.

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**St. Luke is commemorated on October 18.**