

THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church
Livingston, Alabama



Volume XXIV, Number 7

July/August 2017



July/August 2017

This Month's Cover

In honor of the Feast of St. Augustine of Hippo on August 28, our cover this month is a detail of *Saint Augustine and the Child on the Seashore*, attributed to Giuseppi Bonati (1635-1681). Completed at an unknown date in the late 17th century, the full painting is horizontal, oil on canvas, c. 5'7"x4'3". It is in a private collection and is not on public display.

Saint Augustine¹ (A.D. 354-430) was the Bishop of Hippo Regius in North Africa. He had been studying and meditating for years on the Doctrine of the Trinity, and was preparing to write a treatise on the subject. It was his custom to walk along the seashore as he meditated. According to an ancient legend, one day he saw a little boy playing in the sand. He had dug a hole and was running back and forth to the sea, filling a seashell and pouring the water into the hole. Augustine asked him what he was doing. He replied, "I'm putting the sea in this hole." Augustine said, "Don't be silly, child. You can't put that immense sea into that little hole." The boy said, "Neither can you put the immensity of the Holy Trinity into your little mind," and vanished. Some say that the little boy was Christ, and others that it was Augustine's tutelary angel. Saint Augustine, originally an atheist, is one of the intellectual and spiritual titans of the development of Christian theology.

It is not known for certain who actually painted this work, but Francesco Petrucci² proposes that it was the Ferrarese painter Giuseppe Bonati, and most art critics agree. Bonati, also known as Giovanni Bonati, was the protégé of Cardinal Carlo Pio de Savoia, so he was widely known as Giovannino del Pio. He worked primarily in churches in Venice and Rome, although he also did several works under the patronage of Queen Christina of Sweden. Bonati was a very fine artist, but he is not ranked among the great masters.

Richard R. Losch+

¹ The saint's name is pronounced Saint Au-gus-tin, while the city in Florida is pronounced Saint Au-gus-teen.

² Petrucci (1958-) is a highly regarded Italian architect and art historian.

A Word From the Editor

For years I have been hearing dire predictions that the End Times are imminent, and that all the signs mentioned in the Bible are here to prove it. Claims are made that climate change is evidence, and as the Bible says, there are wars and rumors of wars, and that there are more earthquakes and volcanic eruptions than ever before. It is true that the climate is changing—but it has been continually changing ever since there was a climate four billion years ago. It is also true that there are wars and rumors of wars—but the earth has not been without war since the first troglodyte clans battled each other over territory a hundred thousand years ago. On the other hand, it is not true that there are more earthquakes and volcanic eruptions than ever before. They come and go in cycles. Their numbers are quite normal, and indicate that nothing has significantly changed for at least thousands of years.

There is a branch of theology known as Eschatology, which studies the End Times (the Eschaton). With the exception of a tiny fringe group, there is one thing on which all eschatologists of all faiths agree, and that is that we do not and cannot know when the end will come. Jesus told us the signs in order that we might know *that* it is coming, not *when*. He told his disciples that it is not given even to him or to the angels in heaven to know when it will happen (Mk. 13:31f). It is therefore arrogant and sinful for us to think that we can determine when in history it is going to happen. It could be this afternoon, and it may not be for millions of years.

Eschatologically, it is far more important for us to concern ourselves not with the end of the earth or the universe, but with our own end in this world. Death, judgment and the ultimate destiny of our soul are very real and personal concerns.

The Epistle is published monthly except August by Saint James' Episcopal Church, P.O. Box 446, Livingston, AL 35470-0446, the Rev. R. R. Losch, Editor, email rlsch33@gmail.com, Phone 205-499-0968. Copyright © 2017 Richard R. Losch. Permission is granted to reproduce text items in parish newsletters or bulletins (but not on the Internet or digitized) as long as they are reproduced completely and in print, and credit is given.

We can muse about the collapse of the cosmos and paint profound mental images of the heavens splitting and Christ returning in glory, but when we bring it down to our own lives and remember that we are talking about heaven or hell, it suddenly becomes a very different matter. The reason Jesus talked about it at all is that it is essential that we be prepared. We have no idea when it will come, and when it does it will be too late to prepare. Don't wait for the End Times. If we live every moment of our lives as if we knew it were our last—and it could be—then when our time does come we will stand before Christ in joy, not in fear.

