

THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church
Livingston, Alabama



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This Month's Cover

Out cover painting this month is *The Assumption of the Holy Virgin* by Sir Peter Paul Rubens. It was painted in 1626 as an altarpiece for the Cathedral of Our Lady in Antwerp, Belgium, where it remains today. It is oil on a wood panel, and measures roughly 10½' x 16'. In it we see the Blessed Virgin being carried into heaven by a choir of angels and *putti*. As we have mentioned in previous articles, *putti* ("baby angels") were a common device at the time. Some of the people at her tomb look upward in awe, while others reach down to touch her discarded shroud. Ancient tradition says that her tomb was miraculously filled with lilies when she was assumed into heaven. The symbol of Mary is a stylized lily, the *fleur-de-lis*.

The doctrine of the Assumption teaches that since Mary was conceived free of original sin (the Immaculate Conception) and lived without sin, it was inappropriate that her body be corrupted as are the bodies of sinners. Thus at her death she immediately assumed her resurrected body and was taken into heaven, where she reigns as Queen of the Saints. This is dogma (required belief) in the Roman Catholic Church, and it is an accepted doctrine in all other Catholic and some Protestant Churches. The Feast of the Assumption falls on August 15.

Peter Paul Rubens was born in Westphalia, Germany in 1577. His parents were Calvinists, and had fled Anwerp during the persecutions of

Protestants. His father, Jan Rubens, became the legal advisor (and lover) of Princess Anna of Saxony, the second wife of William I of Orange. He fathered a daughter by her and was imprisoned for the affair a few months before Peter Paul was born. Anna finally managed to obtain his freedom the following year, and the family returned to Cologne.

Rubens entered his apprenticeship as a painter in 1591, and studied under several Flemish masters. In 1598 he entered the Guild of St. Luke as an independent master. In 1600 he traveled to Italy, where he was strongly influenced by the works of Titian, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael and Caravaggio. He spent time in Spain and then returned to Italy. In 1609 he returned to Antwerp to be with his sick mother, but she died before he arrived. He remained there 12 years, producing some of his greatest works. In 1621 he went to France on a diplomatic mission for the Hapsburgs, journeying back and forth several times between Spain, France and Flanders. In 1630 he returned to Antwerp, where he remained for the rest of his life. He died in 1640.

Rubens was the greatest painter of the late Continental Renaissance and Baroque periods. His fondness for painting full-figured women generated the adjective "Rubenesque." He was also a renowned diplomat, and in that role often functioned as a spy. He was knighted by both Philip IV of Spain and Charles I of England.

Richard R. Losch+

A Word From the Editor

Each year on the Fourth Sunday of Easter we observe "Good Shepherd Sunday," in which we remember that Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd." The metaphor of God's people as sheep occurs often in the Bible, the most familiar being in the 23rd Psalm.

A baby lamb ranks very high among cute, cuddly and lovable creatures. But adult sheep? Not so much. Sheep are dirty, smelly, greasy, stubborn and stupid. They bite, butt and kick, and that is often when they are in one of their better moods. They want to be independent, yet if they become separated from the flock they are incapable of taking care of themselves. Sheep are followers, and cannot survive without the guidance and protection of the shepherd. Comparing humans to sheep is not at all complimentary, but it is accurate.

On the positive side, sheep are very productive animals. Their wool provides warm clothing, their meat is delicious and nutritious, their tallow provides candles for light, and the greasiness that makes them unpleasant to touch is lanolin, one of the best emollients for human skin.

Sheep are herd animals. They become frightened if they find themselves separated from the flock. They depend on each other for safety and a sense of security. A sheep will rarely leave the flock purposely. If he finds a good grazing spot, however, he focuses his attention on it and ignores everything around him. In time he can nibble himself away from the flock.

This will sometimes bring him over a rise so that he no longer sees or hears the flock. When he realizes that he is alone he will panic and run, often in the wrong direction, separating himself even more from the flock. He is then an easy prey for wolves.

