

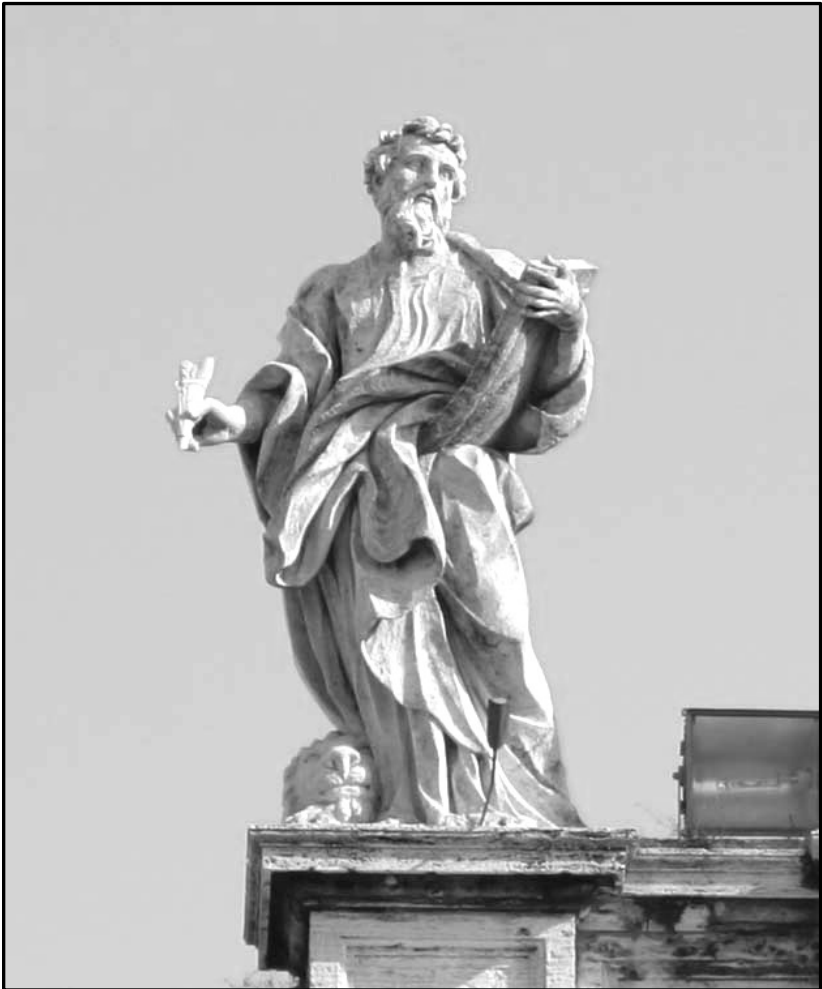
# THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church  
Livingston, Alabama



Volume XXIV, Number 4

April 2017



April 2017

## *This Month's Cover*

Our cover this month, in honor of the Feast of Saint Mark the Evangelist on April 25, is Lazzaro Morelli's statue of St. Mark in St. Peter's Square in Rome. It stands over the entrance to the North Colonnade with the statues of Saints Mary of Egypt, Ephraim and Theodosia, along with the coat of arms of Pope Alexander VII, who commissioned the entrances to both colonnades. The group was sculpted by Morelli between 1661-1666. St. Mark was the first to be completed, in 1662. Morelli was assisted by Bartolomeo Cennini, who received the final payment for the statue in 1663. It is 10'4" tall, and is carved from a block of travertine. St. Mark is in the act of writing his gospel, with a tablet in his left hand and a Roman stylus in his right. Recumbent at his right foot is his symbol, a lion. There are over 140 statues of saints on the North and South Colonnades of St. Peter's Square, 45 of which were sculpted by Morelli. This grouping is particularly important, however, because it is elevated over the north entrance. There is a similar group over the south entrance, for which Morelli sculpted St. Catherine of Siena.



Lazzaro Morelli (1619-1690) was born Piceno in northern Italy. His father was the Florentine sculptor Fulgenzio Morelli. He came to Rome as a young man to study under Francesco Fiammingho (François Duquesnoy), but when he had an opportunity to study under the genius Gian Lorenzo Bernini he transferred to his studio. Morelli worked at the height of the Italian Baroque period. He was responsible for a number of famous statues in Rome, including the angel on the Ponte Sant'Angelo, and a significant part of the Fontana del Quattro Flumi (the Fountain of the Four Rivers). He also participated in the sculpting of two magnificent tombs, those of Pope Alexander VII and Pope Clement X.

