

THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church
Livingston, Alabama

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This Month's Cover

In honor of the Feast of Saint Mary Magdalene (July 22), our cover this month is *Mary Magdalene* by the anonymous Flemish artist known as the Master with the Parrot. Completed in c.1530, it is oil on a wood panel, measuring only about 14½"x11". It is displayed in the McNay Art Museum in San Antonio, TX, the gift of Dr. and Mrs. Frederic G. Oppenheimer. It is important because while the dress and pose are in the style of about 1500, it displays a significant shift from the flat depthless style of the Middle Ages to the more full-bodied and rounded style of the Renaissance. Mary is holding an alabaster jar of ointment, as is traditional in most pictures of her. Although inaccurate, this is a reference to the story of the prostitute pouring the ointment on Jesus' feet and wiping them with her hair (Lk. 7:36ff). Tradition has long identified that woman with Mary Magdalene, although there is absolutely nothing in the Bible to substantiate this claim. In AD 591 Pope Gregory I delivered a series of Easter sermons in which he conflated the stories of Mary Magdalene with two stories of prostitutes that are juxtaposed with her stories in the Bible. All the Bible says is that Jesus had healed her of seven demons (Mk. 16:9). The Jews did not consider prostitution to be a matter of possession, but simply a grievous sin. The seven demons probably referred to madness (possibly she was bipolar or schizophrenic).

In the late Middle Ages many artists did not sign their religious paintings, believing that they should be done for the glory of God rather than that of the painter. This was particularly common among Dutch and Flemish painters, so there are hundreds of masterpieces whose artists are unknown. Because of distinctive styles most can be identified as having been done

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by a particular person, but his name and background often remain unknown. These painters are commonly known as the Master of some peculiarity in their style. This painter is known for brightly colored birds in many of his works. He was active c. 1525-1550, but nothing more is known about him. In a 1948 article Max Friedländer, the scholar of Flemish Art, identified 15 paintings that were clearly done by this man. One is a portrait of a boy with a parrot, so he called him *der Meister mit dem Papagei* (the Master with the Parrot). The name stuck, and this artist has been known as such ever since.

Richard R. Losch+

A Word from the Editor

Now that the CDC has released us from obligatory masking, many have chosen to shed the three-ply masks that have separated us from one another for so long, yet offers protection to others. Many, on the other hand, have chosen to continue wearing them, and that may be a good choice. Unfortunately, by our very human nature we all often tend to wear another three-ply mask that separates us from one another, but that threatens danger to others rather than offering protection. That is the mask of greed, selfishness and dishonesty. Jesus taught us to shed that mask, but many choose to continue to wear it, and that is not a good choice. By virtue of our being Christians we are morally obligated to do everything in our power to shed that mask and drive it out of our lives. Because we are human it is not easy to do so, but little that is worthwhile is easy. Our obligation extends beyond that, however. As Christians we have also chosen to accept the role of leadership, and thus we are bound by more than just the responsibility for our own moral rectitude. It is our Christian duty to help (but not force!) others to rise to a higher level of morality and charity. This we can do in many ways, but by far the most effective is by setting a shining example of how a Christian should live. People will pay far more attention to what they see us do than to what they hear us say. If we shed our separating masks of human frailty

and show the world the face of generosity, selflessness and truth, then we will truly have made the world a better place. More importantly, we will have fulfilled our duty as Christ commanded us, to love one another even as he loved us.

Father Rick Lock+

Parish Directory

Copies of the updated Parish Directory are available on the table in the vestibule. If, as you are using your directory you discover an error, please give the corrections to Hiram Patrenos in writing or by e-mail to patrenoj@bellsouth.net. The Parish Directory will be updated again in December.

Hiram Patrenos

Offerings and Gifts

All things come of thee, O Lord, and of thine own have we given thee. Amen. We appreciate all those who continue to mail their offerings and gifts. Checks may be mailed to:

St. James' Episcopal Church
PO Box 446
Livingston, AL 35470
ATT: Treasurer

St. Alban's Episcopal Church
c/o PO Box 1422
Livingston, AL 35470

Hiram Patrenos

Forward Day by Day

The new *Forward Day by Day* daily devotional booklets for May, June and July are available on the table in the vestibule. In addition to the small booklets we have large print editions available. Please feel free to take either size.

Hiram Patrenos

Altar Flowers

Volunteers are needed to provide Altar Flowers. A signup chart is located in the vestibule. For more information, please speak with Carolyn Patrenos.