The human metaphor is again very accurate. In the Church we care for each other, providing mutual spiritual support that encourages us to remain faithful. Although there are some, most people are not innately evil. Little by little, however, nibbling away sin by sin, we can separate ourselves from the flock until we are so far gone that it is unlikely that we will ever make the effort to return. We are then easy prey for Satan and for true evil. Although there were undoubtedly some exceptions, most of the guards in the Nazi concentration camps very likely started out as decent men. Little by little they became increasingly corrupted by the Nazi philosophy, until eventually they ended up as concentration camp guards and complete monsters. We work our way into hell in little nibbles, not in great bites.

A hireling protects the sheep because if he fails to do so he will lose his job. The good shepherd knows and loves his sheep, and will risk his life to protect them. Christ is the Good Shepherd even to the point that he laid down his life to save us. All we like sheep have gone astray, and the Good Shepherd seeks us out to return us to the fold. Now we must follow him.

Father Rick Losch

Evening Prayer and Parish Suppers

On Saturday, July 4th, Independence Day, we will have a service of Evening Prayer at 6:00 p.m. with a cookout following in the parish house. Grilled hamburgers and hotdogs will be furnished. Signup sheets for potato chips, baked beans, salads, buns, desserts, other items, and tea are posted in the parish house kitchen. There is also a sheet for those planning to attend so that we may know how many to plan for. So that we may know how many hamburgers and hot dogs to cook, you are asked to sign up no later than Sunday, June 28th. A nominal contribution will be asked of each person to defray the expenses for this event and you are asked also to bring canned goods for the Department of Human Resources Food Pantry. As always, there will be plenty of good food and fellowship. Please make your plans to attend. Note that there will not be a third Wednesday supper.

Our August service of Evening Prayer will be on Wednesday, August 19th, at 6:00 p.m. Details about the supper will be announced in the Sunday bulletins and weekly e-mails as we approach the date.

Hiram Patrenos

Parish Directory

Copies of the updated Parish Directory are available on the table in the parish house. If as you are using your directory you discover an error,

please give the corrected information to Hiram Patrenos either in writing or by e-mail to patrenoj@bellsouth.net. The Parish Directory will be updated again in November.

Hiram Patrenos

Altar Flowers

Volunteers are needed to provide Altar Flowers through the Pentecost season. A sign-up chart is located in the Sacristy. You may use flowers from your yard or, if you wish, make arrangements with a florist to provide them. For more information, please speak with Carolyn Patrenos.

Hiram Patrenos

Thank you Deep South Landscaping!

Thank you to Jason Gordy and his crew from Deep South Landscaping for their gift of pruning and cleaning out all the shrubbery, beds and hedges at the rectory and church. They also donated and planted all of the flowers in the prayer garden. We appreciate their hard work and generosity!

Hiram Patrenos

Fifth Sunday Community Service

The fifth Sunday Community Service this month will be hosted by St. James' on August 30th at 11:00 a.m. Please make your plans to attend and help to continue this very old Livingston tradition.

Hiram Patrenos

Be Wordly Wise

The Suffix -phobia

The suffix *-phobia* means fear, not hatred. Psychologists tell us that we are born with only two innate fears, the fear of falling (ptosephobia) and the fear of loud noise (thorybophobia). In the course of our lives we often develop a wide variety of fears that can range from extreme discomfort to absolute terror. Among these are ophidiophobia (snakes), arachnophobia (spiders), entomophobia (insects), acrophobia (heights), claustrophobia (enclosed places) xenophobia (strangers), cynophobia (dogs), phasmophobia (ghosts), and two of my favorites, homilophobia, fear of sermons, and sesquipedaliophobia, fear of long words. Almost all *-phobia* words come from Greek roots, except sesquipedaliophobia, which is derived from the Latin for "foot and a half."

The misuse of this suffix to mean hatred is modern. We hear it most commonly in the words Islamophobia and homophobia. The former means fear, not hatred, of Islam, and the latter means fear of sameness, not hatred of homosexuals. Hatred is indicated by either the prefix *miso-* (as in *misogyny*, hatred of women) or the suffix *-echthra*. Hatred of Islam would be either *misoislamism* or *Islamoechthra*, and hatred of homosexuals would be *homophylophilioechthra*. This word is linguistically correct, but it is unlikely that it will ever replace the incorrectly used word *homophobia*.