Father Rick Losch

Annual Parochial Report Statistics for St. James'

	2015	2016
Total Active Baptized Members	32	32
Total Communicants in Good Standing	29	29
Average Sunday Attendance	23	24
Easter Sunday Attendance	33	33
Total Sunday Holy Communions	49	50
Total Weekday Holy Communions	2	3
Private Holy Communions	0	1
Daily Offices held on Sunday	2	2
Daily Offices & Weekday Services	6	4
Burials conducted	1	0
Marriages conducted	0	0
Baptisms under 16 years of age	1	0
Confirmations 16 years & older	1	0
Confirmations under 16 years of age	2	0

Annual Parochial Report Statistics for St. Alban's

	2015	2016
Total Active Baptized Members	4	4
Total Communicants in Good Standing	4	4
Average Sunday Attendance	6	9
Easter Sunday Attendance	N/A	N/A
Total Sunday Holy Communions	12	10
Total Weekday Holy Communions	0	0
Private Holy Communions	N/A	N/A
Daily Offices held on Sunday	0	0
Daily Offices held on Weekdays	0	0
Burials conducted	0	0

Be Wordly Wise

Grave Language

The first think that comes to mind when we hear the word grave is the place in which we bury the dead. This word came into English from the Old German (also modern German) *Grab*, which has the same meaning.¹ That came into German from Latin *gravis*, heavy. Some argue that the word grave as a burial place came from the Middle French *graef*, which also derived from *gravis*. The concepts of heavy and deep are very closely related in many languages (modern slang uses both “heavy” and “deep” to describe something that is very serious or important). The adjective grave, meaning serious (as in grave danger), derives from the same root. The Latin root *gravis* has flowered into a large number of English words. One is gravity, from the Latin *gravitas*, heaviness. The word *gravitas* is commonly used in politics to mean depth of character or seriousness. Also deriving from *gravis* is the word *aggravate*, to make worse in the sense of to make heavier. Another derivative is the Middle English *greve*, to be sad, from which we get *grieve*. In Middle English *gravis* also evolved into the verb *grafen*, to dig or to carve, from which we get the words *graven* (as in a graven image) and *engrave*. All in all, the Latin *gravis* is a deep and heavy word.

Richard R. Losch+

Parish Directory

Copies of the updated Parish Directory are available on the table in the vestibule/narthex and in the parish house. If, as you are using your directory you discover an error, please give the corrected information to Hiram Patrenos in writing or by e-mail at patrenoj@bellsouth.net. The Parish Directory will be updated again in November.

Hiram Patrenos

¹ As we have pointed out in the past, the letters (and sounds) *b* and *v* and of *v* and *f* are often interchangeable in linguistics.

July 4 Evening Prayer and BBQ Supper

On Tuesday, July 4th, Independence Day, we will have a service of Evening Prayer at 6:00 p.m. with a barbeque supper following in the parish house. Pulled pork barbeque will be furnished. Signup sheets for baked beans, salads, buns/bread, deserts, other items, and tea are posted on the bulletin board in the vestibule/narthex as well as a sheet for those planning to attend (so that we may know how many to plan for). So that we may know how much barbeque to order, you are asked to sign up no later than Thursday, June 29th. As always, there will be plenty of good food and fellowship. Please make your plans to attend.

Hiram Patrenos

Altar Flower Volunteers

Volunteers are needed to provide altar flowers through the season following Pentecost. 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 the church. They also donated and planted all of the flowers in the prayer garden. We appreciate their hard work and generosity.

Hiram Patrenos

Community Fifth Sunday Service

The Fifth Sunday Community Service this month will be hosted by the Livingston First Presbyterian Church on July 30th at 11:00 a.m. Please make your plans to attend and help to continue this unique Livingston tradition.

