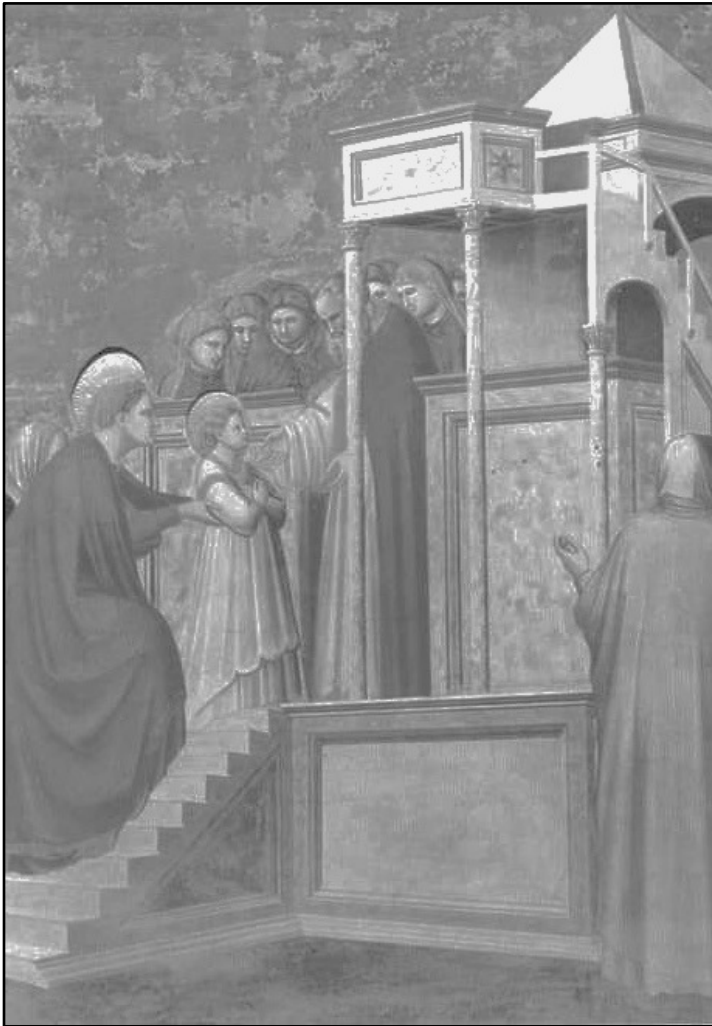


THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church
Livingston, Alabama

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February 2013

This Month's Cover

This month our cover picture is a detail from Giotto's *Presentation of Christ in the Temple*. It is one of over fifty of his frescoes in the Capella degli Scrovegni (also known as the "Arena Chapel") in Padua, Italy. It is toward the west end of the north wall of the chapel, near the ceiling. A fresco is a painting in watercolor on wet plaster. As the plaster dries the paint penetrates it deeply, producing rich color that does not fade. In places where there is not dampness or persistent high humidity, frescoes are very durable. Most of Giotto's frescoes are in a surprisingly good state of preservation considering that they are seven hundred years old.

Ambrogio di Bondone, called Giotto, was born in Vespignano, near Florence, in about 1267. At the age of ten his talent was discovered by Cimabue (Bencivieni di Pepo, 1240-1302), who was recognized as the greatest Italian painter of his time. Cimabue took him to Florence to study. Possibly his first work was in the baptistery in Florence. He became a Florentine citizen, although he also worked in Assisi, Rome, Padua, Milan and Naples. He was an immediate success, and became very prosperous. He married twice (his first wife died in childbirth). He supported eight children, and provided handsome dowries for two daughters. His workshop in Florence flourished, but only three oil paintings signed by him survive, and most art historians believe that they were mainly the work of his students. As such, he would have

signed them as something of a brand name for his workshop.

His most important works are the frescoes in the Capella degli Scrovegni in Padua, the Novicella mosaic in St. Peter's in Rome, his frescoes of the life of St. Francis at Assisi, the frescoes in Chiesa di Santa Croce in Florence, and the *Ognissanti Madonna*, now in the Uffizi in Florence. In 1334 he was appointed Master of Works for the cathedral in Florence. With the collaboration of the sculptor Andre Pisano he decorated the façade of the cathedral. It still bears his name, but it has been greatly altered since his time.

From 1335 until his death in 1337 Giotto worked in Milan. Little is known of the details of his life, although many legends were produced about him after his death. He was so highly regarded that for several decades "Giotto" was considered synonymous with "painter."

