

Reflection: Feast of Luke, Evangelist & Martyr 18 October 2020 Cn. Anne Wentzel

We know St Luke first of all as an evangelist - the author of the third gospel - and also the author of the Acts of the Apostles, the work which records for us the earliest history of the Christian Church.

We know very little about St Luke's own personal history. There is an ancient and widespread tradition that he was an artist, a painter of pictures, but the evidence is quite uncertain. But we do know, both from the Acts of the Apostles and from St Paul's Epistles, that he was a companion of St Paul on missionary journeys. St Paul speaks of him with affection as his 'fellow-labourer', and 'the brother whose praise is in the Gospel throughout all the churches.'

In the Epistle to the Colossians, Paul speaks of him as the 'beloved physician,' and for that reason, Luke has been traditionally regarded as the patron of doctors and nurses, and of the medical profession and the healing ministry generally.

In Christian history the healing ministry has a long and distinguished record and in the European Middle Ages, it became largely the province of Christian religious orders, whose members founded hospitals, and devoted their lives to the care of the sick. In modern times, and especially during the past century, our medical institutions have become gradually secularised: but still most of them can trace their history back to ecclesiastical foundations.

Nowadays, if one speaks of the healing ministry, many are inclined to think particularly of the phenomena of 'faith healing', and the 'healing services' which now go on in many of our churches; but the healing ministry, properly speaking, must include the whole range of healing work, whether it is directly under the auspices of the Churches, or not. And we should try to understand just what is the nature of our Christian commitment to the whole work of health and healing.

For Christians, the fundamental motive in all this is charity. We love one another, and we see to bear one another's burdens, and to relieve one another's sufferings.

The Lord be with you.