Hiram Patrenos

Thanks to Deep South Landscaping

Thank you to Jason Gordy and his crew from Deep South Landscaping for their work in trimming the shrubbery at the church, parish house and rectory and also for donating and planning the summer plants in the prayer garden.

Hiram Patrenos

Eve's Children

According to the Book of Genesis, at the creation God commanded Adam and Eve, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" (Gen. 1:28). They had no children before the fall and their expulsion from Eden. Their first child was Cain, and then Abel was born. When they had grown to be young men Cain murdered Abel, and was cursed and expelled, leaving no one to carry on the line of Adam.¹ It must have occurred to Adam and Eve that God's command to multiply was not being fulfilled. Finally Seth was born, and all mankind is descended from him.

The names of Cain and Seth carry a significant statement of the development Eve's relationship with God, but unfortunately this is completely lost in translation. The original Hebrew readers would have recognized it immediately. In Hebrew the name Cain is *Kayin* (קַיִן), which means something that has been acquired or produced. "Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, 'I have produced a man with the help of the Lord'" (Gen. 4:1). Here the focus is on Eve, saying that even though it was with the help of God, it was she who produced her son. By the time Seth was born Adam and Eve had gone through a lot. Their two sons had

¹ Cain fathered Enoch (Gen. 4:17) and through him had many descendants, but since that line was cursed, in the eyes of the writer[s] of Genesis that did not count.

grown up, one had murdered the other and had been cursed and driven out. They were alone again, surviving by hard labor and travail. The couple had started out like innocent children in Paradise, and had now matured in both wisdom and understanding.

When her third son was born Eve named him Seth. In Hebrew this is *Shet* (שֵׁט), meaning appointed or provided.¹ She said, “God has appointed for me another child instead of Abel” (Gen. 4:25). This time God is the focus, not Eve. She saw the birth of Cain as her action with the help of God. By now she had come to realize that the birth of Seth was God’s action through her. This is a significant change in her view of things, and thus of her own spiritual growth.

The whole allegorical narrative of the creation of man and the growth and development of his relationship to God is a powerful one, and should be a guide in our own spiritual growth. Our understanding of the subtleties of the story can be a very helpful tool.

Richard R. Losch+

A Touch of Trivia

You may think you are right on top of things, but maybe not so much. When you look at Neptune in a telescope, you are viewing it as it was about 4.16 hours ago, because that’s how long it takes for the light to travel the average 2.7 billion miles from Neptune to Earth. The light you see reflected from Neptune is actually light that left the sun 8.55 hours earlier because it has made a round trip.² As close as we are to the sun, the sunlight that falls on you left the sun 8.3 minutes earlier. Even as close as the moon is, it takes 2.51 seconds for its reflected light to reach us. Light travels at a speed of 186,282 miles per second (670,615,200 miles per hour). Many of the stars you see at night may have burned out long ago. They are so far away that the light we see left them billions of years ago, and we are seeing it only now. Looking at the sky is looking at history.

Richard R. Losch+

¹ From the Hebrew verb *lashit* (לָשִׁיט), to appoint or to provide.

² That includes the 8.3 minutes that the light took to leave the Sun and pass Earth on its way to Neptune.

Be Wordly Wise

Epistle

Today the word “epistle” is usually considered little more than a synonym for “letter,” albeit a bit more formal. It comes from the Old English *epistol*, which derives from the Old French *epistle* (Modern French *épître*). That is from the Latin *epistola*, letter, which in turn comes from the Greek *epistolē* (ἐπιστολή), message, letter, command or commission (according to its context). The Greek derives from the prefix *epi-*, in its secondary meaning of to (rather than upon), and the verb *stellein* (στελλειν), in its secondary meaning of to dispatch or send. An epistle, therefore, is a message that is sent to someone. The Old English *epistol* is also the source of the word *pistol*, a device that sends a bullet to its target.

The word epistle is akin to the word apostle, which is derived similarly except with the prefix *apo-* (απο-), off or away from. An apostle is one who is sent away to preach and teach.