Dante described Giotto as the foremost painter of his time, replacing his teacher Cimabue. Posterity regards him as the single most powerful force in altering the course of painting in Western Europe. He marked the end of the Gothic and Byzantine styles, and paved the way for the Italian Renaissance. A hundred fifty years later Michelangelo studied Giotto's work and made copious notes on it.

Richard R. Losch+

The Epistle is published monthly except August by Saint James' Episcopal Church, P.O. Box 446, Livingston, AL 35470-0446, the Rev. Richard R. Losch, Editor. Phone 205-499-0968, email loschr@bellsouth.net. Copyright © 2013 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.

A Word from the Editor

Can Christianity Survive?

An aggressive and outspoken segment of modern society is doing everything in its power to destroy Christianity. The first wave is to push it out of the public forum, and the next will undoubtedly be a movement to suppress it altogether. The question is often asked today as to whether Christianity (or religion itself) can survive this onslaught. The answer is simple: Yes! Throughout history the Church has faced enemies who have sought to destroy it, and all they have ever accomplished is to strengthen it. Times are changing and the days of easy and socially acceptable Christianity may be on their way out, but the Faith will persist. As Bishop Fulton J. Sheen observed many years ago, we are watching the end of Christendom, but not the end of Christianity. Christianity is that Faith deposited once and for all time with the Apostles. It was given to us by God, and it is for all people. As the rabbi Gamaliel observed two thousand years ago, if it is of God it cannot be stopped, and if it is not there is no need to fight it because it will die by itself (Acts 5:33). Christendom, on the other hand, was that long period when the vast majority of Americans and Europeans claimed to be Christian, and the Church was a central focus of their daily lives. Christmas and Easter, despite their secular overtones, were acknowledged to be the celebrations of the birth and resurrection of Christ (not just winter and spring festivals), and public prayer was commonplace and expected.

The era of Christendom is disappearing, and it may be just as well. It was too easy to claim to be a Christian, and as a result we tended to take the Faith for granted. People went to church on Sunday because it was what one did on a Sunday morning, and everyone else expected it of them. The churches were full, but I wonder how many people, even some clergy, really understood what was going on there. There is a difference between going to church and worshipping God. One is a matter of routine, and the other is a conscious spiritual activity. All too often the twain do not meet.

Perhaps now that Christendom is dying we can get on with the business of Christianity. When we consider that the Church's mission is to save us from hell and bring us to everlasting life, we have to realize that this is serious business. The work of the Church is not to sponsor soup kitchens and promote social justice. These are only signs of the Faith, not its purpose. The work of the Church is to save souls. This requires prayer, an understanding of what the Church teaches, and a willingness to put those teachings into practice. To live up to those expectations requires discipline and a conscious attention to one's spiritual life. It takes very little effort to be a part of Christendom, but to be a Christian is hard work. It's good work, though, and the pay is extraordinary!

Father Rick Losch

Be Wordly Wise

Fardel

We know that our readers have been anxiously awaiting an explanation of the line in Hamlet's soliloquy, "Who would fardels bear/ to grunt and sweat under a weary life." A fardel is a package or burden. The word is archaic today, but was in common use well into the early twentieth century. It derives from the Arabic *farda*, "piece" or "pack."¹ It appeared in French during the Crusades as *farde*, whence came the diminutive *fardelle*. It appeared in English as "fardel" in about 1300, and remained unchanged for over six centuries. Some etymologists believe that the Arabic word was adopted in Western language as early as the ninth century as the Vulgar Latin *fardum*, "load." An archaic and primarily British derivative of it is *fardage*, "baggage."

In zoology, the fardel is the third pouch in a ruminant's stomach (properly known as the *omasum*). The usage is appropriate, as it acts as a separate "package" from which water is extracted from the fermented material before it is digested.

A verb, "to fard," re-appeared at the end of the twentieth century after having all but disappeared from English for two centuries. It means "to apply make-up." It is found in litera-

ture in the late eighteenth century, where it is used as a verb and also as a noun, *fard*, meaning white face-makeup. Originally it referred to the application of heavy makeup to hide blemishes or disfigurement of the face.² Its origin is obscure, although a relatively early term for a makeup kit was a "fardel-bag." It may have evolved from this.

The verb "to fard" is most often used today in indelicate double entendre jokes about women applying makeup in public.

Richard R. Losch+

An Ancient Prophecy?