*Richard R. Losch+*

## ***A Word From the Editor***

The Gospel reading for the First Sunday in Lent is the story of Jesus' temptation by the devil. Jesus had been in the wilderness fasting for a very long time, and was famished. The first temptation was to use his divine power and turn the stones into bread. The second was to cast himself off the highest point of the Temple and thus, being unharmed, prove to all who might doubt that he is indeed the Son of God. And the third was to use his divine power to force the whole world to love and serve him. Jesus, of course, refused all three temptations, quoting Scripture to Satan as the rebuttal to each.

When the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity took humanity upon himself as Jesus of Nazareth, this was not God coming among mankind in the guise of a man, as Jupiter seduced Leda in the guise of a swan. He took upon himself total humanity, from conception to death. This included all that goes with being human, including pain, emotion, suffering, and the ability to sin. Even though he is still God, he was also every bit as human as you or I. He resisted sin without calling upon any power that is not also available to each of us by the grace of God. The fact that he was capable of sin and yet did not sin convicts us, because it shows that if he in his humanity and without the use of his divine power could resist sin, then so can we. The problem is that we are too weak to do so.

The temptation that the devil offered to Jesus is the same that is regularly offered to us—the easy way out. It would have been easy to get food by calling upon his divine power; it would have been easy to convince the world that he is God by impressive miracles (this is why when out of compassion he performed miracles, he usually told them not to tell anyone); it would have been easy to force the world to love and

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obey him, but that would have been slavery, not love. Instead, he chose the hard way—his death upon the Cross.

As we move through Lent and on with our lives, we should examine ourselves regularly to be sure that we are not choosing the easy way instead of the right way. Unfortunately, the right way is rarely easy, especially in today's amoral society. Notwithstanding, God calls us to righteousness, not to ease. Pope Benedict XVI said, "The world will give you comfort, but you were not made for comfort. You were made for greatness." If we seek that greatness now without concern for how uncomfortable it may be, we will have unimaginable comfort for the rest of eternity in the Glory of God.

*Father Rick Losch*

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## ***Be Wordly Wise***

### ***Words of Lent***

Since we have now entered into Lent, it is appropriate to consider the origin of some of our Lenten terms. The name of the season derives from the Old English *Lenten*, Spring, which in turn derives from the Old German *lenten*, long. Although the origin is unclear, it is probably a reference to the lengthening of the days in Spring. *Lenten* is probably also the origin of the English word lengthen.

During Lent we abstain, which comes via the Old French *abstenir*, from the Latin *abstinere*. That word is the combination of *ab-*, from, and *tenere*, to hold. In many dialects there is only a fine distinction between 't' and 's' (many British pronounce Peter as Pea-sir). It was easy, therefore, for the 's' to sneak into *abstinere*. The extreme of abstinence is fasting, from the Old English *faestan*, to fast, which in turn comes from the Old Norse *fasta*, to starve.

At the end of Lent we focus on the Passion of Christ. This use of passion does not mean ardor or extreme emotion, but rather suffering. This comes from the Latin *patior* (participle *passus sum*), to suffer. That is derived from two Greek words,

*pascho* (πάσχω), to suffer, and *pathos* (πάθος), suffering or loss. That is related to *Pascha* (Πάσχα), Passover, which comes from the same root as the Hebrew *pesach* (פסח), Passover. *Pesach* also derives from a root that means suffering, referring to the suffering of the Egyptians at the deaths of their firstborn on the first Passover.

One word that is used all year long but that is especially prominent in the last week of Lent is “holy.” That comes to us from the Greek *holos* (ᾠολος), whole or complete. That which is holy is that which is complete and has total integrity. This is also the root for the German *heilig*, which eventually became the Old English *halig*, holy, and finally developed into *hallowed*, sacred.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***A Touch of Trivia***

The name of the dandelion has nothing to do with being dandy. It comes from the French *dente de lion*, lion’s tooth (although in France it is called *pissenlit*). This weed grows in almost every country in the world, so there is a name for it in almost every language. In Danish it is *løvetand*, in German *Löwenzahn*, in Norwegian *løvetann*, in Portuguese *dente de leão*, in Italian *dente de leone*, and in Spanish *diente de león*, all of which mean the same thing, lion’s tooth. In almost every other language, including, surprisingly, Dutch and Swedish, which one would expect to be similar to German, the plant has a great variety of completely different names.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***Fifth Sunday Community Service***

The 5th Sunday Community Service this month will be hosted by St. James’ on Sunday, April 30th at 11:00 a.m. Please make your plans to attend and support this Livingston tradition.