Hiram Patrenos

The Sacred Number Seven

The number seven occurs in the Bible hundreds of times as a number, as lists of seven things, or as sevenfold occurrences. God rested on the seventh day after creating the universe; Joshua marched seven times a day around Jericho for seven days; seven pairs each of clean animals and one pair each of unclean animals were brought into Noah's ark (Gen. 7:2); it took seven days to bring the animals into the ark (7:10); Jesus refers to himself with the phrase, "I am" seven times in John's Gospel; there are seven spirits before the Throne of God (Rev. 1:4). Even to this day it is a powerful and to some a mystical number. We still talk about the seven sacraments and the seven seas, the seven liberal arts and the seven deadly sins, and we note that the Big Dipper has seven stars. Even in dice seven is either a winning or a losing number depending on the circumstances. In ancient times the number seven was sacred not only to the Jews, but also throughout the whole Middle East. It was believed to indicate divine perfection. Although it is not entirely clear why, ancient writings give some indication. It is the sum of two other sacred numbers, three and four, both of which were symbols of perfection (and thus of wholeness or completion). The triangle is the simplest of all the geometric polygons, and the square is balanced in all directions. Also, while seven is not the first prime number, it is the first prime that cannot be counted on one hand, and it is the last that can be counted on both. For tens of centuries the primary symbol of the Jews was the seven-branched candlestick, the Menorah, which was a very important furnishing in the Temple. Even today the Menorah is second only to the six-pointed star, the so Star of David,¹ as a Jewish symbol.

The Hebrew word for seven is *sheva* (שבע). This is tied to

¹ The Star of David or Solomon's Seal, although very old, does not go back to the time of David or Solomon, but only to about the 6th or 7th century BC. It was never a uniquely Jewish symbol until the Jews started migrating back to Palestine in the late 19th century AD and adopted it as the symbol of Zionism. Today it is the central device on the Israeli flag.

shevuah (שבועה), oath. Jews were forbidden to swear on the Name of God,¹ so they would swear on the sacred number seven (“Let the holy number seven be my witness”). To take an oath on seven times seven was equivalent to swearing on one’s own life, and seventy-seven was equivalent to infinity.² The Hebrew *Shabbat* (שבת), Sabbath,³ is also rooted in *sheva* (seven) and thus in *shevuah* (oath). The Sabbath is the seventh day, but it is also a recognition of the obligation (oath) to serve and worship God. What we call Pentecost is in Hebrew *Shavuoth* (שבועות), the Festival of Weeks or the Festival of Oaths. This feast falls fifty days after Passover (in Christian usage fifty days after Easter).⁴ If we do not count the Day of Passover (or Easter) itself, however, it is the forty-ninth day (seven sevens or seven weeks). This is obviously not just a coincidence (Lev. 21:15ff). In Judaism it is the affirmation of the obligation (oath) of the Law, because the Israelites arrived at Mount Sinai, where the Law was given, fifty days after leaving Egypt.⁵ In Christianity it is the celebration of the giving of the new understanding of the Law with the creation of the Church by the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Richard R. Losch+

¹ “Thou shall not take the Name of the LORD thy God in vain.”

² “Then came Peter to Jesus and asked, ‘Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother who sins against me? Up to seven times?’ Jesus answered, ‘I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times’” (Matt. 18.21f).

³ In Judaism any important holy day is a Sabbath, even if it does not fall on the seventh day. Every seventh day (Saturday), however, is a Sabbath.

⁴ Thus the name Pentecost, which comes from the Greek word for fifty. Long before the Christian era most of the world’s Jews spoke Greek and read their scriptures in Greek (the Septuagint).

⁵ Traditionally, dairy products are eaten on *Shavuoth* (a particular favorite is cheesecake). The reason is that the meat that the Israelites had at Sinai was prepared before the Law was given, and was therefore not *kosher* (ritually clean) once they had the Law. Until meat could be properly prepared, therefore, all they could eat was grain and dairy products.

Into Your Hands...

Jesus quoted the Psalms twice when he was on the cross. He cried, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” This is the opening of Psalm 22, which concludes with the acknowledgement that despite our trials God does not forsake us. Just before he died, Jesus said, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” (Lk. 23:46). This is a quote from Psalm 31:5, and is a prayer that every Jewish child was taught to say before going to sleep. It is the equivalent of our traditional “Now I lay me down to sleep” prayer. The word in that Psalm that we translate “commit” (KJV “commend”) is the Hebrew *afkid* (אפקיד). Although there is no real English equivalent, a clearer translation would be “deposit.” In Hebrew *afkid* does not mean simply to hand something over, it means temporarily to submit something into the care of another with the full expectation of getting it back. Jesus was clearly declaring that his death was not the end, but only a temporary caesura. When he said “It is finished” he was not referring to his life, but to his mission. His earthly job was finished. He was not.

