

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America - Homily on the Sunday of the Feast of the Holy Evangelist Luke



Saints Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church

Silver Spring, Maryland

October 18, 2020

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It has been said, “last but not least,” as this wonderful community of Saints Constantine and Helen does, indeed, now complete my visitations of all the Parishes of the Archdiocesan District. However, I would rather say, “I saved the best for last!” Being with you in your new Temple and community is a proud moment for me, because this famous community was, in fact, the very first parish visited by His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew on his Apostolic Visit to the United States in October of 1997. And today, my friends, we celebrate your community — not only its venerable history, but its future as a leading parish of our Archdiocese.

This eighteenth day of October is the Feast of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Luke, “the beloved physician,” as Saint Paul calls him.^[*] The Holy Luke, who wrote both the Gospel of his name and the Acts of the Apostles, is truly the first historian of our Church. He addresses both of his works to Θεόφιλος, whose name means, as you know, “the friend of God.” For every reader of these sacred texts should read them with love for the Lord.

As I look around the Church today, I see friends of God. I see those who qualify as the “Κράτιστοι” — the “most excellent” friends of God — as Luke described Θεόφιλος in the Prologue to his Gospel. Give ear to the Evangelist’s words, as he explains why he wrote this Gospel:

“... my most excellent Theophilos,” Luke says, “so that you might know the certainty of the words by which you were catechized.” ^[†]

Here is the reason for the Gospel — its purpose. To help establish us in our faith with a written record of what our Lord Jesus Christ did and what He taught. This is why the only book that remains on the Holy Altar both day and night is the ἱερόν Εὐαγγέλιον that contains all four Gospels.

My beloved Christians, the tradition of our Church is twofold. One is written, and the other unwritten. Look around your beautiful temple that you have created by your sacrifices and labors. Here is the unwritten tradition that takes shape as architecture and form, through holy icons and the liturgy itself.

But the Gospels are the story that informs all of these forms of our Faith. As Saint Luke specifies in his Prologue; the words are the:

“narrative concerning the events of which we have full assurance, for they were handed down to us through the tradition of those who were the Eyewitnesses and Ministers of the Logos from the very beginning.” ^[‡]

You see, my beloved Christians, the Gospels themselves derive from the αὐτόπται καὶ ὑπηρέται — the eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word — as the Evangelist John says in his First Epistle:

“He Who was from the beginning — the Word of Life — We heard Him; we saw Him with our eyes; we beheld Him and even our hands touched Him....”^[§]

We never have to worry about the reality of our Faith, because we have the Gospels. They are the anchor that hold in place the Ark of Salvation — our Holy Orthodox Church — when we face storms and controversies. For the first fifty to

seventy-five years after the Resurrection, we had living Apostles — the eyewitnesses as mentioned before. And during this time the Gospels were written, so that when those eyewitnesses were no longer with us in the flesh, their testimony and knowledge of the Lord would endure.

Even as we celebrate Saint Luke today, let us all commit to a deeper knowledge of all the Holy Gospels. For they are the gateway to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, Whom we celebrate in this Divine Liturgy, and Who is the salvation of our souls.

Amen.

[\[*\]](#) Colossians 4:14.

[\[†\]](#) Luke 1:3,4.

[\[‡\]](#) Luke 1:1,2.

[\[§\]](#) I John 1:1.

[Source](#)