The ancient Hebrew word for Arabia was (עֲרַב). Even though Arabia was to the southeast of Israel, 'arab meant "toward the darkening" or "toward the evening," and was often used to mean "west."

In ancient Hebrew writing there were no vowel symbols. They did not appear until the eighth century A.D., so it is sometimes difficult to be sure of what was precisely meant in the ancient texts. It is interesting to note that with a slight change of vowels (using the same three consonants, 'rb [עֲרַב]) the word 'arab can mean mix, meddle, sweet, darkening, evening, mongrel race, or swarm.

Richard R. Losch+

¹ In Islamic use, a *Fard* is one of the five religious duties. It is the individual's responsibility to God and to mankind. It is a concept similar to the Jewish *Mitzvah*, which is a righteous (and usually altruistic) act that brings a blessing on both giver and recipient.

² Fard was very stylish in Elizabethan times, when aristocratic ladies wore thick white makeup at court. It is reported that when Queen Elizabeth I died the fard on her face was so thick and hard that it cracked.

Shrove Tuesday

Our traditional Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper will be held on Tuesday, February 12th, from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. The donation for adults is \$5.00 and for children 12 or under is \$2.00. Take-out plates will be available. Please invite your friends and neighbors to join us for this traditional celebration of Mardi Gras.

Hiram Patrenos

Special Lenten Services

On February 13th our observance of Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, will be held at 12:05 p.m. with a service of Holy Communion and Imposition of Ashes. Please make your plans to begin your observance of the Lenten Season at this special service.

Hiram Patrenos

ECW Antique Alley Yard Sale

The Episcopal Church Women will have a yard sale in May during the Highway 11 Antique Alley Yard Sale. Everyone is encouraged to keep this in mind as they clean attics, storage buildings, and closets. Furniture is especially sought after during this sale and we will be happy to help you move any items you wish to contribute. If you have items to be contributed, please speak with Hiram Patrenos to make arrangements to get the items to our storage space.

Hiram Patrenos

Snowmen fall from heaven unassembled.

Merry Christmas!

No, we're not behind the times. It started at sundown last December 24 (it actually started two thousand years ago), but it isn't over yet. The *feast* is December 25 and the *festival* continues until sundown January 5; but the *season* isn't over until the Feast of the Purification ("Candlemas") on February 2, when we celebrate the ritual presentation of Jesus to God in the temple at Jerusalem. On that day the candles to be used in the church for the coming year are blessed, symbolizing the coming light of spring. The entire Christmas season, from December 25 to February 2, celebrates the entire sequence of events of Christ's infancy. So until February 2, Merry Christmas!

Richard R. Losch+

Nothing New

Sometimes we tend to think that our modern exotic medical problems are new. They are not. Archaeologists excavating a necropolis in Spain discovered the remains of a thirty-year-old woman who died sixteen hundred years ago. In her pelvis was a calcified tumor, inside of which were malformed bones and teeth. This is known as an ovarian teratoma (from the Greek for "monster swelling"), which is a tumor in the ovary that produces stem cells that can grow into human parts such as hair, bone and teeth. Ovarian teratomas are rare and benign, and one this was probably not the cause of the woman's death.

Richard R. Losch+

Shrove Tuesday, Mardi Gras and Pancakes

Shrove Tuesday, the last day before the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday, was a solemn day in ancient times. It was the day when Christians completed the final preparations for Lent. This preparation involved two main things. One was the cleansing of the soul by prayerful self-examination and the sacrament of Holy Penance (confession). The name of the day comes from “shrove,” which is the past tense of the archaic verb “to shrive.” To shrive means to hear confession, assign penance, and pronounce absolution. The penitent is then “shriven,” because the priest “shrove” him. It comes from the Old English *scrifan*, “to assign penance.”

The other part of the preparation was the removal from the home of all rich, sweet or fatty foods. Sweets and fat were considered luxuries, and were to be abstained from during Lent. In preparation for Passover, observant Jews removed all *treif* (non-kosher food) from their homes, including every possible trace of leavening. This was usually done by eating up as much of it as possible before Passover began. This custom was picked up by early Christians as they prepared for Lent, with regard to any foods that were deemed luxuries or delicacies. In time the process of eating up these foods became a festival that was commonly known as *Carnivale*, from the Latin *carnelevarium*, “the removal of meat.” Often people would gorge themselves on the last day to eat up

the last of the food just before they went to confession. The day came to be known as “Fat Tuesday,” which in French is *Mardi gras*.