Richard R. Losch+

Rebuilding the Temple

In about 950 BC King Solomon built the first Temple in Jerusalem, and soon thereafter it became the center and source of unifying strength for all of Judaism. It was the only place where sacrifices could be officially offered. The Babylonians destroyed it in 587 BC, and after Cyrus the Great released the exiled Jews about 45 years later, Zerubbabel rebuilt a smaller and simpler Temple out of the rubble of Solomon's. In about 20 BC Herod piece by piece tore it down and replaced it with a Temple that was reportedly even more magnificent than that of Solomon. This was the Temple that stood in Jesus' time. In AD 70, in retribution for a series of Jewish rebellions, the Roman general Titus (later to become emperor) razed Jerusalem and in fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy, leveled the Temple, leaving “not one stone upon another.” All

that survived was the western retaining wall that supported the Temple Mount, which still stands today (the so-called “Wailing Wall”). From then on no Jewish animal sacrifices were offered, the hereditary Levitical priesthood faded into obscurity, and Rabbinic Judaism began to flourish.¹

Today many dream of rebuilding the Temple, restoring the Levitical priesthood, and reinstating the sacrifices as required in the Old Testament Law. To many others this is a horrifying prospect for many reasons, and the vast majority of both Christians and Jews are strongly opposed to the movement, considering it to be extremist or fanatic. In the first place, for it to be a valid Temple it would have to be built on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, Mount Moriah, on the sacred rock upon which Abraham prepared to sacrifice Isaac. Currently at that spot stands the 1400-year-old Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, the third most sacred place in all of Islam.² To build the Temple there would require destroying the Dome and the mosque. Not only would that be a barbaric act, as it is one of the most beautiful structures of late antiquity, but to do so would unquestionably ignite World War III between the Islamic states and most of the rest of the world. Were that to happen the holy site itself, along with the rest of Jerusalem, would be destroyed.

There is a handful of extremist Jews who dream of rebuilding the Temple, and are willing to risk whatever it takes to do so. The vast majority of the world’s Jews, however, want no

¹ Rabbinic Judaism is Judaism led by rabbis (trained teachers) rather than by the hereditary Levitical priesthood that controlled it from the time of Aaron up to the destruction of Herod’s Temple. Although there were rabbis in ancient times, they did not have the authority or influence that was held by the Levitical priests before AD 70. Modern Judaism, while in many ways quite different from the Judaism of the first century AD, is still rabbinical. Jesus, whom many called Rabbi, was crucified in AD 33, so the priests were still in control in his time.

² The first is Mecca, Muhammad’s birthplace, and the second is Medina, where Muhammad’s forces finally destroyed Arabian paganism and established Islam as the state religion.

part of this. Not only do they know the horrors that would be let loose on the world if it were tried, but even more they recognize that Judaism has evolved and changed significantly over the past 3200 years, and they believe that this evolution is part of God's plan. Judaism as practiced by Moses, King David, Ezra and Nehemiah, Jesus, and Maimonides, while basically the same faith theologically, differed greatly in practice and ritual in each of those eras. Each era was a preparation for the next, all in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. The end of the era of animal sacrifice and the development of the era of Rabbinic Judaism is, in the eyes of most Jews, a stage in the natural course of events in their faith, and is fully in accord with God's plan as revealed through the Law and the Prophets. They are thus content that while Jerusalem is the Holy City and the capital of Israel, the Temple itself is a revered thing of the past and need not be restored.

There are also extremist Christian sects who want to rebuild the Temple. Their reasoning is not only heretical, it is insidious. They believe that they can force God's hand and bring about the Second Coming of Christ by igniting a worldwide holocaust,¹ and they know that any attempt to rebuild the Temple would cause this. This is a benighted mentality not unlike that of the Westboro Baptist Church, and it is condemned and rejected by the vast majority of Christians.

Christians believe that it was not mere coincidence that the destruction of the Temple and the advent of Christianity were contemporaneous. It teaches that while we hold the Temple in the greatest of reverence, Jesus Christ and the Holy Church are the ultimate Temple of God, and there is no longer a need for a physical Temple on earth or for the continuation of animal sacrifice: "You, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sac-

¹ This is not unlike the belief of the "Twelvers," a fanatic Islamic sect that believes that the Twelfth Imam is waiting to return to earth and lead the whole world to submission under an Islamic state. In their belief, the only thing that will bring about his return is a worldwide holocaust.

rifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5). The incarnation of Christ is the building of the new Temple, the new House of God: “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father” (John 1:14). This is a clear reference to Solomon’s dedication of the first Temple, in which the glory of God overwhelmed the priests (1 Kings 8:11).