Richard R. Losch+

Bishop Marray Visits

On June 21 Bishop Santosh Marray, the Assistant Bishop of Alabama, visited St. James' to administer the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Confirmation. He baptized Jonas Ja'Varein Rashad Jones, the foster child of Jim and Amy Rankin, and he confirmed Joshua Rankin, William Green-Burns and Brian Burnes. We welcome Jonas (whom we call Jones) into the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, and we congratulate Josh, William and Brian on their reaffirmation of the Faith. Following the service there was a parish luncheon, when we had the pleasure of meeting Bishop Marray's lovely wife Nalini.

Richard R. Losch+

The Symbols of Holy Baptism

The Book of Common Prayer defines sacraments as "outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace, given by Christ as sure and certain means by which we receive that grace." The outward and visible sign of Holy Baptism is water, which is required for the sacrament to be considered valid. Other symbols serve to remind us of the meaning and importance of this Sacrament by which we are brought into Christ's grace.

Water: Water is the simplest and purest of God's earthly gifts, and it is the basis of all life on earth. Since prehistoric times it has symbolized cleanliness and has been used in puri-

fication rites. In early times baptism was often done by total immersion, representing not only the washing away of sin, but also the death to sin, burial (symbolically in water), and the rising to everlasting life (the emerging from the water). During the blessing of the water the priest divides it, symbolizing the division of the Red Sea when God saved the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt, just as we are saved from slavery to sin. He then casts water to the four points of the compass, symbolic of Jesus' commandment to go forth and baptize, "even to the uttermost part of the earth." Water is poured on the candidate three times, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. If immersion is used, the candidate is immersed three times.

Salt: Salt has a dual symbolism. In ancient times it was a precious commodity, denoting life and a lively and healthy spirit. Salt not only enhances the flavor of food, but it is also essential to life itself. Jesus said, "Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other" (*Mk. 9:50*). Symbolic of this, a few grains of salt are placed on the tongue of the child.

Chrism (blessed oil): Anointing with oil is a very ancient practice. It was used primarily as a sign of purity, blessing, adoption, or elevation to high position. In ancient times oil was poured liberally over the head, but today we symbolize this by touching the head and hands with a tiny bit of oil. Anointing is obviously a perfect

symbol of baptism, through which we are cleansed of sin, blessed by the church, adopted as children of God, and made heirs of everlasting life. The child is anointed, and then the sign of the cross is made with oil on the forehead, sealing the child as Christ's own forever.

The Baptismal Candle: The candle is the symbol of the Light of Christ, and of the Fire of the Holy Spirit. The Paschal Candle is always lit for baptisms throughout the year. From this we light the baptismal candle, which is given to the child (or the parents, after symbolically placing it into the child's hand). Traditionally this candle is lit every year on the anniversary of the baptism until the child is confirmed, as a reminder of the vows that were taken. Most people nowadays do this on the child's birthday instead (the baptismal candle is the origin of the tradition of birthday candles).

The Purple and White Stoles: At the beginning of the service the priest wears a purple stole to remind us of our sinfulness and our need for repentance. Just before the actual baptism he changes to a white stole, symbolic of the cleansing from sin given us by Christ. At the beginning of the Eucharist he then changes to the color of the season.

Richard R. Losch+

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Reverence for the Flag

With Independence Day looming and Flag Day having just passed, it seems appropriate to consider why we show such veneration for the American Flag when many other nations treat their flags so cavalierly. In Great Britain, for example, when a flag is worn out it is simply thrown in the trash. It is not treated with the reverence that most patriotic Americans show their flag. The reason is simple. In a monarchy, the sovereign is the symbol of the nation and of the unity of its people. "For Queen and country!" is the rallying cry of patriotic Britons, and their ceremonies are opened with the singing of their national anthem, "God Save the Queen." They have no equivalent to our Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. The same is true in most monarchies and even in dictatorships, where the leader is the unifying symbol. In democratic republics, on the other hand, the governmental administration changes every few years. The only regularly visible continuing symbol for them is their flag. Americans open ceremonies with either the Pledge of Allegiance or the National Anthem. These honor the Flag, not our leaders. In America the essential binding factor is the Constitution, but that is not regularly visible, whereas the Flag is.