Richard R. Losch+

Babel to Pentecost

In Genesis 11:1ff we read the allegory of the founding of Babylon and the building of the Tower of Babel. The people of the world were all united and of one language, yet they were united in defiance of God rather than in peace and submission to him. They decided to build a tower that would reach into heaven. The traditional interpretation of this is that after the Flood they decided to build a tower high enough that it would be a safe haven above the surface of the water if God should flood the world again.¹ In order to stop the project, God con-

¹ In the center of ancient Babylon (“City of Babel”) there was a huge unfinished tower that was undoubtedly the source of this legend. There is no record of exactly what it looked like, but it was probably a ziggurat. A ziggurat is a type of stepped pyramid that was found all over the ancient Middle East. It was built as a holy place, and on its top was a temple. A ziggurat was also the centerpiece of every city in ancient Central America.

founded them by giving each man a different language. Since they could not talk with one another, they spread around the earth, each family speaking a different language.¹ This allegory not only explained to the ancients why there are separate nations and languages, but it also teaches the important truth that communication is essential to understanding and harmony.

On the Jewish feast of Pentecost (*Shavuoth*) following the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus, the Disciples were gathered together in Jerusalem in obedience to one of Jesus' last commands to them. They were a pathetic lot, frightened and confused, and with no idea what to do next. Suddenly the Holy Spirit came upon them and deposited in their hearts and minds the whole Truth of the Christian Faith as it was to be presented to the world. This does not mean that they immediately became knowledgeable theologians. Nevertheless in them, and thus in the Church, was deposited everything needed for salvation, and the wisdom, strength and courage to continue to grow in an understanding of it. Peter, who shortly before had been as confused and frightened as the rest of them, then went out and faced the hostile grown of pilgrims in Jerusalem and preached a sermon so powerful that more than three thousand accepted his teaching and were baptized that day (Acts 2:1ff). Peter would have had a working knowledge of Greek, as most Jews with any modicum of education in his day did, but he undoubtedly preached in the vernacular of the time, which was Aramaic.² From Passover through Pentecost every year the population of Jerusalem almost tripled with Jewish pilgrims from all over the known world, and most of them spoke their own national languages and did not understand Aramaic. Although Peter preached in Aramaic, the pilgrims all heard him in their own native languages. When they realized this they marveled,

¹ Etymologists can trace no connection between Babel and the English word "babble." Apparently the similarity of the words is coincidental.

² Aramaic is a Semitic language that is very close to Hebrew, and was the common language throughout the ancient Middle East at that time. Hebrew by that time was used only in synagogue worship and by scholars.

of course. With the gift of the Holy Spirit, Babel was undone.

Several years ago, I was the assistant priest in a parish in Raleigh, NC. In that parish there were people from all over the world. Every year on Pentecost, at the reading of the lessons, we would have people read the passage from Acts (2:1-27) in a multitude of languages, all at once, after which it would be read again in English. The cacophony of all those languages at once was a reminder of what it must have sounded like at Babel. I thought it was a great lesson, but long after I had left Raleigh it dawned on me that that was not at all what it was like on Pentecost. While there was a babble of languages on the streets of Jerusalem, once the crowds gathered to hear Peter speak that was gone. Rather than a divisive din of different languages, there was a mutually binding harmony—everyone heard the message clearly in his own tongue, and thus they were all unified in hearing the one Gospel. It was the undoing of the separation of Babel, and the beginning of the re-unification of mankind in the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

The secular world is doing all in its power to restore the divisiveness of Babel. This has even affected the earthy branch of the Church, which is torn and bleeding with division, heresy and corruption. As Christians, it is our calling to fight for the unity and harmony that was restored to the world and made available to us on Pentecost. Christ gave us the Holy Spirit, and promised that he would guide us to all truth—not that he would hand us the truth, but that he would guide us to it. The Holy Spirit has given us the tools we need, and the ability to seek the Truth in harmony. Now it is we who must do the work.

Richard R. Losch+

H. G. Wells got into his time machine and arrived in 2021. He asked a man, “What is the most exciting thing about the 21st century so far?” The man pulled out his smartphone and said, “With this device I can access all the recorded information known to man.” Wells said, “That’s amazing! What do you do with it?” The man replied, “I look at pictures of cats and argue with strangers.”

July Birthdays . . .

