

His body lay in Thebes until the year 357 when the remains of both Luke and Andrew were transferred (by the Christian Roman Empire) to the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople. During the eighth and ninth centuries, an iconoclastic movement destroyed religious sites and artworks, but Luke's relics were saved. Tradition says that they were taken by a priest who fled to Padua, Italy, where a community of Greeks was living.

Another disaster brought on by war led someone else to hide the relics of Padua, until they were discovered by monks on April 14, 1117. "An affidavit describes several objects found in or around the coffin. They included an image of three calves' heads (the ancient symbol of Luke), an eight-armed cross stamped on the exterior of the casket, and a marble tablet bearing the inscription *S.L. Evang.*" They remain in Padua, and are venerated by pilgrims at the Basilica of St. Justina.¹

One such pilgrim was the Greek Orthodox Bishop of Thebes, who prayed at Luke's tomb in 1992. He was compelled to request a study of the remains and asked that Luke's relics be returned to Thebes. After careful analysis, including the extraction of a tooth from the skull, scientists found that the age of the remains supports what is historically and traditionally known about Saint Luke. The DNA is similar to those whose ancestry is rooted in ancient Antioch. The Catholic Bishop of Padua further responded to the Greek Bishop's request by providing Thebes with a piece of Luke's rib closest to the heart; a symbolic act of unity between Western and Eastern Christians.

Luke is the patron saint of physicians, artists, and bachelors. He is symbolized in art by the ox, a sacrificial animal in ancient Judaism, because of his emphasis on Christ's sacrifice and priestly identity. His spirituality demonstrates joy, concern for the poor, the downtrodden, and the outcast, as well as confidence in God's grace and promises.

Socials with the Saints

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Sources incl.: 1. BibleArchaeology.org, 2. *Sacra Pagina: Acts of the Apostles* (Johnson, Luke Timothy)
3. *Navarre Bible: St. Luke 4*. "Unveiling the Writings of St. Luke" by Matthew Leonard & Dr. John Bergsma (YouTube) 5. "Body of Luke Gains Credibility," *New York Times*, 2001.



Saint Luke the Evangelist

Born: First century A.D. in Antioch, Roman Syria (modern-day Turkey)
Died: circa 74–100 A.D. in Thebes, Greece
Feast Day: October 18

The name Luke means "illumination" or "bringer of light." It is generally agreed upon that Saint Luke the Evangelist was born into a Gentile Greek family in the early part of the first century A.D. As one of the most educated authors of the New Testament Scriptural books, Luke held a

firm grasp of the Greek language and culture.

According to the Greek bishop St. Epiphanius, Luke was one of the seventy-two apostles appointed by Jesus to go ahead of him in pairs to every place he intended to visit. The Gospel according to Luke is the only one which records this act of Jesus. However, scholars disagree with Epiphanius for several reasons; one being that Luke did *not* count himself among the eyewitness of Jesus' ministry. Therefore, he could not have been personally commissioned by Jesus.

Luke *did* use the first-person "we" while he wrote about Saint Paul's later missionary journeys. So, we can conclude that, after Christ's ascension into heaven, Luke may have learned about Jesus as a young man through the missionary work of Saint Paul. He later joined Paul's ministry. In the letter to Philemon (1:24), Paul counted Luke among his "co-workers." Luke and Paul became close; in Paul's second letter to Timothy, written while Paul was near death in Rome, he said, "Only Luke is with me." Some speculate that Luke would have been the one to care for and bury Paul's body after his death in Rome.

Luke is the author of both the Gospel According to Luke as well as the Acts of the Apostles. Together, scholars name these writings *Luke-Acts*. Due to their sheer volume and scope, Luke is the author with the single largest contribution to the New Testament—even greater than his mentor, Paul. Luke conducted thorough research and interviews for his writing.