*Hiram Patrenos*

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## ***Easter Flowers***

Each year St. James' Church offers the opportunity to remember loved ones through donations to the Altar Guild, which provides the lilies and altar flowers in the church for Easter services. If you wish to make a donation for this – In Memory of, In Honor of, or In Thanksgiving for – envelopes with forms are available at the back of the church or you may print this information clearly and mail it along with your contribution to Carolyn Patrenos, President, St. James' Altar Guild, Post Office Box 399, Livingston, Alabama 35470. Checks should be made payable to St. James' Altar Guild. Because of the increased costs for these flowers, we ask for a minimum donation of \$25.00 for memorials. Publication deadline for inclusion in the Easter bulletin is Wednesday, April 12th. Your donation is tax deductible.

*Hiram Patrenos*

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## ***Special Services for Holy Week and Easter***

The Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday – On Sunday, April 9th, our observance of Passiontide will begin with the celebration of the Liturgy of the Palms and Holy Communion at St. James' at 11:00 a.m.

Maundy Thursday – St. James' will observe this day with the traditional Holy Communion and Stripping of the Altar beginning at 6:00 p.m.

Good Friday – St. James' will observe this day with the Liturgy for Good Friday and the Mass of the Presanctified beginning at 5:00 p.m.

Easter Day – The Community Sunrise Service will be hosted by St. Francis of Assisi Roman Catholic Church at 6:30 a.m. at the Livingston Civic Center. St. Alban's will celebrate Easter with Holy Communion beginning at 8:30 a.m. St. James' will celebrate Easter with Holy Communion beginning at 11:00 a.m.

*Hiram Patrenos*

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## ***Binding and Loosing***

Jesus said to Peter, “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 16:19). He later said the same thing to the rest of the disciples (Matt. 18:18). The Roman Catholic Church teaches that he thus gave this power to the bishops through Peter (thus through the Pope) as the supreme authority, while the Anglican and Orthodox Churches teach that it was given to all the bishops in council under the leadership and guidance of Peter as the first among equals.<sup>1</sup>

The question rises, however, of just what this power is. It is often interpreted to mean that the Church is given the power to bind Satan and to loose people from their sins through absolution. If we go back to the culture of Jesus' time, however, we see that this is a completely erroneous interpretation. It had nothing to do with the devil or with absolution of sin. When Jesus used these words his listeners would have known exactly what he was talking about, because the phrase “binding and loosing” was a common technical legal phrase in the Jewish culture in those days. To bind meant to pass a law banning or forbidding something, and to loose meant to give statutory permission for something. The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus describes the authority that Queen Alexandra vested in the Pharisees as the authority to become “the administrators of all public affairs, empowered to banish and readmit whom they pleased, as well as to loose and to bind” (*Jewish War* 1:110). What Jesus gave the disciples, and thus to their descendants the bishops, was the authority to legislate for his Church. They have the power to make rules for the governing and organizing of the Church, and to allow or forbid teachings and actions in the ecclesiastical community.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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<sup>1</sup> In the Anglican and Orthodox Churches, while they hold the Bishop of Rome in high regard as the successor of Peter, they impute no more authority to him than that which is held by any Patriarch of the Church.

## *The Man With a Water Jar*

When Jesus told the disciples to go into Jerusalem and prepare for the Passover (the preparation for the Last Supper), he told them, “As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters” (Luke 22:10). In modern society we might never notice that this was a very unusual thing. Carrying water was strictly a woman’s job in ancient Palestine. It would be a very rare man, even if he had no wife, who had no women about him (even a servant) to carry the water. The only exception to that would have been a member of the Essene sect. This was a sect of men who led a celibate monastic life in order to devote their whole attention to God.<sup>1</sup> Being celibate, they would have carried their own water. Jesus may have been saying in effect, “When you enter the city you will see an Essene. Follow him.”

