

THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church
Livingston, Alabama

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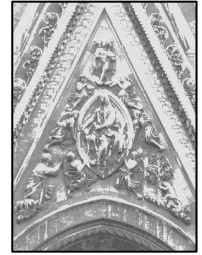
This Month's Cover

Last month our cover was Ciuffagni's *Saint Matthew*, one of the four evangelists originally carved for the Duomo in Florence. This month, in honor of the Feast of Saint Luke (10/18), we have another of the four, Nanni di Banco's *Saint Luke*. The other two were Donatello's *Saint John* and Niccolò Lamberti's *Saint Mark*.

Saint Luke was commissioned by the wool guild Arte della Lana in 1408, and the statue was completed in 1415. It is marble, and is a little under seven feet high. The figure is slightly foreshortened in order to look natural when seen from below. Nanni modeled *Saint Luke* after the classic Roman senatorial style of statuary. It was to be placed in one of four niches, two on each side of the main door, in the façade of the Duomo. The statues remained there until 1587, when they were moved inside the cathedral. In 1936 they were housed in the *Museo del'Opera del Duomo* (the Museum of the Works of the Cathedral), where they are on display today.

Nanni di Banco was born about 1375 in Florence. He was trained by his father, the sculptor Antonio di Banco, who worked with Niccolò d'Arezzo on the Duomo. Nanni's first commissioned work was a life-sized statue of Isaiah for the inside of the cathedral. His masterpiece was *Quattro Santi Coronati* ("Four Crowned Saints"). It

represents four Roman sculptors who were martyred in the reign of the emperor Diocletian for refusing to make a statue of the pagan god Aesculapius. He began it in 1411, while he was still working on *Saint Luke*, and finished it in 1413, two years before *Saint Luke* was finished. In 1414 he began what would be his last major work, a relief of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary over the Mandorla Gate of the cathedral. It was an enormous undertaking, including not only the relief, but all the filigree work that surrounds it. He died before it was finished. It was completed by Luca della Robbia, who was believed to have been one of di Banco's students. Nanni di Banco died in Florence in 1421 at the age of forty-six.



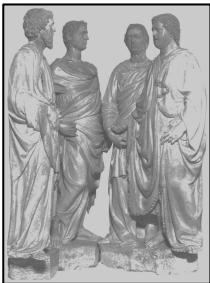
Richard R. Losch+

Degree Not Required

According to the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, only 2 out of the 10 fastest growing occupations in the United States require a Bachelor's Degree or higher. Notwithstanding, 21,800,000 students, an all-time record, are enrolled in American colleges this fall, according to the National Center for Educational Statistics.

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 R. 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

As I write this, it seems that the news is about Syria all day every day. I have talked in the past about news shows becoming obsessed with a single piece of news, but it is usually about a “wardrobe malfunction,” which celebrity couple is ending their cohabitation, or some lurid criminal trial. This time the intensive focus makes some sense, because what happens in the Middle East in the next few weeks may make the difference between whether or not we open the gates for World War III.

There are powerful arguments on both sides of the question of whether America should intervene in Syria, and I don't pretend to be wise enough to know the answer. My personal feelings are that it would be a terrible mistake, but I am also aware that I could be wrong on a number of levels.

The question that troubles me the most is a moral one: do we as Christians have an obligation to confront and fight evil regardless of the cost? Theologians and moralists have struggled with that question for two thousand years. On the one hand, if evil is not confronted it will prevail. On the other hand, if the confrontation opens the way for an even greater evil, it might be better to hold off and seek a better way to confront it. But (at the risk of sounding like Tevye), on the other hand, to fail to confront evil is to support it. But sometimes (again, as Tevye would say), there is no other hand. One of the burdens of Christianity is that there are no easy answers to tough moral questions.

Harry Truman said that one of the hardest things he had to do was to order men to risk their lives in battle, knowing that they would often lose them. Imagine the struggle he faced in deciding that the killing of 150,000 Japanese at Hiroshima and Nagasaki would save up to 2,000,000 American and Japanese lives by ending a war that Japan had sworn to fight to the last Japanese. Whether or not we agree with his decision, we have to sympathize with the difficulty of his struggle in making it, and the burden of it that lay on him for the rest of his life. The leaders of the world are now facing decisions that could have as serious ultimate repercussions.

However we may personally feel, it is tempting to sit back and feel like a victim, incapable of doing anything to support our own positions. In fact, that is not true—there is much that we can do, and the most important thing is to pray about it. Never underestimate the power of prayer. It has a strengthening and unifying power that bonds us not only with God, but also with one another. Pope Francis called for a day of prayer and fasting for peace on September 7, and millions of Christians of all denominations participated in it. This could have a powerful effect, but it needs more than just a day. It must be ongoing in the prayers of everyone. Peace will not come quickly, and it will not come easily, and it may not come in the way that we personally will like. Pray, however, that God's will be done.

