

## Reflection for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time

In this Liturgical Year, the Gospel of Luke is our primary source for the Gospel Readings that we have on Sunday's. Knowing we will be hearing from St. Luke a great deal in this Liturgical Year, it might make sense to investigate the author of the Gospel and look into the structure of his Book. St. Luke is 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, this means St. Luke's writing constitutes over twenty-five percent of 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 tradition holds that St. Luke died in the age of 84 in Thebes as a martyr for the faith.

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, St. Luke wanted to assure his readers of the truth of what they had been taught. The second purpose of St. Luke's Gospel is 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 for everyone to embrace His Son and follow Him in this world and in the next. Thirdly St. Luke wishes 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 is to assure the believers of Christ that they have no need to fear any mere earthly powers even the Roman Empire. 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 there to support him. 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.

In our Gospel reading today, which is Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21, we have a reading that covers the introductory verses of the Gospel, and Jesus returning to Nazareth, speaking in the synagogue on the Sabbath day. Even though this Gospel reading is bifurcated, part of it from chapter 1 and part from chapter 4, it does seem to flow very well and has a united message. It does make sense that even though our Gospel Reading this Sunday is from two different chapters of the Gospel of Luke and are separated by chapters two and three, the message today is a seamless one. The reason for this reality is that the first four verses of our Gospel Reading taken from chapter one introduces the Gospel to Theophilus, the person that this Gospel is written for. The next eight verses of the Gospel Reading present Jesus starting His ministry by going to a synagogue on the Sabbath and reading from the scroll of the Prophet Isaiah about a time of blessing that is to come. Jesus then informs all who are in the synagogue that "*Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.*"

The statement that Jesus makes in the Synagogue of Nazareth as He starts His ministry is meant for the people in the Synagogue, for Theophilus, for us in Los Alamos County, and for every generation that has come before us and will come after us. The time of blessing foretold by the Prophet Isaiah is often referred to

as the Jubilee year that is found in Leviticus chapter 25, which takes place every 50 years. This year of favor, this year of *ratzon*, that Jesus is saying is fulfilled in our hearing is different from the normal Jubilee year. What Jesus is stating is that the New Covenant is fulfilled in our hearing. What was promised from the time of the fall of Adam and Eve has come to pass. Since the day Jesus was in the Synagogue in Nazareth we have been living in a perpetual Jubilee year. Every day the Spirit of the Lord is in our daily lives, every day glad tides are shared with the poor, every day miracles happen, and this is all pleasing and blessed by our Lord.