One of the obligations of the Essenes was to provide hospitality to strangers. This involved particularly the provision for strangers to observe important religious events such as Passover. Jerusalem was overcrowded with pilgrims at Passover, so arrangements would have to be made long in advance in order for anyone to have a place to observe the Passover meal. Many scholars believe that Jesus had a close relationship with the Essenes, even to the point that he may have visited Essene communities for retreat. It is entirely possible that he had contact with an Essene in Jerusalem who was able to make arrangements for them for the Passover meal. It is also traditional that the meal took place in the home of the mother of the disciple John Mark, who is credited with writing the Gospel that bears his name.<sup>2</sup>

*Richard R. Losch+*

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<sup>1</sup> It is generally believed that the Dead Sea Scrolls were the library of an Essene community that lived in the Qumran desert. While some Essene communities allowed marriage, they were very few.

<sup>2</sup> It is also believed that Mark was the young man who fled the garden when Jesus was arrested (Mark 14:51).



## ***My Old Kentucky Home***

If you move to Kentucky you had better be prepared to bathe at least once a year. A state law that mandates people bathe at least once in twelve months is just one of many unusual statutes that are on the books. Another state law states that “No female shall appear in a bathing suit on any highway within this state unless she be escorted by at least two officers or unless she be armed with a club.” The law was later amended with: “The provisions of this statute shall not apply to females weighing less than 90 pounds nor exceeding 200 pounds, nor shall it apply to female horses.”

*From <http://themillennialmirror.com>*

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## ***The Samaritans***

The Samaritans are an ethno-religious group of Hebrews whom the Jews consider heretics and outcasts, and who see the Jews as the same. They were large in number in Jesus' time, primarily in Galilee. They still exist today, but now they are mainly found in the West Bank and near Tel Aviv. In Jesus' time there was an intense antipathy between Jews and Samaritans, to the extent that they would not even speak to each other unless it was absolutely necessary. Their sacred writings are in a variation of the language known as Samaritan Hebrew, which the Jews consider to be something of a primitive Hebrew, but is probably much like what was spoken by the Israelites in the time of King Saul. In Samaritan Hebrew they call themselves *Shamerim* (שמרים), while in Hebrew they are called *Shomronim* (שומרונים). In Arabic, which most of them speak today, they are called *al-Samariyyum* (السامريون). All of these terms mean “Guardians [of the Law].” After the breakup of David's United Monarch of Israel in 922 BC, there were two Jewish nations—Israel in the north, and Judah in the south. Jerusalem was the capital of the southern kingdom of Judah, and in about 870 BC King Omri built the city of Samaria as the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel. Thereafter the Samaritans, who rejected

Jerusalem as their holy city, claimed that the center of their faith was Samaria,<sup>1</sup> while the Jews retained Jerusalem as the center of Judaism. At some point, and it is unclear when, the Samaritans started claiming that Moses did not receive the Law on Mount Sinai, but rather that it was given to Joshua on Mount Gerizim in the West Bank after Moses' death. To this day there is an annual Samaritan festival on Mount Gerizim to celebrate this event.<sup>2</sup>

The Samaritans claim that the religion they follow is that which was observed in Israel and Judah before the Exile, and that was practiced by the Jews who remained in Palestine while the rest were taken into exile Mesopotamia. There is no doubt that there was a major reform of Judaism led by Ezra and Nehemiah after the return from the Exile, and that there were strong Mesopotamian and Persian influences on the Jewish culture after their return. On the other hand, those who were left in Palestine during the Exile were the uneducated masses, who were left in a devastated land with no significant political or religious leadership. Under these circumstances any culture or religion is subject to being corrupted. The northern kingdom of Israel, whose capital was Samaria, had already sunk into terrible socio-economic polarization long before their defeat by the Assyrians, and their religion had been badly corrupted with often outrageous pagan practices. After the fall of the southern kingdom of Judah to the Babylonians a little over a century later, the decay of Israel swept through the remaining people in Judah, corrupting their culture and religion as well. What the Samaritans practiced,

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<sup>1</sup> King Omri bought the land on which to build the city from a man named Samar, so he named the city Samaria after him. Samar's name means "Guardian." It is simply coincidence that the Samaritans ("Guardians of the Law") and the name of the city of Samaria, which they took as their holy city, have the same linguistic root.

<sup>2</sup> The Jews celebrate the feast of *Simchat Torah* ("Rejoicing in the Law") every October on the 23rd day of the Jewish month of Tishri. It commemorates the giving of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai. This year it will start at sundown on October 11.

therefore, was, as they claimed, the Judaism of the people who remained in Palestine during the Exile, but it was a badly distorted version of the Judaism of the pre-Exilic Jews. Ezra's reforms were not so much to change Judaism as to purify it of its Mesopotamian and Persian influences and of the distortions that had crept into Palestinian Judaism.