In the last couple of centuries the celebration of Carnivale and Mardi Gras has become muted in many parts of the world, being observed primarily by a supper of sweet and fatty foods on Shrove Tuesday. The most common celebration is a supper of sausage, pancakes, butter and syrup. This has become a common event in churches throughout America.

Richard R. Losch+

Groundhog Day

Groundhog Day, February 2, is not completely a secular event. It is rooted in the ancient tradition that with the end of the Christmas season on Candlemas, winter is on its way out and we begin to look toward spring. The vernal equinox, the official beginning of spring, is about six weeks later on March 20. Since the church candles are blessed on Candlemas, an ancient superstition says that if the sun shines on that day it is a sign that the Devil is competing with the Church. That means that winter will hang on for six more weeks until the vernal equinox. If the sun does not shin, the Church is victorious and the spring will come early to denote that. The idea of the groundhog’s seeing his shadow if the sun is out is an old Pennsylvania Dutch tradition.

Richard R. Losch+

Thou shalt not steal. The government will tolerate no competition.

Some Recent Archaeological Tidbits

Information from recent issues of "Biblical Archaeology Review."

St. Nicholas Chapel in Myra

For fifteen centuries the city of Myra has been a site of Christian pilgrimage. It was the see of the fourth century bishop Saint Nicholas of Myra, today popularly remembered as Santa Claus, who has been venerated as a paragon of Christian generosity since his own time. He shaped the development of Myra as a Christian city at the time that Christianity had just been accepted as a legal religion in the Roman Empire.¹ Myra, now known as Demre, is in the province of Lycia on what is now the southern coast of Turkey. It was a Hellenic city in Nicholas' time.

For centuries pilgrims and tourists have visited the Church of Saint Nicholas, its honeycomb of catacombs, and the city theater. It was assumed that most of the original city was lost. In 2009 new underground radar technology revealed anomalies that suggested walls and buildings. Over the next two years they unearthed parts of an amazingly well-preserved Christian city that was buried under eighteen feet of sediment that had been deposited by the nearby Myros River. Myra had suffered a series of catastrophes over the centu-

ries, including several devastating earthquakes. In the seventh through the eleventh centuries it was also subjected to a series of raids by different Islamic sects, but the eleventh century seizure by the fanatic Seljuks was the beginning of the end of Myra. They sacked the city and took the bones of Saint Nicholas. They were soon thereafter recaptured by Italian merchants who brought them back to Bari in southern Italy. They are still there in



Saint Nicholas Chapel

the Church of Saint Nicholas in Bari. The city was then subjected to two

centuries of persecution of Christians and two more earthquakes. After several seasons of extraordinarily heavy rains, Myra was finally abandoned in the thirteenth century, apparently very shortly after the recently discovered chapel was built. The silting of the Myros River had begun centuries before, but after the city was abandoned nothing was done to stem it. All that survived on the surface was a portion of the ancient Greek theater and the sixth century Church of Saint Nicholas, which was a pilgrimage site. The rest of the city was inundated by mud very quickly, and this undoubtedly contributed to its uncanny state of preservation.

With the discovery of the ancient city, archaeologists recently completed the excavation of a thirteenth cen-

¹ He became Bishop of Myra in 325, and that year attended the Council of Nicaea. He was an advisor to Constantine I, who legalized and encouraged Christianity. He died in 346, a year before the birth of Theodosius I, who would make Christianity the official established religion of the empire.

tury chapel dedicated to Saint Nicholas that was extraordinarily well-preserved by the sediment deposit. They said that the preservation was of “Pompeian clarity.” One of its outstanding features is a six-foot deësis fresco of Jesus, John and Mary holding scrolls with Greek text. Deësis is an icon style found in Byzantine and later Eastern Orthodox art in which Christ is portrayed in majesty, carrying a book, and flanked by the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist in a supplicatory stance. The name is Greek (δέησις) for “prayer” or “supplication.” This art style is common in Egypt and Cyprus, but has never before found in Turkey. The text of the scroll Christ holds is John 1:29, “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.” That of Mary is an intercession asking Christ to forgive the sins of mankind.

The architectural features are primitive. One of the most striking is a cruciform window that casts the shape of a cross on the altar when it is sunlit.



Much of the ancient city is under the present city of Demre. Archaeologists are buying property from local residences as fast as they can in order to prevent illegal excavations, although few saleable artifacts have been found so far. It appears that when the Myrans decided to abandon the city they packed up most of their possessions and took them with them.