Father Rick Losch

Be Wordly Wise Symposium

When we hear of a symposium we generally conjure up an image of a sedate gathering of scholars sharing their wisdom and discussing new ideas. However, since the word is generally associated with Academia, it might be more accurate to imagine a rowdy frat party. *Symposium* is a Latin word that the Romans took directly from the Greek *symposion* (συμπόσιον), “drinking party.” It derives from *syn*, “together” and *potein*, “to drink,” which also produced *sympotes* (συμ-ποτης), “fellow drinkers.”

The symposium was an important social event among ancient Greek and Roman aristocrats. It was strictly for adult males (not even female slaves were allowed to be present) and it was always preceded by a banquet. The men would withdraw to a private room in the back of the home, where they would drink liberally. A symposium always had a stated purpose. This might be the introduction of a son into adult society, the announcement of an important event such as the appointment to a prestigious civic or military office, or to honor a great victory. Since happy events were in the purview of Dionysius, the god of revelry, much drinking took place at symposia—and we suspect that in much of Academia it still does.

Richard R. Losch+

Some people are like Slinkies—they serve no useful purpose, but you can't help smiling when you see them tumbling down the stairs.

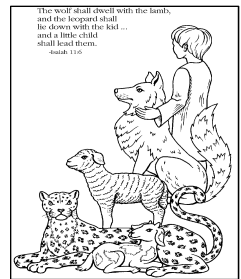
Evening Prayer and Parish Supper

Our October service of Evening Prayer will be on October 16th at 6:00 p.m. with a Soup, Salad and Sandwich Supper following in the parish house. Signup sheets for soups, salads, sandwiches, desserts, and tea will be posted in the parish house kitchen, as well as a sheet for those planning to attend (so that we may know how many to plan for). As always there will be plenty of good food and fellowship. Please make your plans to attend.

Hiram Patrenos

Blessing of the Animals

In honor of the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, we will have a service of the Blessing of the Animals on Sunday, October 6, 2013, in the courtyard. While altercations between animals are extremely rare at these services, we ask that your animals be leashed, tethered or caged. In case of rain the service will be held in the parish house, although we ask that hooved animals be kept outside. We will go out to bless them afterwards. Please invite your friends and neighbors to this happy occasion. Any kind of animal is welcome.



The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall
lie down with the kid...
and a little child
shall lead them.
Isaiah 11:6

Hiram Patrenos

Thanks to Butch and Melanie

Thanks to Butch Lamb and Melanie McLelland for all of their hard work in pruning and removing the overgrown shrubbery and hedges at St. Alban's, and for their hard work each month cleaning the interior of the church before our monthly services. It is greatly appreciated!

Hiram Patrenos

Altar Flowers

Volunteers are needed to provide Altar Flowers through the season of 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

Gideons International Annual Contributions

During the month of October, we will be receiving contributions for the work of The Gideons International. We will not have a speaker from The Gideons but will hold all contributions and forward them to the local chapter following our service on October 27th. Envelopes are available for contributions (which should be made payable to "The Gideons") on the table at the rear of the church and may be placed in the Alms Basins at the Offertory.

Hiram Patrenos

Credit Ratings

According to Standard and Poor's, 13 states have a higher S&P credit rating than the U.S. Government.

Inexperience Prevails

Only 1 in 5 (20.4%) members of Congress are military veterans. According to Vital Statistics in Congress, 20 Senators (out of 100) and 89 Congressmen (out of 435) have served in the military. In 1978, 77% were military veterans.

Richard R. Losch+

*Saint James'
Episcopal Church
requests the pleasure of
your company
at a Reception and
Book Signing
celebrating the publication of
"ALL THE PLACES
IN THE BIBLE"*

by the Rev. Richard R. Losch

*St. James' Parish House
Sunday, the 27th of October
from two o'clock until four o'clock
in the afternoon*

In June the Australian Ethical Investments e-newsletter said, "Our new video explains how ethical investment can give good returns in under 2 minutes." It makes one wonder just how ethical those investments really are.

United Thank Offering

The United Thank Offering (UTO) is a ministry of the Episcopal Church for the mission of the whole church. Through United Thank Offering, men, women and children nurture the habit of giving daily thanks to God. These prayers of thanksgiving start when we recognize and name our many daily blessings. Those who participate in UTO discover that thankfulness leads to generosity. United Thank Offering is entrusted to promote thank offerings, to receive the offerings, and to distribute the UTO monies to support missions and ministries impacting the lives of women and children throughout the Episcopal Church and in invited Provinces of the Anglican Communion in the developing world.