- 6 Madelyn Mack
- 7 Meredith Underwood Shah
- 8 Cameron Baldwin
- 13 Chris Thompson
- 14 Lindsey Moore Thompson
- 16 Carl Sudduth
- 27 Ethel Garth Scott
- 29 Mira Muñoz



. . . and Anniversaries

- 8 Charles & Linda Muñoz



August Birthdays . . .jv

- 8 Garland Scott
- 12 Harris Marks
- 25 Joe Moore



. . . and Anniversaries

- 27 Mitesh & Meredith Shah



Ancient Roman Names

In almost every ancient European society free people had two names.¹ They had a given name and a second identifier that usually indicated their father's name (Simeon bar-Jonas, Simon the son of John), their place of origin (Patroclus of Locris), or their profession (Alexander the Coppersmith). This was also the case in early Rome, but as the society became more complex during the evolution of the Republic, the Romans developed a naming system that was simple yet effective. The most important social unit to a Roman was his *gens*. This is usually translated family, but a more accurate concept of *gens* would be clan or tribe. Most free Romans could trace their *gens* back many generations, and this was an almost inflexible determiner of the individual's social status. A subdivision of the *gens* was the *familia* (family), most of whom lived in the same household under the iron-handed rule of the *paterfamilias* (literally, family father), who was always the oldest male in the household.² The top social echelon was that of the Patricians. These claimed to trace their *gens* back to one of the original few dozen men who established Rome under the monarchy of Romulus himself. It was even better if you could trace it back even further to one of the men who landed in Italy with Aeneas, the royal fugitive from Troy. One of the noblest families in Rome were the Julii (the *gens* Julius), of which Caesar was a member. They allegedly traced their ancestry directly back to the Trojan hero Aeneas, who was the son of the prince Anchises and the goddess Venus. Not a bad blood line.

¹ In most societies, slaves had only one name. If they were free and then were enslaved (such as war captives), they were given a single new name and were not legally allowed to use their old names. Even if they were later freed, as often happened, they had to take the name of their former master, and were not allowed to revert to their old pre-enslavement names.

² The power of the *paterfamilias* was absolute. He literally had the power of life and death over those in his household. He decided who could marry whom, and what the males in his household could do for a living. He even decided which babies born into his household would be allowed to live. Most did not abuse their power, but some were despicable tyrants.

During the Republic, until the about last century before its fall in 31 BC, male Roman citizens had two names, a *praenomen* (a given “first” name) and a *nomen* (the name of their gens). Most free men had these two names, although many in the lower classes still used the old system (Marcus of Picenum or Lucius the Stonecutter). Women did not fare as well. They had only one name, but we will deal more with that below. On the eighth day after a Roman child was born, it was brought before the *paterfamilias*, who was seated, and placed on the floor in front of him. If he picked the child up, it was officially recognized as a member of the family, and if it was a boy the *paterfamilias* gave it a praenomen (a girl’s name was automatic). If he got up and walked away, the baby was killed.¹

The names that were given were fairly standardized. It was rare that the praenomen was not one of a list of sixteen that were almost universally used.² Of these, each family usually chose from a list of only three or four. This tradition helped distinguish families. For example, Gaius Julius Caesar’s family of the gens Julius almost exclusively used the praenomen Gaius, Lucius or Sextus. If someone had the name Publius Julius, even though he might be of the gens Julius, the aristocracy would know that he was not of the family of the Caesars.

Most upper-class Romans also had a family nickname, the *cognomen*. These were usually descriptive names, and were often humorously insulting. Many Romans had a Don Rickles type sense of humor, however, and laughed at these names and actually bore them with pride. One of the founders of the Republic in the early days was physically deformed. He was Marcus Junius, and had the cognomen Brutus (animal-like). Nonetheless, his family proudly kept that cognomen for centuries. It

¹ It could be killed on the spot, but more often it was “exposed.” It was taken outside the city and left for wild animals to kill. Often such infants were rescued by members of the lower classes and raised as their own.

² These were Appius, Aulus, Decimus, Gaius, Gnaeus, Lucius, Manius, Marcus, Numerius, Publius, Quintus, Servus, Sextus, Spurius, Tiberius and Titus. The most common name by far was Gaius.

is ironic that Marcus Junius Brutus was a founder of the Republic, and his descendant Marcus Junius Brutus was Caesar's chief assassin, who sealed the doom of the Republic. Some other *cognomina* of important families were Ahenobarbus (red beard, Nero's family), Strabo (cross-eyed, Pompey's family), Bibulus (drunkard), Cicero (chick-pea), Claudius (cripple)¹ and Caesar (full-mane). The last two are ironic. Claudius was an ancient Roman cognomen, yet the emperor of the gens Claudius actually was crippled. Caesar means full-maned, yet Julius Caesar was balding and was very sensitive about it. Occasionally some men took a fourth name, an *agnomen*, which was a second nickname. Pompey, after his fabulous military victories, was called *Magnus* (the Great) by his troops and the populace. That became his *agnomen*, so he was Gnaeus Pompeius Strabo Magnus. After Scipio defeated Hannibal he was known as Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus (Africa-conqueror).

