

*Almighty God who didst inspire thy servant Saint Luke the Physician, to set forth in the Gospel the love and healing power of thy Son; manifest in thy Church the like power and love, to the healing of our bodies and our souls.*

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Today we celebrate the feast day of St. Luke the Evangelist. St. Luke was a Gentile physician from Antioch and was skilled in the Greek language. St. Luke the Evangelist wrote the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. He wrote his Gospel by traveling all over Israel and surrounding areas interviewing those who had been eyewitnesses of the life and death of Jesus. Thankfully, St. Luke interviewed many Apostles and it is thought he even spent time recording the memory of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He was a follower and companion of the Apostle Paul, and we are given evidence of this in today's Epistle. St. Paul often mentions St. Luke being with him and sending his greetings to the churches. The Acts of the Apostles he wrote by recording his own experiences, through his journeys with St. Paul. St. Luke lived to be 84 years old, and was originally buried in Constantinople, and later his relics were moved to Padua, Italy.

St. Luke was not a martyr, but he certainly endured persecution and hardship by accompanying St. Paul on his missionary journeys. We are given some idea as to how Paul and Luke travelled through the sending of the seventy in today's Gospel. According to legend St. Luke was even one of the seventy. They took with them only the very bare necessities, surviving off of the good pleasure and hospitality of friends and those who took them in, unencumbered by worldly goods. St. Luke was a devoted and faithful friend staying with St. Paul even at the very end of St. Paul's life. In his last days, St. Paul writes to Timothy saying that *only Luke remains with me*. Luke was devoted to the cause of Christ and to the Church, by sacrificing his livelihood to seek out the recollections of the Apostles, of St. Mary, and of other eyewitnesses of Jesus Christ so that the Church in future ages might have the record of his Gospel. If St. Luke had been a scribe or rabbi then he may not have been so unique to the church. But St. Luke the Evangelist was a learned physician and a gentile, trained in the Greek school of medicine, and so his Gospel must have been as astounding and startling to the early Jewish Christians as St. Paul's dramatic and abrupt conversion on the Road to Damascus.

The startling and unusual accounts of the life of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of that life into the early Church as recorded in the Acts can be discerned in the content of today's Collect. Here we read: *Almighty God who didst inspire thy servant Saint Luke the Physician, to set forth in the Gospel the love and healing power of thy Son; manifest in thy Church the like power and love, to the*

*healing of our bodies and our souls.* We remember that it is in the same Gospel of Luke that the paralytic is lowered through the roof to the feet of Jesus and the man is healed after Jesus forgives his sins saying, *which is more difficult? To say thy sins be forgiven thee or arise and walk?* St. Luke recorded also the story of the grateful leper, who was healed as he obeyed the Lord to go and show himself to the priests, and then was stopped in his tracks when he realized that he should turn back and show his gratitude to Jesus. To this man's spiritual faith and thanksgiving, Jesus responds *thy faith hath made thee whole.* St. Luke reminds us that the leper's healing was not complete until he was healed physically and spiritually. The great Father of the Church, St. Clement of Alexandria writes, *He who is the Wisdom and Word of the Father and who created man, is concerned with his creature as a totality; he heals both body and soul, being the Physician of humanity and capable of healing all things.* St. Luke's Gospel is full of that consciousness that Jesus came to heal not only the body but also the soul. Being conscious of earthly healing as a physician, St. Luke is astounded by the spiritual healing that must always be of foremost concern in the healing that Jesus brings.

But does healing have a place in the Church today? How often have we heard it said, *well we have physicians today we do not have to rely on God's miracles to heal us.* This to a certain extent is true. God has given to bodily physicians the gifts of science and medicine to further their expertise. But Physicians can only heal the body, they cannot heal the soul. Let us not forget, the healing power of Jesus Christ which St. Luke records for the church is not confined to only those miraculous and spectacular healings of the body. If we open our ears and our hearts, we may experience this healing power this very morning. We are reminded by the French priest, Fr. Jean Mouroux that the Holy Communion contains within itself the real spiritual healing that Jesus has forever intended for all of us. He writes, *God Himself preserves and restores health. And here again the Eucharist has its part to play. It brings our flesh into contact with Him who healed the sick, and has lost neither His power nor His mercy because He is the Saviour and the God who gives life. In a measure which He alone determines...the Eucharist keeps the body in health. We have only to open our [prayer books] and we may see the Church asking for health as one of the normal graces that flow from the Body of Christ: "Defend us, O Lord, from all perils of mind or body...The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, given for thee, preserve thy body and soul into everlasting life."*

All that Jesus brings to us through the Holy Communion, the reading of the Gospel, Confession, and the Sacraments of Baptism and Unction, or the anointing of the sick, these are spiritual healing medicines in and of themselves that reveal

the true kind of redemption that Jesus always intends. The Gospels contain the healing words of everlasting life, confession is the cutting out and removal of sin, and Holy Communion grafts into us the body and blood of Jesus His healing presence cures us of all spiritual sicknesses if only we have the faith and thanksgiving with which to receive them. The Church is the treasury of the Sacraments, the treasury of power and love, for the healing of our bodies and our souls as ordained by Jesus Christ, the Great Physician. For it is the Church which is called to bring us to the feet of Jesus, from whom all health of body and spirit flows.

St. Luke did not lay his medical practice aside, he fulfilled it in a different way by specializing in the healing of souls. After all, what good is it to be in the best of physical health but to have horrible spiritual health? Poor physical health is easier to endure when our spiritual health is good. And it is the healing of our souls that we must seek out and procure from Jesus. To this end, we have been given help through the church, *the hospital of sinners*. Therefore, along with the Church today let us pray, *Almighty God who didst inspire thy servant Saint Luke the Physician, to set forth in the Gospel the love and healing power of thy Son; manifest in thy Church the like power and love, to the healing of our bodies and our souls. Amen.*