

Reflection for the 3rd Sunday of Ordinary Time

Many scholars would agree with the statement that St. Luke wrote his Gospel in a manner and way that the reader and listener would realize the certainty of the teachings revealed in the Gospel. St. Luke wrote in a manner that he wanted the reader and listener of the Gospel Book to come away from the experience with no questions and no doubts, but with certainty that what is shared in the Gospel did truly happen and that one who has the experience of reading the Gospel of Luke is now ready to rejoice and unite oneself to Christ in faith and love.

In this Liturgical Year, the Gospel of Luke is our primary source of the Gospel Readings that we have on Sunday's. Knowing we will be hearing from St. Luke a great deal this Liturgical Year, it might make sense to look into the author of the Gospel and into the structure of the Book. St. Luke is seen as one of the Four Evangelists, one of the writers of the four gospels found in the New Testament. Since the early Church St. Luke has always been recognized as the author of the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, which means St. Luke contributed over a quarter of the text to the New Testament. St. Paul mentions St. Luke in his letter to the Colossians, and he is referred to as a physician. Due to St. Paul's reference to St. Luke, he has been seen both as a physician and a disciple of St. Paul. Since the early days of the Church St. Luke has been regarded as a Saint. Tradition holds that St. Luke died in at the age of 84 in Thebes as a martyr for the faith. In 1992 the Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Leronimos of Thebes and Levathia requested that Bishop Antonio Mattiazzo of Padua return a significant fragment of the relics of St. Luke, so that they could be placed on the site where the holy tomb of St. Luke is located in Thebes and is venerated to this very day. The request by Metropolitan Leronimos prompted a scientific investigation of the relics in Padua that are believed to be St. Luke. The scientific investigation concluded that the relics are of a person who had lived and died at the same time of St. Luke and so the relics being St. Luke is very plausible. With this positive information Bishop Antonio Mattiazzo delivered to the Metropolitan Leronimos the rib of St. Luke that was closest to his heart to be kept at his tomb in Thebes.

When reading the Gospel of Luke, a person should keep in mind that St. Luke had a four-fold purpose when he wrote his Gospel. First the author of the Gospel of Luke wanted to assure his readers of the truth of what they had been taught. Luke wished his readers to be confident in what had been shared with them about Jesus Christ. The second purpose of St. Luke's Gospel was to help the reader understand how Israel's rejection of Jesus and the Gentiles' entrance into the Kingdom of God are both a part of God's plan. We need to trust that God has a plan of everyone to embrace His Son and follow Him in this world and in the next. Thirdly St. Luke wished to clarify that Jesus did not teach that His bodily return would come immediately but that there would be a period between His resurrection and His second coming. The fourth and final purpose of the writing of the Gospel of Luke was to assure the believers of Christ that they have no need to fear any mere earthly powers even Rome. May we all be reminded that as believers in the one true God we look forward to a world beyond this world.

It is also important to note that St. Luke wrote both his Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles between 61 AD and 63 AD. These two books were written to a person with the name Theophilus, and Luke wrote these books to him with a desire to prove to Theophilus the truth about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. St. Luke wrote these two books while St. Paul was in prison in Rome and St. Luke was in Rome to support St. Paul. The name Theophilus means friend of God, in the time of St. Luke, Theophilus was a common name but also a common honorary title among the learned Romans and Jews of the era. Some scholars have wondered if Theophilus was not referring to one person but to all who are seeking the truth, about Jesus Christ.