During most of the Republican era (c. 510-31 BC) the cognomen was strictly a family affair, and was rarely recorded as part of a man's legal name in official records. By the last century of the Republic, however, it was not only considered part of the name, but was often used alone. For example, Julius Caesar's grandfather, who was also Gaius Julius Caesar, would have been addressed as Gaius Julius, never as Caesar (to have called him Caesar would have been considered quite rude). Only his most intimate friends would ever call him just Gaius. Before they were officially recognized as adults, boys were addressed by just their praenomen. By Caesar's time, however, it was common to address men by just their cognomen. In AD 212 the emperor Caracalla granted full Roman citizenship to all residents of the Empire. Soon thereafter the Roman naming customs faded, and names of all sorts became common again.

Adoption, even of adults, was very common in ancient

¹ Claudius could be either a nomen or a cognomen. The gens Claudius (that of the emperor Claudius) was super-noble, almost as high as the gens Julius. There was also a cognomen Claudius, that in earlier Latin was spelled Clodius, that meant crippled.

Rome. If a man were adopted he took his adoptive father's name. Added to that was his own nomen, usually with *-ianus* attached to it. For example, Gaius Julius Caesar's grand-nephew was Gaius Octavius Thurinus. When Caesar adopted him (posthumously in his will), he became Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus. He was known as Octavianus (Octavian) until the Senate awarded him the title Augustus (Majestic) when he became emperor. Thereafter he was known simply as Augustus.

As we mentioned, women did not fare as well in their names. The only name a woman normally had was the feminine form of their nomen. For example, a girl of the gens Livius was called Livia. If she had a sister, she was also Livia. The first two would be referred to as Livia Major and Livia Minor, and after that they were just numbered (Livia Tertia, Livia Quarta, etc.). Sometimes they might be called by a nickname (such as Livilla, Little Livia), but even these were uninspired. Octavian's sister, who married Marcus Antonius (Marc Antony), was Octavia. When a woman married she often took the feminine form of her husband's nomen.¹ Augustus's wife, of the gens Livius, was Livia until she married her first husband, Drusus. She then became Drusa. After she divorced him and married Augustus she could have become Julia, but they broke with tradition and she was commonly known as Livia Drusilla.

Slaves had only one name, which was given by their owner. By far the most common slave name had a rather sardonic tone to it. It was Felix, Happy. Slaves were often freed by their masters, but they could never fully break the tie with their previous owners. When they were freed, by law they had to take their ex-master's name along with their own. Cicero was Marcus Tullius Cicero. He freed his beloved slave and secretary Tiro, whose legal name thereafter was Marcus Tullius Tiro.

Richard R. Losch+

¹ Octavia refused to use the name Antonia when she was married to Marc Antony, especially after his numerous extra-marital affairs, most notably with Cleopatra. Notwithstanding, their daughter, the emperor Claudius's mother, was Antonia Minor (she had an older sister, Antonia Major).

Nicodemus the Pharisee

Nicodemus is an important character in the story of Jesus, although the only place we find him in the Bible is in the Fourth Gospel. There has been much conjecture about him over the centuries, so first let us consider what we actually know.¹ His name is Greek (Νικόδημος), although that does not mean that he was Greek. The Hebrew form of the name is *Naqdimon* (נִקְדִּימון). By Jesus' time, as a result of Alexander the Great's conquest, the Greek culture had had a powerful influence on all Middle Eastern cultures. Greek was the *lingua franca* of the entire civilized world. Every educated Jew could speak it, and many Jews, even though they rejected most of the Greek culture, used Greek names (the names of the Apostles Andrew and Philip are Greek). Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a member of the Jerusalem Sanhedrin (Jn. 3:1).² As such, he would have been a very powerful man. Jesus called him "a teacher of Israel" (Jn. 3:10), indicating that he was not only well educated, but also a teacher of other Pharisees. We know that he was wealthy, because he contributed a hundred pounds of very expensive spices for the embalming of Jesus (Jn. 19:39). Finally, he spoke in defense of Jesus in the Sanhedrin, indicating not only that he had a position of influence there (Jn. 7:50f), but also that he sought to be just and reasonable.

