

Insights in Liturgy

The Year Of Luke

By Msgr. William H. Shannon

This year is Year C in the Sunday liturgy; it is the year, therefore, when the Gospel of St. Luke is read in the Sundays of Ordinary Time. It seems appropriate then to begin the new year with some reflections on the Good News as presented by St. Luke. Ernest Renan called the Gospel of St. Luke "the most beautiful book ever written." And George Bernard Shaw once said that it was St. Luke's portrayal of our Lord that won the hearts of men and women to Him.

St. Luke was not one of the disciples of Jesus. He was probably born in Antioch, where a large Christian community had emerged; and after his conversion he became the

missionary companion of St. Paul. He appears to have been a physician by profession. In the Epistle to the Colossians St. Paul mentions among those who send greetings to the Church at Colossae "Luke our most dear physician." Indeed, some studies suggest that Luke uses in his Gospel the medical vocabulary of his time. In writing the story of the woman whom Jesus cured of hemorrhage he is notably kinder to the physicians who had cared for this woman than is St. Mark. (Contrast Mark 5:26-27 and Luke 8:43-44).

Unlike Mark, but similar to Matthew, Luke begins his Gospel with the Infancy Narratives: the two annunciation stories, the visitation, the birth of John the Baptist and then the glorious Christmas story that has inspired so much art and that never fails to stir our hearts on Christmas. (It

is worth noting that Luke apparently knows nothing of the coming of the magi or the flight into Egypt. These stories are found only in Matthew's Infancy Narratives.)

Surely the central theme in Luke's Gospel is that of Jesus the merciful Saviour who comes to offer to all people the experience of God's forgiving love. Dante has called Luke the "scribe of the mercy of Christ." The great scenes of mercy (the forgiveness of the penitent woman who washed Jesus' feet, the call of the sinner Zacchaeus, the mercy extended to the thief on the cross — these scenes are found only in Luke. Also the great parables of mercy (the lost sheep, the prodigal son, the good Samaritan) are also only in Luke's Gospel. The mind almost falters at the thought of a Gospel portrayal of Jesus without the moving insights of Luke into the heart of the merciful Saviour.

As in the Acts of the

Apostles (Luke vol. 2), the Holy Spirit is everywhere active in the Gospel of Luke. The Holy Spirit comes upon Mary. Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit; so too Zachary and Simeon. Jesus is led by the Spirit into the desert; after the Spirit had descended upon Him in the waters of the Jordan. After the desert temptations Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. In the synagogue of Nazareth Jesus says: "The Spirit of God is upon me."

Luke's Gospel is the Gospel of prayer. It records a number of occasions on which Jesus prayed. It puts the Lord's Prayer in the context of the disciples' request "Teach us to pray." It is also the Gospel of joy: from the joy sung about by the angels at Bethlehem to the return of the disciples to Jerusalem after the Ascension — with joy in their hearts.

Luke's work has been called the Gospel of Women. He shows unusual literary

gifts in presenting brief biographical sketches of women: Mary, Elizabeth, Anna, the widow of Naim, the repentant woman in the Pharisee's house, Mary and Martha of Bethany. Luke also mentions the women who ministered to Jesus during His public life. (See Luke 8:1-3)

One of the striking peculiarities of Luke's Gospel is the "Journey Narrative" which runs from Chapters 9 to 19. Luke has Jesus ever moving toward Jerusalem, the Holy City, where the final act of Salvation History will be accomplished. The city of Jerusalem as the center of salvation history is most important to Luke. He even rearranges the temptation stories so that the last one takes place in Jerusalem. Likewise he re-situated the appearances of the risen Jesus to his disciples and has them occur, not in Galilee as in the other Gospels, but in Jerusalem. (It is noteworthy that in his second volume, the Acts of the Apostles,

Luke also has a "journey narrative" the journey of Paul, from Jerusalem to Rome. Luke is telling us through "geography" that the center of salvation history shifts from Jerusalem to Rome.)

For a study of this "most beautiful book ever written", the following divisions of the Gospel might be helpful:

- 1) Prologue and Infancy Narrative (1-2)
- 2) The Ministry of the Baptist culminating in the Baptism of Jesus and Jesus's desert struggle (3:4-13)
- 3) The Ministry of Jesus in Galilee (4:14-9:50)
- 4) The Great Journey Narrative (9:51-18:30)
- 5) Entrance into Jericho and the Zacchaeus event (18:31-19:10)
- 6) Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem (19:11-21:38)
- 7) Passion, Death, Resurrection, Glorification of Jesus (22:1-24:53)

Alumni Drive Reaches \$11,000

The Alumni Appeal Drive of 1979-80, chaired by Father Robert F. McNamara of St. Bernard's Seminary, has raised \$11,704. Thus far, 163 alumni have participated with the average gift \$71.80.

A goal of \$35,000 has been set and a hundred percent participation will insure success, Father McNamara said.