One of his interview subjects could have been the Blessed Virgin Mary, since Luke's Gospel account is the only one to begin with the stories about Jesus' infancy and youth as well as Joseph and Mary's life before Jesus' birth, and the story surrounding the conception and birth of John the Baptist (the son of Mary's cousin, Elizabeth). Luke mentioned several times that Mary "pondered in her heart" the things that occurred to the Holy Family; this fact supports the theory that he spoke with Mary herself or with one of Mary's relatives to whom she had passed along these memories. The song-prayers, or canticles, of Mary and of Zechariah are only found in Luke.

His intended audience consisted of well-educated Greek and Roman people, especially those who were open enough that they would visit the synagogues to listen to the reading of Jewish Scriptures. Luke directs his writings to Theophilus, which means "friend of God," so it is unclear whether Theophilus was an individual person, or a name that Luke used to address a wider audience.

Through Paul's letter to the Colossians that we learn that Luke was a doctor: "Luke the beloved physician sends greetings" (4:14). Luke was the only evangelist to record Jesus' statements about doctors, such as "Physician, heal yourself!" (4:23) or "Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do" (5:31). He also extended a professional courtesy to fellow doctors in telling the story of the hemorrhaging woman. Whereas Mark wrote that she had "suffered greatly at the hands of many doctors" and "only grew worse" (5:25-26), Luke wrote that she "had spent all her livelihood on doctors and was unable to be cured" (8:43).

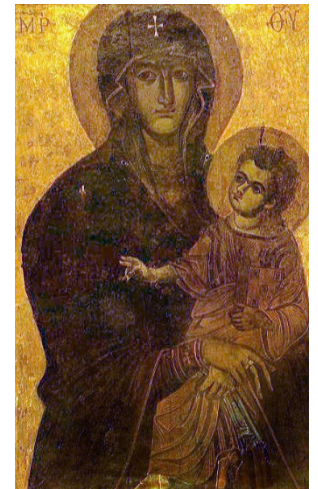
Luke's medical knowledge is clear by the way he described certain physical conditions. For example, he is the only evangelist who noted that, on the night of Jesus' arrest by the Romans, "he was in such agony and he prayed so fervently that his sweat became like drops of blood falling on the ground" (22:44), which is a rare, stress-induced medical condition called hematuria.

Because the scientific method had not yet been invented, Luke's medicine would have been less scientific and more of a philosophy and an art. *Luke-Acts* is regarded by biblical scholars as an artfully-told, two-part story of God's action in the world.

Luke is the only gospel to contain beloved stories such as the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, and the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Of all the evangelists, Luke placed the greatest emphasis on the Holy Spirit, prayer, and the involvement of women in God's plan.

He also took great care to record Jesus' words at the Last Supper, noting that this was the start of a "new covenant" (22:20). The Mass was important to Luke's experience of the Christian faith; in Acts of the Apostles following the Pentecost outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the evangelist named four main elements of the Mass in the lives of the early Christians: "They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers" (2:42).

Tradition holds that Luke was a fine artist, and was the first person to paint icons. Icons are works of sacred art depicting saints or scenes such as those from Scripture. Icons are prayerfully 'written' using artistic symbolism to convey eternal truths. Luke is credited with creating the first icon now called a Hodegetria, which is a type of icon of the Virgin Mary holding the Child Jesus and gesturing toward him as the source of salvation. Luke's original Hodegetria was kept in Constantinople, but has been lost to history. He has been credited with several other images of the Virgin Mary including



Our Lady of Częstochowa, Our Lady of Vladimir, the Madonna del Rosario, and Our Lady of the People of Rome located in the Basilica of St. Mary Major. This latter piece, called *Salus Populi Romani*, was brought to Rome by Saint Helena in the fourth century. It was credited with miraculously sparing the city from the plague in the sixth century.

After Paul passed away, Luke is believed to have continued preaching the Gospel in the regions of Italy, Galatia, Dalmatia, and Macedon. There is some dispute regarding the circumstances of his death; some say he was martyred, while others say that he 'suffered much for the faith,' and lived into old age before dying in Bithynia, located in modern western Turkey.¹ Tradition holds that he was 84 years old.