The Jews' rejection of the Samaritans was justified on the grounds that their religion was corrupt and misguided, much as the majority of Christians reject the distortions of such extreme groups as snake-handlers and the likes of the Westboro Baptist Church. It was very significant that Jesus in his parable chose to use a Samaritan as the most righteous man, and that the only time he directly declared himself to be the Messiah (other than just implying it or not denying others' declarations) was to a Samaritan woman (John 4:26).

In A.D 529 and 555 the Samaritans revolted against their rulers, the Byzantine (Eastern Roman) Empire, and brief but bloody reprisals ensued from each revolt. During these revolts the numbers of Samaritans were drastically reduced, and have never recovered. A 2015 census revealed only 777 left, divided mainly between a group living in the village of Qiryat Liza on Mount Gerazim in the West Bank, and in Holon, a city near Tel Aviv. Their secular language is Arabic, and their liturgical language is Samaritan Hebrew written in a Paleo-Hebrew alphabet. They are legally considered a separate religion in Israel, and most Muslims hold them in contempt. Today the Jews and Samaritans are considerably more tolerant of each other than they were in ancient times. Although they are not common, there are occasional conversions from Samaritanism to Judaism or vice versa, usually because of marriages. The popular Israeli TV star Sofi Tsedaka was born a Samaritan in Holon, and converted to Judaism at age 18.

*Richard R. Losch*

*I decided to stop calling the bathroom the John and renamed it the Jim. I feel so much better saying I went to the Jim this morning.*

## *The Love of God*<sup>1</sup>

In the New Testament there are at least 25 passages (and at least 5 in the Old Testament) that clearly state that God loves mankind even though he hates sin. The classics, of course, are John 3:16, “God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son to the end that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” and 1 John 4:16, “God is love.” He may hate the sin, but he still loves the sinner. The very foundation of Christianity is God’s love for us, his forgiveness of the repentant, and our response in loving him.

It is only on the most basic level that we can say that Christians and Jews worship the same God as Muslims. One of the major differences between Christianity and Islam is that Islam, unlike Christianity, does not teach the love of Allah for all mankind. The Qur’an has 16 verses that declare whom Allah loves.<sup>2</sup> Nowhere does it state that he loves mankind,<sup>3</sup> although it contains dozens of passages identifying whom Allah does not love. We do not point this out as a condemnation of Islam, but to belie the common myth that we all worship the same God with just a few little differences in how we go about it. The Judeo-Christian and Islamic concepts of God are very different. John Ashcroft was once asked what he believed to be the difference. He said, “Islam worships a God who expects you to give your sons to die for him. Christianity worships a God who gave his Son to die for you.” That pretty well sums it up.

Jews and Christians believe that God judges and condemns sinners, but because of his love he will place before them eve-

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<sup>1</sup> Reprinted and emended from the May 2015 *Epistle*.

<sup>2</sup> Those who do good (2:195, 3:134, 3:148, 5:13, 5:93), those who fear him (3:76, 9:4, 9:7), the just (5:42, 49:9, 60:8)), the righteous (19:96), the pious (85:14), the repentant (2:222), the steadfast (3:146), and those who rely on him (3:159).

<sup>3</sup> The closest to that is 11:90, which says, “My Lord is most merciful, most loving.” There are no other passages that imply that love for mankind is a major attribute of Allah.

ry opportunity to repent and turn to him and thus be forgiven. It grieves him when some choose to reject him. Islam teaches that Allah sent the prophet Muhammad to show the way, and those who reject his teachings anger Allah and are damned. The extremists (who do not represent the majority of Muslims) go so far as to teach that Allah wants them to kill any who reject him. This may be some twisted form of justice, but it is not love.

The Mosaic Law forbids Jews from cursing anyone. They have come up with a powerful curse that does not violate this law: "May God deal with you with justice." Islam believes that God is just. While it extols his mercy, it teaches that this mercy stems from our submission to him, not from his love for us. Judaism and Christianity teach the love of God for mankind, and that his love manifests itself in mercy and forgiveness to all who repent of their sins and strive to obey him. Christianity expands on this, teaching that God *is* love.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***The Intercession of the Saints***