Should the Temple be rebuilt? It would be fascinating to see a full-sized re-creation of the Temple as a museum piece, but to rebuild it as the actual Temple of God would be terribly wrong. Not only would it elicit a global political catastrophe, but if Christians were to support it, it would be a heresy. To do so would be to deny the New Covenant.

Richard R. Losch+

Jerusalem

The Jebusites were a Canaanite tribe in the second millennium BC, during the period when the Israelites were trying to conquer Canaan. Canaan was not a nation, but a confederation of powerful city-states, much like Phoenicia. The Jebusite capital was Urusalim, a city ideally located on the west bank of the Jordan River. The city’s name meant “City Built by Salim.” We do not know who Salim was, but it is likely that he was the king who established the Jebusite city-state.

David united the northern and southern Israelite tribes and became the first king of the United Monarchy of Israel in about 1000 BC. He wanted as his capital a city that had not belonged to any Israelite tribe and that was located between tribal lands, so that no one tribe could have a claim over any other. Urusalim was the perfect location, but it was well defended, and was in the hands of one of the most powerful Canaanite tribes. David personally led a troop of highly trained commandoes through a water tunnel into the city, where he surprised and overcame the guards, opening the city gates to his army. They took the city, and David made it his capital (2 Sam. 5:6ff). It remained the capital of Israel and later of Ju-

dah for 1000 years until the Romans destroyed it and expelled the Jews in the first century A.D.¹

The first thing David did upon his victory was to rename the city Yerushalayim (ירושלים), which we pronounce Jerusalem. Although the two names sound much alike (which David obviously intended), they do not mean the same thing at all. Urusalim means City Built by Salim, while Yerushalayim means City of Peace or Peacefulness.

In Hebrew peace is *shalom* (שלום). This is a very interesting word. It has the same root as *lehashlim* (להשלים), to complete, and *leshelem* (לשלם), to pay. The clear implication is that to pay ones obligations and to complete one's endeavors is the surest road to peace of mind.

Richard R. Losch+

What's a Wiki?

This has nothing to do with religion (although there are several religious wikis), but I thought you might be interested to know what a wiki is. We are all familiar with Wikipedia and Wikileaks, but most people are not aware that there are hundreds of wikis on the Internet. A wiki is a website that allows its readers to add articles, or to edit material already on the website directly from their own web browsers. Some wikis allow editing only by registered members, but most, like Wikipedia, are public. A wiki uses a special computer language called a Wiki Markup that is able to read input from what is called text format. Text format is what you use when you type from your keyboard onto the wiki website. The word comes from the Polynesian *wiki-wiki*, which means quick.

Richard R. Losch+

¹ In 922 BC David's grandson Rehoboam lost control due to his tyranny. The United Monarchy broke into two kingdoms, Israel in the north and Judah in the south. David's dynasty survived as the kings of Judah, with Jerusalem as the capital, while Israel sank deeper and deeper into paganism. The Judea of the New Testament is the ancient kingdom of Judah, while Galilee and Samaria were remnants of the old kingdom of Israel.

Obeying God's Law

In today's society it seems to be perfectly acceptable to pick and choose which laws we want to obey and which we can ignore. We see this regularly, from the highest levels of government right down to our mundane daily experiences such as observing traffic laws, handicap parking places and "10 Items or Fewer" grocery lines. Unfortunately, we also often have this same attitude toward God's Law. We either ignore it altogether, or pick and choose cafeteria-style what we like to obey and what we decide does not apply to us. This is a dangerous game, however, because God's Law is neither archaic nor morally relative. It has been said that the greatest moral weakness of people today is treating the Ten Commandments as little more than the Ten Recommendations.