From these facts, we can flesh out a realistic picture of Nicodemus the man. For the most part, the Pharisees were not at all warmly disposed to Jesus, considering him a rebel, irreverent, and a troublemaker. Part of Nicodemus' responsibility as

¹ As for conjecture, by far the most popular episode in the first season of the video series *The Chosen* was the one in which Nicodemus meets with Jesus. The series is very faithful to the Bible, but "fleshes out" many of the stories by adding fictional events surrounding the Biblical accounts. To the credit of the producers, these fictional portions are completely consistent with the stories and their meaning as the Bible presents them.

² Every city had a Sanhedrin (City Council), but that of Jerusalem was extremely influential over the Sanhedrins of other cities. It was in effect, although not officially so, the ruling body of all Judea.

a “teacher of Israel” would have been both to defend the teachings of the Torah and to uphold the ancient customs against any dissidence or blasphemy. The fact that he sought to meet with Jesus indicates that he was at least somewhat familiar with his teachings, and that he had heard of and perhaps seen his miracles. Rather than simply dismissing him as a renegade or persecuting him as a threat, he wanted to learn more about him by meeting him face to face. He was apparently already favorably disposed to hear what he had to say, since he addressed him as Rabbi (Teacher), and said that he knew he came from God, because no man could do what he had done without having God with him (Jn. 3:1ff). He was also concerned about protecting his own reputation. He met with Jesus at night, obviously secretly. We do not know whether he feared actual retribution from his colleagues on the Sanhedrin, or simply wanted to avoid a lot of questions about why he wanted to meet Jesus. It would seem, however, that he was at least partially convinced that Jesus might indeed be the Messiah or at least a great prophet. Otherwise there is no reason for him to have defended him or contributed to his burial. It is entirely possible that he was a secret financial contributor to Jesus’ ministry.¹ He also would have been at least middle aged to have achieved his rank and authority, so we know he was not a young man.

Nicodemus may have been a secret follower ever since his meeting with Jesus. Some early Christian traditions believed he was. In a scene in *The Chosen*, when Nicodemus almost goes with Jesus and the Apostles but cannot quite bring himself to do so, Jesus says sadly, “You came so close.” It is entirely possible that he really did come close to becoming an Apostle.

Richard R. Losch+

¹ We tend to think of Jesus and the Apostles as living in complete poverty, and in one sense they did. They had to eat, however, and would have had many other expenses, including contributing to the poor. We know they had several financial supporters (Lk. 8:1ff), including Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and probably Lazarus, and it is reasonable to think that Nicodemus could also have been one of them.

A Touch of Trivia

White Chocolate

So-called white chocolate is not really chocolate at all, but in the past few years it has become a popular confection, and is an ingredient in numerous recipes. There are many imitations of white chocolate that go by that name, but the true product contains only pure cocoa butter, milk solids and sugar, and may contain lecithin and vanilla. False white chocolates are made with saturated vegetable oil or a mixture of oil and deodorized cocoa butter, and contain other chemicals as preservatives, hardeners and flavoring. The real thing contains only the three main ingredients and is yellowish, not white, as that is the color of pure cocoa butter. It can also be quite expensive, but most consumers believe that it is worth the extra money.

Historians are not sure of the origins of white chocolate, but the consensus is that it was invented in 1936 by Nestlé, the Swiss chocolate manufacturer. They had produced powdered milk for military use during World War I, and after the war, when there was little demand for it, they were stuck with tons of it in storage. Also, after extracting cocoa powder from the cocoa bean, a byproduct is cocoa butter. While this was in some demand in other industries, they still had a large surplus of it. Some genius at Nestlé got the idea of mixing the two with sugar and selling it as candy. It was an instant success. What started out as a way to avoid losing money on surplus materials became a sizeable and very profitable industry.

Richard R. Losch+

The Epistle is Online

The last eight years of *The Epistle* are online. Go to <http://rlosch.com> and click on the “Epistle” tab at the top. On a mobile device, click on the blue menu at the top right and select the “Epistle” page. You can read it online or download it as a .pdf file. This is an easy way to share articles with others.

Richard R. Losch

James and John—Jesus’ First Cousins?

