

My dear friends, many of you expressed last Sunday how much you appreciated the homily for the Feast of St. Luke. Because of the significance of this Saint for our community I thought I would print out that homily for this weeks bulletin.

We are parishioners of St. Luke's Church. But what does it mean for our community and each of us individually to have St. Luke as our Patron Saint?

The little we know of St. Luke is gleaned from the Scriptures: he was of Gentile origin, a Greek from the city of Antioch in ancient Syria, and he made his living as a physician. He was an early convert to Christianity, and was a companion of St. Paul on his missionary journeys, right up to Paul's martyrdom. St. Luke was himself martyred for the faith several years later, which is why I'm wearing red vestments today. But St. Luke is mainly known as the author of the third Gospel and the book of Acts. It is in these writings, penned with his own hand under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that we can attempt to sketch a portrait of the beautiful interior life of this great evangelist, so as to better to understand the influential role he desires to play in our life as our spiritual father. There are three traits I wish to focus on.

First of all, we know from his Gospel that St. Luke had a special love for Mary, the mother of Jesus. Luke gives more information about her than all the other evangelist, and it is mainly because of him that we have a special insight into the greatness and beauty of her soul. St. Luke's Gospel reveals Mary's simple steadfast faith, her child-like trust and obedience to God's will, her generosity and readiness to serve others, her gratitude for the gifts she has received, her acceptance of God's plan, even when she doesn't understand it, and her prayerfulness, pondering the ways of God and keeping the truth of God always close to her heart.

To embrace St. Luke as our Patron Saint is to continue to grow in our own love and devotion to Mary, often looking to her as the model disciple of Jesus Christ. I was glad to see signs of this love and devotion when I arrived here last December, and I pray that it will continue to deepen and grow. One way we will foster this love for Mary in our community is by making annual trips down to the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help, in Champion Wisconsin.

2ndly, as one reads St. Luke's Gospel, there is a noticeable emphasis on Jesus' compassion and mercy for the lost and poor, the sick and suffering, for the outcasts and strangers. As a doctor St. Luke was very familiar with sickness and suffering, and was probably himself a very compassionate man. His experience as a physician would be good preparation for his work as a missionary of Christ's mercy and healing. Only in Luke's Gospel do we find: Jesus' healing of the 10 Lepers; the 3 beautiful parables of Mercy in chapter 15; the story of the Good Samaritan; the parable of the poor beggar Lazarus and the rich man; and the moving scene of Jesus reaching out to the little man Zacchaeus, the despised, rich tax-collector of Jericho.

- I remember a day two years ago when I went to the bank to deposit some checks. On my way in I saw a young woman there for the same purpose. She was dressed in black, sporting about 20 ear-rings, tattoos on her shoulders and arms, and carrying a purse in the shape of a coffin, which was also black. I could see sadness and suffering in her face. After this quick glance, I looked away, and set about my business. But seconds later I realized that I had missed an opportunity to reach out to this hurting, lost soul. It's hard to say what difference a kind word or a loving gesture would have made for her that day--but

I failed. I can still see her face to this day, and I pray that God would send other people into her life, better than I, more faithful than I, to give her the love and help she needs.

Having St. Luke as the Patron of our community calls us to be especially attentive to the needs of each other, and especially to anyone who is without the necessities of life, for those who are lost and have left the Church, for anyone who is sick or suffering, and reaching out to the stranger. And we don't have to look very far--they are in our parish, in our schools and classrooms, in our neighborhoods. There are people who come here looking for a place to call home, and some of them have suffered a great deal. What are we doing to reach out? We have a reputation of being a very warm and welcoming community, but we can always do better.

And lastly, St. Luke had a passion for evangelization--with an emphasis on joy. St. Luke wanted to spend his life spreading the good news about Jesus, evidenced in his missionary journey's with St. Paul, and by his writing not one, but two books: the first about the power of the Holy Spirit at work in the life and mission of Jesus, and the second about the power of that same Spirit at work in the Church as it faithfully lives and carries on Jesus' mission.

I was on vacation 3 years ago at friends cabin. On the last two evenings I went fishing. The first evening I was catching fish left and right, big sunfish. An hour into it a truck pulled up and a middle-age man got out and tried to start up a conversation. Having so much fun fishing and not wanting to be bothered, I gave the man the cold shoulder, and he soon left. Later I felt bad and realized that I had missed what could have been a graced moment of evangelization. Who knows how God can use a conversation for His purposes. I looked down at my stringer full of fish, but realized that I had let a "big one" get away. As I walked back to the cabin I told the Lord I was sorry and asked Him to give me another chance.

I went fishing again the next evening and caught nothing, only nibbles. Again, a vehicle pulled up, and a young man got out with his fishing pole and started to fish beside me. I immediately realized what God was doing. A conversation started and he began to talk about his family. When he heard that I was a priest, he shared that he had been away from the Church for some time and wanted to come back. What hurt him most was that he had two older children that were not baptized, and he wanted so much to make this right. So I gave him the best advice I could and told him I would pray for him. I walked back to the cabin that night without any fish on my stringer, but it didn't matter, as a Christian I am first a fisher of men and women, and that night, by God's grace, we made a catch.

To have St. Luke as our special patron is to be joyful evangelists--always ready for the opportunities that God opens up in our life.

God love you,
Fr. Steven