Are we then as Christians bound to obey the Torah, the Jewish Law? The answer is an unequivocal yes and no. That is not intended to be a wisecrack. The Law of God is the Law of God, and we are bound to it. Period. First, however, we need to take a look at what that Law really is, and what is meant when we talk about obedience to it. To both Jews and Christians the Law of God is not merely the collection of rules and requirements laid out in the Pentateuch. The Pentateuch is the first five books of the Old Testament (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). This is what the Jews call the Written Torah, but the Torah consists of vastly more than this. Literal obedience to it was the mistake made by the Pharisees, who were for the most part truly righteous and well-intentioned people. The Pharisaic sect was founded about 150 BC for the purpose of studying the Law in order to find ways to make it more accessible to the common people. By Jesus' time, however, they had lost sight of their original purpose. They sought to obey every jot and tittle of the Law as written in the Pentateuch. The reason Jesus (who was almost certainly a Pharisee himself) was so hard on them is that they were good people, but they had missed the point and he was trying to wake them up.

In a sense, the Written Torah is in fact a list of recommendations. From ancient times the Jews understood that the Law as written in the Pentateuch was a starting point, not the final word to be obeyed literally for the rest of time. The Law also consists of a vast collection of material that is called the Oral Torah. It is so called because it started as an oral tradition, although it is actually the written record of millennia of rabbinic discussion and analysis not only of the Written Torah, but also of earlier discussions and analyses. The Oral Torah consists of the Midrashim and the Talmud. The Midrashim are essentially commentaries on the Scriptures, while the Talmud is a collection of civil and ceremonial laws consisting of two parts, the Mishnah and the Gemara. The Mishnah is a collection of commentaries on the commentaries, and then commentaries on those commentaries. The Gemara is a commentary on the commentaries in the Mishnah! What this gives us is an astounding collection of the wisdom and insights of tens of centuries of the greatest of Jewish thinkers.

The written Torah, then, is the launching point for the Oral Torah, and this is entirely consistent with God's plan. He did not give us a neat set of rules to live by, thus freeing us of the accountability for our own decisions and actions. The three greatest gifts he gave us at our creation are life, intellect and freedom. We have the intellect to think for ourselves within the confines of the standards he set for us, but we also have the freedom not to think and not to obey (at our peril). This is what Jesus was talking about when he told us to live by the spirit of the law, not by the letter of it. Look to the letter of the law, from that discern what its spirit is, and then live according to that spirit. That does not mean that we are free of the law, nor does it mean that we are free to interpret it in any way that suits our taste. This is a great error that is in much of Protestantism. Freethinking does not mean thinking it out for yourself, it means thinking it out within the context of God's Will as revealed through the Church. Totally independent thinking has led to 43,000 different Protestant denominations, with 43,000 different interpretations of God's Law.

Very ancient Jewish practice required that there be at least ten people (anciently adult males) in order to have a formal worship service. This was called a *minyan*.¹ The reason for this was that public worship involved study and teaching of the Law, and there was less probability of error if at least ten learned men were able to discuss a point in question. It is also a very ancient tradition that a minimum of at least two, and preferably three or more people be gathered together whenever Torah is studied. The thinking was that a single person can study Torah for the joy of learning, but it can be interpreted only when it can be torn apart piece by piece and discussed. Jesus abolished the *minyan* when he said that when two or three are gathered together in his Name he would be in the midst of them. It is significant, though, that he said two or three, not one. We know Christ through the community of Faith—Christianity is not a “just you and me, Jesus” religion.

Does the Law, then, apply to Christians as well as to Jews? Yes, unquestionably so. Jesus said that “not one jot or tittle of the Law” shall be abolished. But he was not talking about the Written Torah, he was talking about the spirit of the Law as interpreted by groups of rabbis and through the councils of the Church over the generations, inspired by the Holy Spirit. No one scholar, no matter how brilliant or holy, can give an authorized interpretation of the Law. Hillel, Gamaliel and Maimonides were amazingly brilliant rabbis, yet none ever presumed to interpret the Law by himself. One of the greatest human minds of all time, Saint Thomas Aquinas, did not make any claim to have the final say in theology. His works were recognized and authorized as containing the truth by the councils of the Church guided by the Holy Spirit, and only thus are they the standards of the Church’s teaching.

