

October 18: Luke, Evangelist of Mission

Saint Luke can validly be called the “evangelist of mission.” Although all four Gospel writers, each in their own way, portray the mission of Christ and the Church, Luke provides the greatest amount of detail, both in his Gospel and in the Acts of the Apostles, where one finds numerous accounts of the early Church in mission. Today’s Gospel provides several practical, concrete guidelines for mission engagement.

Luke notes that in Jesus’ public ministry he chooses seventy-two followers and sends them out on mission. We should conclude that mission is for *all* of Jesus’ disciples—*all* baptized Christians, not just the special twelve apostles. All mission and evangelization begins with God’s initiative, with Jesus’ choice. In addition, mission is not a personal or individual project; it is a community endeavor of the Church. We are asked to remember that “the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.” This was true in Jesus’ time and remains true today. We recognize the great task that faces us; we turn to the Lord in prayer, asking for additional harvesters.

Jesus gives several brief, yet direct, instructions: “Be on your way.” Do *not* delay! Remember that you will face many challenges; you will be like lambs in the midst of wolves. Jesus advises his missionaries to “travel light.” The missionary is to extend peace to everyone. Be humble and accept what is offered in terms of food and accommodations. Reach out to the sick and needy you encounter (recall Pope Francis’ advice to go to the margins, the peripheries, to the excluded in society). Make the announcement of Jesus’ *Kingdom message* your central emphasis; proclaim that “the reign of God near.” Indeed, as Christians we carry on the mission ministry that Jesus gave us. We appreciate Saint Luke for his beautiful panorama of authentic Christian mission; we also make it our firm commitment!