While we hoist our flag unfurled from the bottom to the top of a staff or mast, in many countries, including Great Britain, it is "broken." This means that it is raised to the top rolled and tied, and then the rope is tugged

to release it and let it fall open. This is the practice in most countries that have been more or less continuous for centuries. In countries that were formed by revolution, however, such as ours, the flag is raised. This is because when a revolutionary movement gains control of a fortress or a piece of land it does not have time for formal ceremonies. It hoists its flag as quickly as possible to claim its victory. That tradition usually remains long after, and so the flag is raised instead of being broken.

Today many are repeating the anti-patriotism of the 1960s. They decry America's wrongs and ignore her greatness, and they quote out of context Stephen Decatur's famous toast. After he had defeated one of early America's most dangerous threats, the Barbary pirates, Decatur raised his glass and toasted, "Our country! In her intercourse with foreign nations may she always be in the right; but our country, right or wrong!" He was not forgiving America for her wrongs, he was calling for her always to be right. The true patriot loves his country enough to recognize that she can be wrong, and he struggles to make her right. The American Flag is the symbol of our freedom to speak out against wrongs and to oppose them. No patriot would defile the symbol of such freedom. The Flag is not a symbol of America's faults, but it is rather a constant reminder to us of the challenge to find them and root them out. For that it deserves the utmost honor and reverence. *Richard R. Losch+*

Jonah's Flight

The story of the prophet Jonah is familiar to most people, even to those who are generally unfamiliar with the Bible. There are few, however, who are aware that it was not a whale that swallowed Jonah. The Bible says, "the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah." A whale is a mammal, not a fish, and the ancient Jews knew the difference. They called a fish *degym* (דגים), but the whale they called *leviathan* (לווייתן).

The story tells of Jonah ben-Amittai, whom God commanded to go to Nineveh,¹ the capital of Assyria, to call for the Assyrians' repentance. They were sworn enemies of the Jews, and Jonah wanted no part of them. He decided to flee from God to Tarshish. The location of Tarshish is unknown, but it was probably either Tarsus in what is now Turkey, or Tarsisus in Spain. He went to the Philistine seaport of Joppa (modern Jaffa, a suburb of Tel Aviv), and boarded a ship for Tarshish. A great storm rose, and the ship was foundering. Jonah realized that this was God's doing, so he told them that the storm was his fault, and urged them to cast him overboard. They did, and the storm immediately abated. The "great fish" swallowed him, and three days later vomited him up on the shores of Nineveh. Jonah realized that God was telling him, "Now knock it off and go

do your job." He went into the city and called for their repentance, expecting them to reject him and be destroyed. He was looking forward to the destruction of the Jews' ancient enemies, but they heard him, repented, and were forgiven. Jonah was furious, and sat outside pouting. The book ends with his chastisement.

Why did Jonah go all the way to Joppa, which in those days was in the land of the Philistines, who were also enemies of the Jews? This was a tremendous distance from where he lived in what is now Galilee, near Nazareth. He could have taken a much shorter route to a northern port by traveling due west.

In the very early days of Middle Eastern religion, people believed that the gods had power only in the lands of the people who worshiped them. The gods of Babylonia had no power outside Babylonia; those of Egypt were restricted to Egypt, and so on. Very early the Jews came to realize that God was all-powerful in all places, but it took a long time for this to sink in to the thinking of the common people. Jonah fled Israel in order to escape God's power, but soon discovered that this is impossible.

The Nile dumps millions of tons of sand and silt into the Mediterranean every year. Much of it is swept up in a counter-clockwise current that carries it up along the Levant, where it is deposited. This results in hundreds of miles of beautiful beaches, but very few harbors. About the only ports that were really any good were at Tyre,

¹ Nineveh was on the Tigris River in what is now Iraq, a few miles north of Baghdad.