Although the Bible says many things very clearly, it also provides us with many clues from which we can, with a little common sense and reason, deduce a great deal more than is actually stated. If we look at all the information that the gospels give us, there seems to be a strong likelihood that the Apostles James and John were actually Jesus’ first cousins, and if so they may have all known each other since childhood. We deduce this from what Matthew, Mark and John tell us about the women who remained with Jesus at his crucifixion.

Matthew tells us that James and John were the sons of Zebedee (Matt. 4:21f), but he does not name their mother. However, he identifies three women as being at the crucifixion: “Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee” (27:56).¹ Mark, on the other hand, identifies the women as “Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome” (Mk. 15:40). While not conclusive, it is reasonable therefore that Salome and the mother of the sons of Zebedee could be the same person. Turning to John, he tells us that “near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas,² and Mary Magdalene” (Jn. 19:25). While John is the only one who says that Mary the Mother of Jesus was there, no biblical scholars doubt her presence. It is usually interpreted that Matthew and Mark did not bother to mention her because it was so obvious that she would have been there.

Now what are the reasonable conclusions we can draw from the identifications of the three women at the cross? Since Mary

¹ Jesus had two disciples named James. James the Greater was the son of Zebedee and brother of John, and James the Less (the Patron Saint of our parish) was the brother of Joseph (not Jesus’ foster father). The epithets “Greater” and “Less” refer to their relative ages, not to their importance.

² Some wrongly interpret this as meaning that his mother’s sister was Mary the wife of Clopas. Although the Romans gave all the girls in a family the same name, by the Jewish naming customs there is no possibility that Mary’s sister would also have been named Mary.

Magdalene is names in all three, there is no doubt of her identity. The other three pairs are Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee (Matthew); Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome (Mark); and his mother's sister, and Mary the wife of Clopas (John). The conclusions that we can draw, then are that Mary the mother of James and Joseph is the same as Mary the wife of Clopas; that Salome (not the dancer) and the mother of the sons of Zebedee are the same person; and that therefore she and the sister of Mary the Mother of Jesus are one and the same. This would mean that Salome, the mother of James and John, was the Virgin Mary's sister. That makes her Jesus' aunt, so her sons James and John would be his first cousins.

Zebedee's family lived in Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee, and Jesus chose to make his home there after he was rejected from Nazareth (Matt. 4:13). Capernaum is 30 miles from Nazareth, which would be about a two days' walk. This would not have been considered a terrible distance by the standard of the time (the Holy Family walked 90 miles to Jerusalem at least twice during Jesus' childhood). Family meant everything to the Jews, so it is likely that that Mary, Joseph and Jesus would have visited Zebedee's family several times, and thus that Jesus, James and John knew each other from childhood. Since Peter and Andrew were business partners with James and John, it is also reasonable that Jesus knew them as well, at least as adults.

The first Apostles called were Andrew, Peter, James and John. If they and Jesus knew each other before the beginning of his public ministry, the story of their call becomes more realistic. For four successful fishermen to give up everything they had, abandon their father, and follow a total stranger would mean either that Jesus had unimaginable charisma, or that he used his divine power to turn their wills. Neither is consistent with Jesus. On the other hand, if they already knew him and believed that he was the promised Messiah, it makes sense. He said to them, "Now we begin. Follow me." They did so with the blessing of Zebedee, who knew this day was coming.

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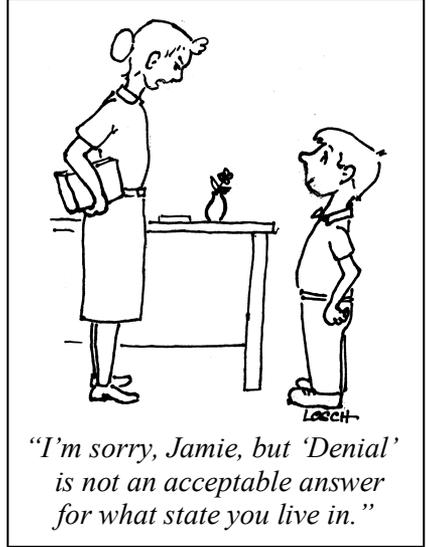
A Touch of Trivia

Wisconsin is known as the Badger State, but not because it has a lot of those flat furry animals. In the early 19th century lead was discovered there, and mining it turned out to be a very profitable industry. Miners poured into the territory by the thousands. At first most did not have shelter, so when the winter approached they dug holes into the ground like badger holes to sleep in, and lead miners came to be known as Badgers.

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