Egyptian Dog Mummies

An excavation at Saqqara necropolis in Egypt has revealed almost eight million animal mummies. Most are dogs, but there are also cat and mongoose mummies. They represent a wide variety of breeds, but many have not yet been identified. Some of the animals were quite old when they were mummified, and some are very young, including a few newborns.

In the Egyptian religion, the gods hear only prayers that are brought to them by spirits whose bodies have been properly buried. The spirits of animals were thought to bring the prayers of living people to the gods.

The Saqqara necropolis was discovered in 1897 by the French Egyptologist Jacques de Morgan. Even though his mapping showed that there were two dog cemeteries there, for over a century the focus has been on the temples rather than on the burials.



Anubis

Excavation and research on the mummies began only as recently as 2009. The catacombs are near Egypt’s oldest pyramid, as well as to the temple of Anubis, the jackal-headed god of the underworld. This particular catacomb, which contained mainly canids, was obviously the site of a cult of Anubis. Other animal cult catacombs are also found in the region in which are found temples and mummies of cows, baboons, ibises, hawks and cats. All of these animals were believed to be intermediaries between humans and their gods.

Roman Athenaeum Found

The recent unearthing of Hadrian's Athenaeum has been called the most important Roman discovery since the finding of the Forum in the 1920s. The first excavations for a new subway under the Piazza Venezia revealed the building, and all work was immediately halted until archaeologists could investigate. The Piazza Venezia is the enormous roundabout (traffic circle) in front of the Vittoriano,¹ where Mussolini addressed massive crowds from his balcony shortly



after the Forum was discovered. It is a spot with which every visitor to Rome is familiar. Today traffic is worse than ever in Rome because there is an enormous hole in the middle of the Piazza, but Romans don't seem to mind—they are delighted that such a great discovery has been made.

What archaeologists found was a nine-hundred seat athenaeum—a center for the performing arts—that was built by the emperor Hadrian in 123 A.D. Roman patricians went there to hear drama, poetry, orations, and philosophical discourses in three huge halls that were furnished with terraced marble seating.

Hadrian was an avid patron of the

arts. He wrote fine poetry in Latin and Greek, and was a very accomplished architect. He and his architects followed the plans of his predecessor Trajan in rebuilding the Pantheon, which is one of Rome's most enduring ancient monuments. Hadrian modified and enlarged Trajan's planned dome, which is still considered an architectural wonder, especially for its time. He also designed (or supervised the design of) an eleven-meter high arched ceiling over the central hall of the recently discovered athenaeum. Unfortunately, it has not survived.² It stood for seven centuries, but came crashing down in an earthquake in 848. A nine-by-five-meter piece of it is still on the floor of the central hall.

After the fall of Rome in the fifth century, the hall fell into disuse and disrepair. In subsequent centuries the iron supports were pulled from the walls, and firepits were dug into the floor to smelt the iron. After the earthquake the building filled with debris. In the sixteenth century a hospital was built on the site, and a cellar for it was dug into the debris. The patients' chamber pots were thrown into it when they died. They could be dated because the glaze and designs on them were identical to those seen on implements in Caravaggio paintings.

¹ The Vittoriano is the monument to the now defunct monarchy founded by Victor Emmanuel II in 1861. Italians call the memorial *La Macchina da Scrivere*, "The Typewriter."

² The dome of the Pantheon survives and is still in excellent condition. It was the largest dome in the world from the time it was built in the second century A.D. until Giacomo della Porta completed Michelangelo's dome on Saint Peter's Basilica in 1590.

First Temple Period Shrine Found Near Jerusalem

The Israel Antiquities Authority announced the discovery near Jerusalem of a shrine with its collection of sacred vessels dating back to the early First Temple period before the eighth century B.C. reforms of Josiah. It was discovered when preparations were being made for an extension of Highway 1 from Sha'ar HaGai to Jerusalem. Previous excavations at the site have uncovered public buildings, warehouses and silos, but this is the first religious edifice. The shrine, which has been dated to the early days of the Kingdom of Judah (early ninth century B.C.), is at Tel Motza on the western outskirts of Jerusalem. The excavation directors are Anna Eirikh, Dr. Hamoudi Khalaily and Shua Kisilevitz. They said, "The ritual building at Tel Motza is an unusual and striking find, in light of the fact that there are hardly any remains of ritual buildings of the period in Judea at the time of the First Temple. The uniqueness of the structure is even more remarkable because of the vicinity of the site's proximity to the capital city of Jerusalem, which acted as the Kingdom's main sacred center at the time."

