



Feast of St. Luke

Homily

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In God's providence, we celebrate the Feast of St. Luke during the synod. His life and work demonstrate for us a synodal mentality. He shows us what we need to remember during our work. First of all, faithfulness and fortitude. Luke is faithful, as we heard in the first reading when Paul states "*only Luke remains with me*". We too are called to remain faithful in our commitment to walk together in the life of the Church and through the difficulties of the journey, even when it is not clear where God is leading us in the short term.

St. Luke is the Marian evangelist *par excellence*, keeping the Mother of God before our eyes and her Magnificat praising the work of the Lord on our lips daily in the liturgy of the hours. Luke often highlights the important role of women in the life of the Church and in announcing the Good News - not only Mary, but the Samaritan woman at the well who announced the Messiah, Mary Magdalene, the first to announce the message of the Resurrection, as well as the various women throughout the Acts of the Apostles who assisted the growth of the early Church. Luke is also the one who describes, best of all, the traits of Jesus' heart, who reveals to us the immensity of God's divine mercy. He shows us how God always takes the first step towards the sinner as in the parable of the prodigal son (Lk 15); the compassion shown in the encounter with the widow of Nain (Lk 7); the tenderness and forgiveness to the sinner at the home of Simon the Pharisee (Lk 7), the love of neighbor in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10); salvation for the lost in the encounter with Zacchaeus (Lk 19).

In both his Gospel and in Acts, he shows clearly show that the Holy Spirit is the protagonist in the life and growth of the Church, as He must be in leading our synodal process. If Luke were documenting the synod, thanks be to God, he would find many of the themes that he favored at the forefront of our own deliberations in these days.

In today's Gospel Jesus sends the 72 disciples out ahead of him to the places that he will visit. His first instruction is for them is to pray for more laborers for the harvest, for more who will announce the Good News that the Kingdom of God has come near to you. "*The harvest is plenty, but laborers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into the field.*" In the announcement of the kingdom, the equality of all the baptized comes to the forefront - all are called to this, not just ordained ministers. However, it is important that all the baptized hear this call, this vocation and respond to it, committing their lives, words and actions to Jesus' mission. For this we must continue to pray.

Jesus then teaches them: "*Into whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this household'.*" These laborers are carriers of God's peace, to a world in great need of peace. Not the peace as

the world gives, but *shalom*, the peace that comes from God's inner life. Every baptized person, having received God's salvific grace, must be an active channel of this peace.

He further tells them, *"If a peaceful person lives there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you."* The term in Greek is literally "a son of peace" - a person open to and living in God's peace. His peace, like his mercy is offered to all, but Jesus knows that not all will be willing to receive it. To receive mercy, one must first ask for God's mercy. Inner peace (*shalom*) is the sign of receiving and being received into God's mercy - the Risen Lord offers this peace to his apostles when appearing to them in the upper room when he repeats "Peace be with you" (Jn 20:19,21). Not all to whom the message of the Kingdom is preached will be open to receive it - man has the freedom to accept God's Good News or not. The Church is open to all, but as with God's peace it is given on God's terms, not man's.

As we continue to talk about what processes, structures and institutions are needed in a missionary synodal Church, we need to make sure that these do in fact assist the mission of bringing the Good News to those who are in need of salvation. Synodality (including its structures and meetings) must be at the service of the Church's mission of evangelization and not become an end in itself, just as the Word of God that St Luke assisted in passing on to us, has been provided as an instrument for our own salvation.

St. Luke, pray for us, as we continue on the synodal journey.