

St. Luke the Evangelist

St. Luke was an evangelist and is the patron of painters and physicians. He is the author of the third Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles.

A physician, Luke is traditionally believed to have been a Greek Gentile from Antioch (modern Turkey). That he was a medical practitioner is apparently confirmed by a passage in Colossians (4:14) in which Paul describes him as "the beloved physician." A convert to the new faith, he accompanied St. Paul on his second missionary journey (c. 51), remained six years in Philippi, Greece, and went on the third missionary journey, the journey to Italy that included the famous shipwreck off the coast of Malta. He remained with Paul during Paul's imprisonment. Paul wrote of Luke three times in the New Testament: in Colossians, 2 Timothy (4:11), and Philemon (24). It is also possible to deduce Luke's presence with Paul on the missionary journeys from numerous passages in the Acts (16:10-17; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28:16). When St. Paul was martyred in 66, Luke went back to Greece, where he is believed to have died at the age of eighty-four "full of the Holy Spirit." Assorted Acta report that he was martyred, although scholars believe these to be legends and quite unreliable. He is believed to have visited the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Luke is the patron saint of doctors and also painters owing to the belief in medieval times that he painted a picture of the Virgin Mary. This work was long preserved in the Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, although it dates to a time far after apostolic times. Luke's Gospel was written between 70 and 85, possibly in Greece, although Eusebius claims that it was written before the martyrdom of St. Paul. The point of view of the Gospel is that of a Gentile Christian for other Gentile (or non-Jewish) individuals. His Acts of the Apostles was written perhaps in Rome, either during the imprisonment of St. Paul or immediately after his death, or in the province of

Achaea, in the area around Greece. The Acts details the Church from c. 35-c. 63, demonstrating in often superb prose the remarkable growth and the stirring witness of the faithful. In art, he is accompanied by a winged ox, the symbol of his Gospel. He is also depicted holding a painting of the Blessed Virgin.

Feast day: October 18.