Sidon and Byblos in Phoenicia (modern Lebanon), and at Joppa. The Phoenician ports were in a land that was an ally of Israel, so Jonah avoided them. Possibly God might have some power there because the Phoenicians were friendly to the Jews. Joppa, on the other hand, was in the land of the Philistines, in the region that today is just north of the Gaza Strip. The Philistines were bitter enemies of the Jews, and it was risky for Jonah to go there. On the other hand, if he believed that God had no power outside Israel, it was a good place to escape his wrath. Besides, it was just inside the Philistine border, so he didn't have to go too deep into enemy territory. It was at Joppa that he boarded the ship for Tarshish.

The story of Jonah is rooted in a number of ancient Middle Eastern legends of various people trying in vain to escape the will or the wrath of the gods. There was a real prophet named Jonah ben-Amittai, but little is known of him other than that he lived long after the fall and destruction of Nineveh. The writer of the Book of Jonah may have known that name and built his story around it. The story is intended to teach three important lessons, and it fulfills that purpose well. First, God is a loving and forgiving God who is willing to forgive even the likes of the Assyrians if they would repent and turn to him; also, despite Jonah's disobedience and petulance, God not only forgave him but also explained to him why he was wrong. Secondly, God is the God of

the whole world, not just of the Jews or the land of Israel. Thirdly, it is not wise to defy God, and if you do you cannot escape the consequences.

Early Christian writers drew a parallel between Jonah and Christ. Jonah sacrificed himself to save the sailors and spent three days in the belly of the fish; Christ sacrificed himself for all mankind and spent three days in the tomb. It is not a good metaphor, however, because while Christ was sinless and never let his human will override the will of the Father, Jonah was disobedient and sullen, and tried to controvert the will of God. The story of Jesus is the story of God's love, while the story of Jonah is the story of God's forgiveness of our failings.

It is doubtful that the writer of the Book of Jonah ever intended it to be taken literally. Among other things, the chronology, geography and history are all wrong, and these were known at the time. There is no record of Nineveh ever repenting and turning to God. It was a magnificent city, but it was very short-lived and was destroyed in 613 BC. The Bible contains many stories that are accurate accounts of historical events, and as more and more discoveries are made, more and more of these stories are validated. On the other hand, many of the stories in the Old Testament and Apocrypha are allegorical. Like these, the message of the Book of Jonah is far more powerful if we read it as allegory than if we try to justify it as an account of an actual historical event.

Richard R. Losch+

Where Are the Graves?

From the first Israelite invasions of Canaan in the 13th century BC until the fall of Jerusalem to Babylonia in 586 BC, there is a vast amount of archaeological evidence of Israelite culture, especially in the hill country of Palestine. What has puzzled archaeologists, however, is the almost total lack of tombs or evidence of Jewish burial customs during that period. They are plentiful after the return from Babylonia at the end of the 6th century, but during most of the Iron Age they are absent. In the late Bronze and early Iron Ages (1550-1200 BC) tombs are plentiful and there is a plethora of evidence of burial customs that tell us much about the religious beliefs of the time. That was the period, however, before the Israelites invaded and occupied the land. It is evident, therefore, that what scholars call the “lack of burials phenomenon” was peculiarly Jewish.

During this period, while the Israelite culture and the Jewish religion were developing and maturing, the society was egalitarian and making a conscious effort to separate itself from the cultures of its pagan neighbors. Many of the ceremonial and dietary laws were given specifically for this purpose. For example, the proscription against eating milk and meat at the same meal was not for health reasons—there is no hygienic reason for it. A common pagan religious practice among the Canaanites was a fertility ceremony that involved seething a young goat in its own mother’s milk

and then eating it. The Jews banned this practice to the extent that meat and milk dishes could not even be prepared in the same cooking vessels.¹ Early Jewish society was egalitarian. Even though social classes developed early in the culture, many of their practices remained uniform throughout the classes. Included in these were their burial practices, which were very simple. Probably one of the reasons that so few graves have been found is that instead of being buries in tombs, they were interred outside the towns and villages in the country, where archaeologists are unlikely to dig because there are no clues that anything might be found. Also, to separate themselves from the elaborate burial practices of their pagan neighbors, their burials were very simple. Even in the few graves that have been found there are rarely any artifacts or religious symbols buried with them.