You may have heard of an old practice of burying a statue of Saint Joseph in the yard when you are trying to sell a house in order to guarantee a successful sale. The custom goes on to say that you should dig it up when the house is sold in order to reward the saint for helping you. This and similar practices are called "deprecation of the saints." They are thoroughly idolatrous and are soundly condemned by the Church. A similar practice deals with Saint Anthony of Padua, who is among other things the patron saint of those who have lost something. His deprecation involves putting a bag over the head of his statue or hiding it in a closet, not letting him out until the lost article has been found. It is common in Mexico to place a statue of the Blessed Virgin out in a hot arid place during a drought, or in a river during an overly rainy period, in order to encourage her to stop the bad weather. All such practices are idolatrous, as they impute a consciousness to the statue. They are actually rooted in ancient pagan Greek and Roman

practices of the ignorant people of those times. Unlike the more primitive peoples of the time, the educated Greeks and Romans knew that their images were merely representations of the gods, and they did not attribute any power to the images themselves. The ignorant, however, treated the statues as if they were the real gods.

In Christianity, images of saints serve as nothing more than representations of those saints as a means of focusing our thoughts and prayers on the laudable attributes of the saints themselves. Statues, icons, stained-glass windows and paintings are merely teaching tools that help tell a story or remind us of an event or person, and connect us to that person. They have absolutely no power of their own.

The Church has no problem with requesting the intercession of the saints, and in fact it encourages it. The accusation is sometimes made that we pray to the saints when we should pray only to God, but this is a false accusation. I don't know of any Christian who is uncomfortable asking for the prayers of friends. When someone you love is sick, you want as many people as possible to pray for him. We ask for the prayers of our friends when we are in trouble, when we are trying to get a new job, when we have to make an important decision, and so on and on. If my friends' prayers have power, would not the prayers of the saints in Heaven have at least as much power? I have heard people object, "But they are dead!" Oh? These are often the same people who say such things as. "I felt my mother smiling down on me when my baby was born." If the mother is still living, then why would you say that Saint Francis or the Blessed Virgin Mary are not?

Never underestimate the power of prayer, and do not hesitate to ask for the prayers of the saints. They are not gods and they have no more supernatural power than God has given any of us, but their prayers are certainly as powerful as those of any of us—and as they have now reached a state of heavenly perfection, probably considerably more so.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***Hate Your Father and Mother***

We tend to shudder when we hear Jesus say, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26). This is a most unfortunate mistranslation that has troubled people for centuries. The Greek work that is usually translated “hate” is *misein* (μισειν). It also means “dislike,” but that is not particularly comforting, either. However, from passages in the Old Testament and its ancient Greek translation, there is no question that the word Jesus used was the Aramaic (and also Hebrew) *sonah* (שנא). Unfortunately, there is no Greek or English equivalent to it, so it is very hard to translate. What it means essentially is “love less than.” We read in Malachi 1:3 that God loved Jacob and hated Esau, yet in many passages in the Old Testament God blesses Esau (Gen. 33:9) and warns against anyone who attacks his descendants (Deut. 2:4f). Also, we read that Jacob hated Leah yet we also read that he loved her, but not as much as he loved Rachel (Gen. 29:31).

It is patently clear that what Jesus was saying to his disciples is not that they should hate their parents, but that if they are to be his followers they must love God more than anything else, including their own family or their own lives.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***The Epistle Is Online***

The last four years' issues of *The Epistle* are online. Go to <http://rlosch.com> and click on the Epistle tab at the top, then click on the issue you want to see. You can read it online or download it as a *.pdf* file.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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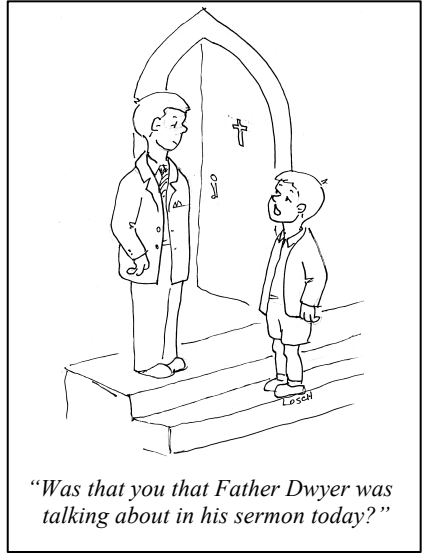
Rabbi Hillel (1st century BC) said, “Say not, ‘I will study [my faith] when I have the time to study,’ because you will never have the time to study!” You must *make* the time to study.

Don't Forget  
 INTERFAITH  
 MEN'S  
 BREAKFAST  
 APRIL 2  
 7:45 A.M.  
 Mark your Calendar

LIVINGSTON FIRST  
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JAMIE

by Richard R. Losch



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