Hiram Patrenos

UTO Ingathering

The Episcopal Church Women's ingathering of the United Thank Offering be on Sunday, October 13th. Envelopes for contributions are available on the table at the rear of the church and may be placed in the alms basins or given to Ethel Scott, UTO Coordinator. Checks should be payable to the ECW (Episcopal Church Women).

Hiram Patrenos

Knowledge v. Wisdom

Knowledge is being aware that a tomato is a fruit, not a vegetable. Wisdom is knowing not to put a tomato in a fruit salad.

ECW Fall Conference

You are invited to the 124th annual Diocesan Episcopal Church Women's Fall Conference:

October 10 - 11, 2013

"Pray—Believe—Love—Serve"

Trinity Episcopal Church,

Demopolis, Alabama

*Hosted by the Black Belt Convocation
of the Episcopal Church Women*

For more information, please speak with Candace Strickland, ECW President.

"Epistle" Online

The *Epistle* is now available online in pdf form. Go to <http://rlosch.com> and click on the "Epistle" tab. I am told that many of our readers forward their copies to friends and family. This is an easy way to do that.

Richard R. Losch+

The Fall of Hazor

The recent discovery of charred cedar beams, collapsed ceilings, sooty walls and jars of scorched wheat at Tel Hazor corroborate the Bible's claim that the ancient city of Hazor was destroyed by fire. Carbon-14 dating has confirmed that the wheat is about 3400 years old. This is right at the time of Joshua's conquest of Canaan and his destruction of the cities of Greater Sihon as described in Josh. 11:13: "Yet Israel did not burn any of the cities built on their mounds except Hazor, which Joshua burned."

Richard R. Losch+

Some Thoughts on the Epistle to the Galatians

The Epistle to the Galatians may well be the most important of Paul's epistles in the formation of the doctrine of the western Church. While it is unclear when it was written, most scholars believe that it preceded the Epistle to the Romans, and laid the foundation for the theology presented in that letter. While the authorship of some of the so-called Pauline epistles has been challenged, there is no doubt whatever that Paul wrote Galatians, and it was very likely one of his earlier letters. It was an encyclical letter—rather than being written to the Church in a particular city, it was intended to be copied and passed around to a number of different groups.

Galatians has been called the “Magna Carta of the Christian Faith.” It declares complete independence from all human laws, values and customs that stand in the way of a personal and community relationship with God. Paul deals with a basic religious question—how can sinful man establish a relationship with a perfect and holy God? The answer is that he cannot. The only way for fallen man to relate with God is for God to establish the relationship as a freely given and unmerited gift of grace. This he did through the incarnation, death and resurrection of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who is himself God.

It is also not entirely clear to whom Paul was writing. Galatia was a region in central Anatolia (now Turkey) whose borders were only very loosely defined. The southern portion on the Mediterranean was a Roman prov-

ince, while the northern portion was a barbaric region that Rome never fully subdued. Several Gallic (Celtic) tribes caused so much trouble that Rome finally gave them a large portion of land on the promise that if they would stay there and not bother Rome, Rome would leave them alone. Scholars disagree as to whether Paul evangelized the entire Galatian region or just the Roman province. The consensus is growing, however, that it was the entire region. Paul made two visits to Galatia. The first was because of an illness that was apparently repulsive, yet the Galatians received him warmly (4:13-14). We are not told the nature of the illness, but it may well have been some skin disease that was physically disgusting. It might even have been one of the many skin diseases that the Bible calls leprosy, but it seems that it was eventually cured.

The Jewish population of the ancient Mediterranean world was vast, and there were few places that did not have a large Jewish community. With the exception of the coastal cities, however, Galatia was one of those. It appears from the Epistle to the Galatians that most if not all of the Galatian Christians were Gentiles. There may have been a few Jews, but it seems that the vast majority were Greeks, Romans and Celts.

It also appears that the Galatians at first embraced Christianity with fervor, but later began to stray. This is one of the main themes in Paul's letter to them. The history of Judaism is a history of backsliding into paganism,

and Paul, as a Judaic scholar, was acutely aware of that. This was also a problem with many of the Gentiles who converted to Christianity, including some of the Galatians. They were not only backsliding into their former paganism (4:8-9), but also were seeking to be circumcised in order to become Jews like Paul. Paul took their straying almost personally. He tells them that being under the Law is slavery, while true freedom can be obtained only through Christ—thus seeking circumcision is not a step up, but rather a step backward into slavery (3:23-29).

In this letter, more than in any of the others, Paul's language is fierce and emotional. He opens with, "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you. . . If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse!" (1:6ff) He later says of those who would circumcise them, "As for those [who would have you circumcised], I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!" (5:12).

