

Introducing the Year of St. Luke

Tonight I would like to talk to you about Sacred Scripture. I think we would all agree that it is an important part of our faith. Consider, for example, its role in the Mass. The Liturgy of the Word of God in Sacred Scripture precedes and prepares us to receive the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, in the Liturgy of the Eucharist. But listening to small portions of the Bible at Mass is not enough to familiarize us with the Bible or its function in the Church. You may have tried to deal with this issue by trying to read the Bible at home on our own only to be discouraged by the difficulty of understanding a complicated library of books written a long time ago by a culture very different from our own.

I'd like to suggest an alternative and initiate a Lenten program in which we read and focus on the Gospel of Luke as a group. There are two reasons for this initiative. First, it is timely. The Church reads the Bible on Sundays in a three year cycle focusing on the Gospel of St. Matthew in Year A, St. Mark in Year B, and St. Luke in Year C. This is the Year of St. Luke which began with Advent. During the Sundays of Ordinary Time, that is the Sundays outside the Advent/Christmas and Lenten/Easter seasons, our Gospel readings will systematically work through St. Luke's Gospel.

A second reason is that reading one of the Gospels is a good introduction to the Bible. The Church considers the Gospels the most important part of the Bible because they are the written witness to the deeds and actions of Jesus. They tell his story and explain who he is from several points of view. There were stories and sayings of Jesus that originated with the apostles and those who had known him that circulated orally, but the Church realized it needed to capture these stories and sayings in a way that explained the significance of Jesus while those who had known him were still alive. The Gospels are meant to be read through as we would read any book in order to understand what the author is trying to tell us. When we understand the Gospel of St. Luke we have gained something important for our faith.

How shall we proceed? First of all, thanks to Father John, I have for each of you a copy of the Gospel of St. Luke in the easy to read Contemporary English Version approved by our Bishops. If you already have the New American Bible Version that is read at Mass, this version provides an alternative translation which may make difficult passages easier to understand. Second, there will be an area on our website called "The Year of St. Luke." There I will post two articles introducing the Gospel and five more that will guide you through the Gospel itself. If you read one of these each week of Lent you will finish the Gospel by Good Friday.

The Sunday Mass readings of ordinary time which work their way through the Gospel of Luke will begin again in June and continue through November. Having read through the Gospel during Lent, these readings will mean more to you. You will gain a greater understanding of Jesus and how Sacred Scripture informs and enriches our faith. You will also have gotten more comfortable with reading the Bible at home.

S. Csontos, 10 February 2013.