The walls of the temple are massively thick, and in accordance with all temple architecture in the ancient Middle East, it was open and faced east. All temples and shrines, pagan or Jewish, were open and faced toward the position of the rising sun on the summer solstice. This was to ensure that the first rays of the rising sun fell on whatever sacred object was within,

thus symbolizing the divine presence within. This was also true of Moses' wilderness tabernacle and David's tent tabernacle in Jerusalem, in both of which the sacred object was the Ark of the Covenant. Solomon's temple also faced east for the same reason, although the Holy of Holies, in which the Ark was housed, was closed off by great olivewood doors. However, the rising sun's first rays fell on those doors, again symbolizing God's presence inside.¹

In the central courtyard there is a square object that was probably an altar, and close by it is a cache of a



Anthropomorphic vessels from the Tel Motza temple

great variety of sacred vessels, some of which are anthropomorphic.

Josiah and Hezekiah in the eighth and seventh centuries centralized all sacrifices in the temple in Jerusalem, forbidding sacrifice elsewhere. It was actually forbidden in Solomon's time, although the ban was rarely enforced. Most sacrifices outside the temple, however, were offered on altars set up in people's homes. This is the only First Temple period non-domestic cult sacrificial center found, and it is particularly unusual in that it is so close to Jerusalem.

¹ Nehemiah says that the opening of the Holy of Holies was covered by a great veil, not a door. This may have been a reference to the Second Temple, and was certainly true of Herod's temple. In any case, the view inside the Holy of Holies was obstructed, and the sun's rays fell on the obstruction.

Israel Enters History

The very first extra-biblical mention of Israel in history is on what is called the Merem-ptah Stela (also known as the Israel Stela). It is a 7.5 foot black granite stela at Thebes. It depicts the pharaoh Merem-ptah (r. 1213-1203 B.C.) receiving a scimitar from the god Amun, the god of Thebes. It contains a number of victory hymns celebrating Merem-ptah's



military achievements, focusing especially on his campaign in Canaan. The hieroglyphics say, "The Canaan is plundered with every hardship. Ashkelon is taken, Gezer captured, [and] Yano'am reduced to nothing. Israel is laid waste, his seed is no more." Hieroglyphic symbols are marked with what are called determinatives, which indicate the category of the word. The determinatives for Ashkelon, Gezer and Yano'am indicate that they are city-states, and that for Israel indicates that it is a people.

History records that Merem-ptah subjugated the Philistines, and Ashkelon was one of their five principal cities. Gezer was a Canaanite city, and the identity of Yano'am is unknown. The time of Merem-ptah was just about the time that both the Israelites and the Philistines were trying to conquer Canaan, shortly after the Israelites had completed their post-Exodus trek in the wilderness. It was the early period of the Judges, long before Israel would become a monarchy.

Even though Merem-ptah brags that he had wiped out the Israelites, it obviously was not true. Egyptian stelae usually exaggerate the accomplishments of the pharaohs that commissioned them.

It is interesting to note that Merem-ptah was buried in the largest sarcophagus ever commissioned by an Egyptian pharaoh. His mummy was placed in a series of four nested marble sarcophagi, the outermost of which was thirteen feet long, seven feet wide and eight feet tall. On the surfaces of all of them were engraved prayers, incantations and magic spells, many of which were repeated over and over again. The outer sarcophagus was smashed and burned around 1000 B.C., but Egyptologists have been able to piece many of its fragments back together.

Preserving Ephesus

Ephesus was one of the largest and most important cities in the first century Roman world. Paul lived and wrote there for a very long period, and tradition says that the Apostle John and the Virgin Mary lived there after the Resurrection. The remains of the city are spectacularly well-preserved, and for centuries Ephesus has been a site for Christian pilgrimages and visits. The Muslim Turkish government has been highly respectful and protective of the Christian shrines there.

Last November the Selçuk Municipality Assembly approved a reconstruction and protection plan, enhancing tourist access to the site.

Articles by Richard R. Losch+

Don't Forget
 INTERFAITH
 MEN'S
 BREAKFAST
 FEBRUARY 3
 7:45 A.M.
 Mark your Calendar

LIVINGSTON FIRST
 PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

JAMIE

by Richard R. Losch



"Father Dillon needs to learn that just because a sermon lasts forever, that doesn't make it immortal."



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