Another factor that may account for the simplicity of the burials is that until after the Babylonian Exile very few Jews believed in an afterlife. A belief in life after death and in resurrection did not become strong in Judaism until the early third century BC. People who believe that death is the end of everything with no life hereafter have no reason to place anything in the graves of their loved ones, but simply bury them with dignity.

This lack of belief in an afterlife

¹ To this day Orthodox Jews have two separate sets of dishes (in Yiddish, *milchig* and *fleishig*) for milk-based foods and meat.

may have been a reaction to the beliefs of the Israelites' Egyptian oppressors, who focused their whole lives on preparation for entry into an afterlife with the gods. To the Egyptians, the only purpose for this life was to prepare for the next. Also, Egyptian burials were very complex, and even the poor attempted to provide their dead with food and valuables to be used in the next life. The Israelites may have reacted to this by going as far as possible in the other direction, toward ultimate simplicity.

In the northern kingdom of Israel, after King Omri built the capital city of Samaria in 870 BC, the society became polarized into the extremely rich and the extremely poor. Although the society of the southern kingdom of Judah remained more egalitarian, in Israel there developed a rigid class system that had only two classes—the royalty and aristocrats, and the poor. Even the rich, however, rarely built fine tombs or had elaborate burial customs until they had fallen deeply into paganism just before the destruction of Israel in about 722 BC.

The Israel Antiquities Authority has done magnificent work not only in preserving Palestinian antiquities, but also in supporting the use of the very latest state-of-the-art technologies to make new discoveries. It is hoped that in using some of these new techniques archaeologists will discover more Iron Age graves that will shed further light on the burial practices of the time.

Richard R. Losch+

Another Validation

A recent discovery in Israel has once again validated a biblical account that had long been challenged. In the description of the entrance to Solomon's Temple in 1 Kings 6 we are told that the entry had five doorposts and five lintels, which is architecturally highly unlikely. The Hebrew word is *mezuzah* (מזוזה).¹ Most translations of the Bible render this as "doorpost," but footnote it to say that the meaning of the word is unclear.

A recent excavation at Khirbet Qeiyafa ("Qeiyafa Ruins"), about 20 miles southwest of Jerusalem, unearthed a limestone shrine model with a doorway that matches the description in 1 Kings. It has been dated at right about the time that David became king, around 1000 BC. Shrine models are, as the name implies, small models of full-sized shrines, and were common at that time. Their purpose is not clear, but they may have been objects of cult worship or actual builders' models to show the workmen what to build.² This and several clay shrine models there show doors with multiple increasingly recessed frames just like that described in 1 Kings. Once again a challenged biblical passage has been proven to be valid.

Richard R. Losch+

¹ This is not the same as the mezuzah that is found on the doorpost of many Jewish homes, which is a small cartridge containing a scroll of passages from the Torah.

² Perspective drawing was unknown until the Italian Renaissance.

Having a Bad Day?

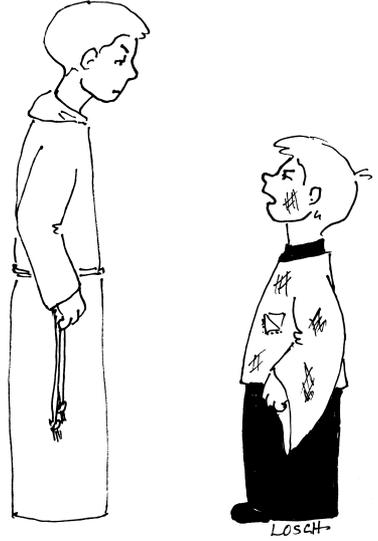
Ronald Wayne was a co-founder of Apple, Inc. with Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak. He designed the logo, drew up the business agreement, and wrote the manual for the first Apple computer. In 1976, twelve days after the company was established, he sold his 10% share for \$800. When Apple was incorporated he was paid an additional \$1500 to relinquish all his rights of ownership. He is now retired with a net worth of about \$300,000. If he had kept his 10% share of Apple he would be worth about \$13 billion today.

The next time you think you have made a bad decision, just think of Ronald Wayne and it might not seem quite so bad.

Richard R. Losch+

JAMIE

by Richard R. Losch



"It was a biblical fight. He trespassed against me, so I smote him."



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