Retreat House Lists Events

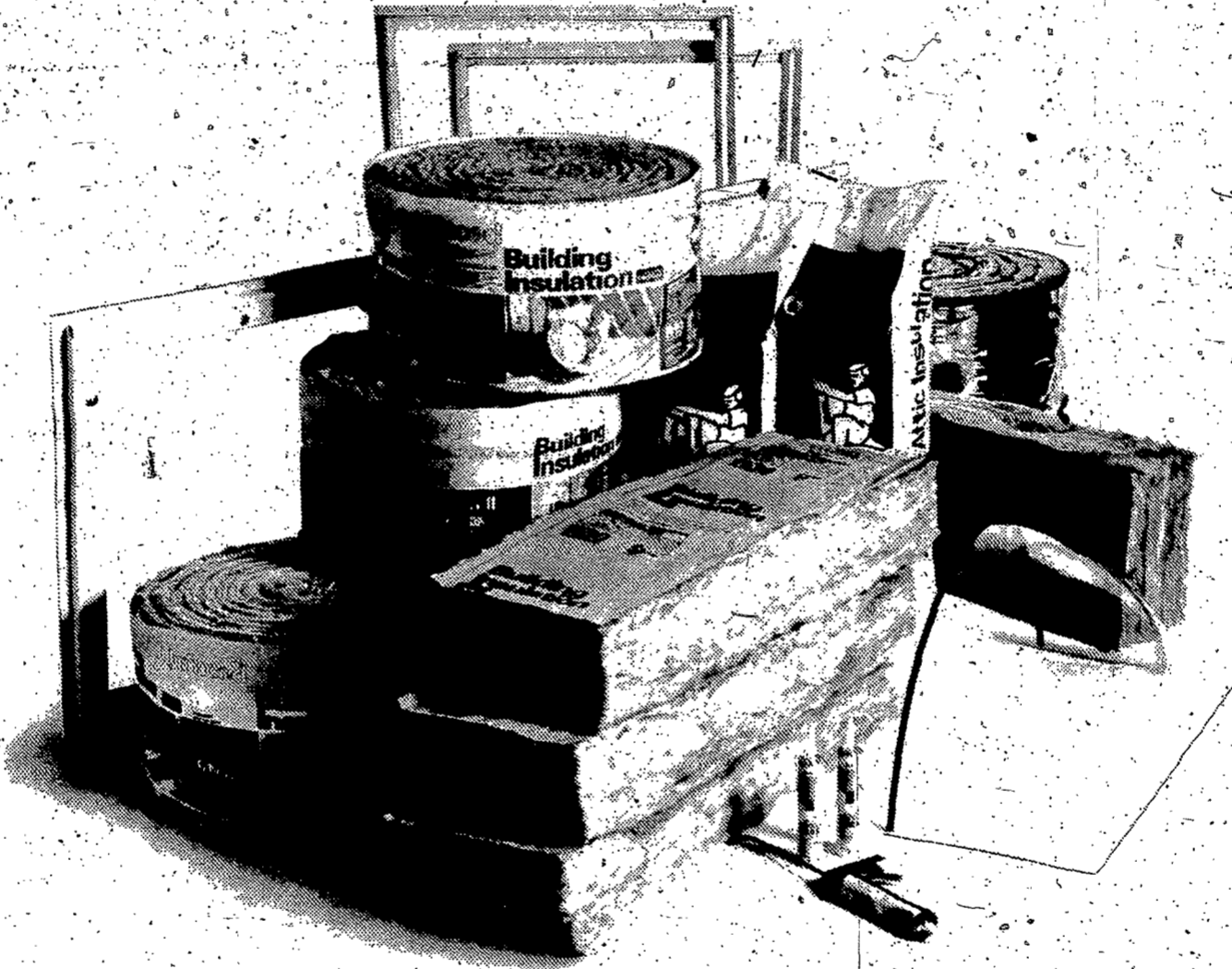
Notre Dame Retreat House at Canandaigua has scheduled a charismatic healing service for 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 12, and a memorial Mass for Father William Jamieson CSSR for 3 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 27. All are welcome to both events.

A special retreat for recovering alcoholics will be offered Jan. 25-27. Details may be obtained by writing to the house at Box 342, Canandaigua, N.Y. 14424, or calling 716-394-5700.

GeVa, NTID Set Comedy

A shadow-signed performance of GeVa Theatre's current comedy, The Waltz of the Toreadors by Jean Anouilh, is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. Jan. 13, in cooperation with the National Technical Institute for the Deaf. Eleven interpreters from the school will take part, and the NTID director, William E. Castle, will moderate an interpreted discussion with the cast, from 4:45 until 6 p.m.

A special phone system has been installed in the GeVa box office, to assist people with hearing deficiencies in making reservations. Because of the small capacity of the theatre at 168 S. Clinton, GeVa recommends early reservations, through 232-1364. General admission is \$7.50; for students, \$5. Subscribers holding tickets for the evening of Jan. 13 (third Sunday) are asked to call the box office as soon as possible if they prefer to attend another performance.



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