We cannot support or condemn something simply on the basis of a passage in Scripture alone. For example, condemning homosexual practice simply on the grounds of a passage

¹ A *mimyan* is still required in Orthodox and some Conservative Jewish worship, but Reform Judaism does not require it.

or two from Leviticus is Pharisaism at its worst. To be justified in condemning the practice one must understand the spirit behind those passages.¹ This can be discerned only after much study, prayer and intellectual exchange with others who have also studied, prayed and discussed. As Christians we believe that the Holy Spirit, who Jesus promised would lead us into all truth, guides the Councils of the Church toward the truth.² Granted, our human weakness often leads us away from the ultimate truth, but we are far more secure in seeking it in community than as individuals, regardless of how intelligent we may think ourselves to be.

Are we then bound to the Old Testament Law? Yes and no. Yes, we are bound to its spirit because it is the Law of God and the reflection of the absolute universal truth of God. But no, we are not bound to it literally. That would be the easy way. We are bound to it by taking the responsibility for discerning its spirit, and submitting ourselves to that.

Richard R. Losch+

“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+

¹ The Church does not condemn homosexuality, it condemns homosexual acts. In other words, the Church does not condemn same-sex attraction, it condemns acting upon it. This is a very important distinction. In fact, the Church deems to be especially virtuous those who have such attraction, yet believe that it is a disorder and refuse to yield to it. In the same vein, being tempted to steal something is not a sin. The sin is in yielding to the temptation and actually stealing.

² Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would *lead* us to the truth, not that he would hand it to us on a silver platter. He will guide us and give us all the tools we need, but it is up to us use God's gifts of reason and intellect to discern the truth.

July Birthdays . . .

- 6 Madelyn Mack
- 7 Milburn ("Butch") Lamb
- 7 Meredith Underwood Shah
- 13 Chris Thompson
- 14 Lindsey Moore Thompson
- 14 Abby Rankin
- 16 Carl Sudduth
- 27 Ethel Garth Scott
- 29 Mira Muñoz



. . . and Anniversaries

- 8 Charles & Linda Muñoz



August Birthdays . . .

- 8 Garland Scott
- 12 Harris Marks
- 25 Joe Moore
- 26 Hannah Rankin



. . . and Anniversaries

- 27 Mitesh & Meredith Shah



SUNDAY SCHOOL IS IN RECESS UNTIL SEPTEMBER 10

SAINT JAMES' EPISCOPAL CHURCH LECTOR, ACOLYTE, AND USHER SCHEDULE July 2017				
	Old Testa- ment	New Testa- ment	Crucifer/ Acolyte	Ushers
2	Roy Underwood	Jim Rankin	Josh Rankin	Roy Underwood* Joe Moore
9	Madelyn Mack	Rosalie Dew	Hannah Rankin	Jimmy Collins* Josh Rankin
16	Jim Rankin	Mary Helen Jones	Josh Rankin	Joe Moore* Jimmy Collins
23	Ethel Scott	Hannah Rankin	Hannah Rankin	Jim Rankin* Roy Underwood
30	Fifth Sunday Community Service at First Livingston Presbyterian Church			
ALTAR GUILD: Ethel Scott				*Hand out bulletins and ring bell

SAINT JAMES' EPISCOPAL CHURCH LECTOR, ACOLYTE, AND USHER SCHEDULE August 2017				
	Old Testa- ment	New Testa- ment	Crucifer/ Acolyte	Ushers
6	Jim Rankin	Roy Underwood	Josh Rankin	Roy Underwood* Joe Moore
13	Rosalie Dew	Madelyn Mack	Hannah Rankin	Jimmy Collins* Josh Rankin
20	Mary Helen Jones	Jim Rankin	Josh Rankin	Joe Moore* Jimmy Collins
27	Hannah Rankin	Ethel Scott	Hannah Rankin	Jim Rankin* Roy Underwood
ALTAR GUILD: Candace Strickland				*Hand out bulletins and ring bell
<p>If you cannot serve on the day assigned, please exchange with another server and call Hiram Patrenos at 652-4210 as soon as possible.</p>				

Stiff Upper Lip

Perhaps one of the reasons the British ruled the world for so long was that they would not acknowledge that anything but victory was possible. In speaking about the Boer War in 1899 Queen Victoria said, "We are not interested in the possibilities of defeat. They do not exist."

We need to take this into consideration in our own spiritual lives. The devil cannot defeat us unless we let him.

Richard R. Losch+

JAMIE

by Richard R. Losch



Saint James' Episcopal Church
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