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Meditations: October 18, Saint Luke

Some reflections that can assist our prayer on the feast of St. Luke. The topics are: St. Luke shows us the normalcy of Jesus's life; the Gospel of mercy; painter of our Lady.

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- St. Luke shows us the normalcy of Jesus's life
- The Gospel of mercy
- Painter of our Lady

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SAINT LUKE was born in Antioch. He was of Gentile, probably Greek, origin, and he practiced medicine. After converting to Christianity around the year 40, he accompanied Saint Paul on his second apostolic journey and spent the last part of the Apostle's life with him. He is the author of the third Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles.

He is the evangelist who has shown us Jesus's infancy most vividly. He provides us with many details that help us contemplate Jesus's humanity and the normalcy of the Holy Family's life: how our Lord was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger, the purification of Mary and the presentation of the Child in the temple, the loss of the child Jesus in Jerusalem... Any other family of the time would have gone through similar circumstances.

Saint Luke concludes the infancy narrative with these words: *And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man (Lk 2:52)*. He shows us that the Son of God went through all the stages of life that we do, and He grew while being subject to His parents. If all of Christ's life is a revelation of the Father, then "his hidden years are not without significance, nor were they simply a preparation for the years which were to come after — those of his public life. [...] God wants our Lord's whole life to be an example for Christians. [...] Our Lord wants many people to ratify their vocation during years of quiet, unspectacular living."^[1] —

ALL JESUS'S words and actions reveal God's mercy towards humanity, but "the Gospel writer

who particularly treats of these themes in Christ's teaching is Luke, whose Gospel has earned the title of 'the Gospel of mercy.'^[2] It is he who emphasizes that Jesus has come to seek and save the lost, who recounts the forgiveness of the sinful woman, who describes the way Jesus looks at Peter after his denials, and who records his prayer and plea for forgiveness for those who crucified Him... St. Luke also includes three parables underscoring the way God continually seeks us to share his love. In these stories, "Jesus reveals the nature of God as that of a Father who never gives up until he has forgiven the wrong and overcome rejection with compassion and mercy."^[3]

All of these details reveal a core truth of the Gospel and our faith: opening our hearts to mercy enables us to receive God's unconditional love. God is good; He can do anything, and He wants to fill us with his life. "The

mercy that God shows should always prompt us to return," as St. Josemaría Escrivá commented. "My children, it's better not to leave his side, not to abandon Him. But if ever, due to human weakness, you do leave, come back running. He always receives us, like the father of the prodigal son, with even greater love."^[4] Thanks to Saint Luke, the scribe of Christ's meekness,^[5] we know that the Lord's heart is always waiting for us. "What a sweet joy to think that God is just, that He takes our weaknesses into account, that He knows perfectly well the fragility of our nature! What, then, would I have to fear? The infinitely just God who deigned to forgive with such kindness all the sins of the prodigal son... Will He not also be just toward me, remaining by his side?"^[6] —

FROM ANCIENT times, St. Luke was referred to as our Lady's painter. His Gospel paints Mary's figure, a model of correspondence to God, most clearly. He highlights the gifts she has received from the Lord, beyond those of any other creature: she is full of grace, she conceives Jesus by the Holy Spirit, she will be blessed by all generations... But he also highlights her faithful, grateful response to all these graces: she receives the angel's announcement humbly, surrenders to God's plans, observes the customs of her people...

At the end of St. Luke's infancy narrative, he writes that Mary *kept all these things in her heart* (Lk 2:51). We can infer that our Lady was one of the evangelist's main sources of information, because only she could have shared such details. Those words show us how our Mother received reality, seeking to love God at all times. "That's what explains

Mary's life — her love. A complete love, so complete that she forgets herself and is happy just to be there where God wants her, fulfilling with care what God wants her to do. That is why even her slightest action is never routine or vain but, rather, full of meaning."^[7] We can ask Saint Luke to help us illuminate our lives with Mary's presence.

^[1] St. Josemaría Escrivá, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 20.

^[2] St. John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia*, no. 3.

^[3] Pope Francis, *Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy*, 11-IV-2015, no. 9.

^[4] St. Josemaría, *Notes from a Family Get-together*, 27-III-1972.

[5] Cf. Dante Alighieri, *Monarchia*, no. 1.

[6] St. Thérèse of Lisieux, *Autobiographical Manuscripts*, no. 8.

[7] St. Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 148.

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