The desire to be circumcised was understandable in the light of pagan customs of the times. When a pagan associated himself with the cult of a particular deity, he underwent a ceremony of initiation. In pagan thinking this rite was not binding and obligated him to no permanent commitment. Rather, it was no more than a public declaration that he was (at least for the time being) willing to bind himself to the cult and its deity, and that in return the cult was willing to accept

him into their circle. Such an initiatory rite was usually only the beginning of a series of initiations into higher and higher states of commitment. For example, initiation into the cult of Isis (an extremely popular cult throughout the Roman world) was usually followed by initiation into the cult of her brother/consort Osiris, then into that of Horus, and so on through a series of gods in the Egyptian pantheon.¹ This thinking is undoubtedly what led so many of the Galatians to want to be circumcised. Having been baptized into Christ, they wanted to take it a step further and also be circumcised into Judaism—after all, if it was good enough for Jesus, it was good enough for them. They felt that Paul had only given them "Christianity Lite"—the beginner's edition—and they wanted the whole thing. This showed a complete misunderstanding of baptism, and Paul uses a great deal of this letter explaining that to them.

In order to understand the importance of this issue, we need to understand the nature of initiatory rites. There are basically two kinds: ceremonial and sacramental, both of which are sometimes later followed by "rites of passage." A ceremonial rite is just that—purely ceremonial. It has no binding obligation other than

¹ Even though these were Egyptian gods, Romans and Greeks very commonly worshiped them. So also were the Persian gods Mithra and Ormuzd. Many Romans worshiped Greek gods, even though they were generally the same as the Roman ones (for example, the Greek Dionysius was the same as the Roman Bacchus, yet the cult of Dionysius was more popular in Rome than that of Bacchus).

what might be promised in an oath associated with it. For example, an inauguration into a political or organizational office is a ceremonial rite. It may involve an oath appropriate to that office, but once the individual no longer holds the office he is no longer bound by that oath. Many clubs have ceremonial initiatory rituals in which a new member is formally introduced at a meeting of the club. Most Protestant churches that do not baptize infants have a ceremonial initiatory rite in which the child is “presented” to the congregation. This places no special responsibility on the child or his family, but simply recognizes that the child is a scion of a member of the congregation, and usually places him under the aegis of the congregation as their protégé.

Sacramental initiatory rites are binding on the initiate, usually for life. Although they are called sacramental, they are not always religious, but they usually have religious characteristics. Also, even when religious they may not necessarily be sacraments as the term is used in Christianity, as long as they have a religious significance. In ancient times such rites almost always involved the shedding of blood, either of the initiate or of a sacrificial animal (and often of both). When Moses sealed the covenant between God and the Israelites, he offered a sacrifice and then sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice on the people (Ex. 24:8). An example of a non-religious sacramental initiatory rite is that in which a man is “made” as a member of a Mafia family. In that rite the initiate and

the leader of the family each cut their palms and then grip their hands together, thus mixing the blood as a symbol of their being “of one blood,” thus of one family.¹ When one accepts a sacramental initiatory rite he is bound for life (or even for eternity) to the benefits and responsibilities of the group into which he is initiated.

The two best-known sacramental initiatory rites, at least in Western society, are circumcision and baptism. They both have much in common, but they are also fundamentally different—and that difference is what concerns Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians. While Jews would not use the term “sacrament” for circumcision, the basic concept is similar: it is a rite that generates a permanent spiritual bond between the recipient a God, and unifies him with his people—all the people of the Mosaic Covenant in the case of circumcision, and all baptized Christians in the case of baptism. Also there is the physical shedding of blood in circumcision, and the spiritual association of being cleansed of original sin through the shedding of Christ’s blood on the cross in baptism. Another common factor between circumcision and baptism is that from ancient times both are administered, when at all possible, on the eighth day after birth. In Judaism this is the law, while in Christianity it is simply tradition. Today most Christians are very lax in

¹ When I was a little boy we didn’t have the nerve to cut ourselves, so close friends became “blood brothers” by spitting in their palms and than clasping hands.

honoring this tradition, The reason for the eighth day is that because God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh, the eighth day represents a new beginning. Traditional baptismal fonts were always octagonal to symbolize this.

Circumcision is, of course, done only on males,¹ but from its very earliest practice it has never been seen as a rite that excludes women.² Quite to the contrary, since it involves the organ of reproduction, it inherently involves both sexes. Judaism is a very family-oriented religion and culture, and Judaic theology emphasizes that through circumcision the child is bonded to the whole family, male and female alike.

The great difference between circumcision and baptism is that circumcision binds the child through his family to obedience to the Law, which is the essence of the Mosaic Covenant. Baptism, on the other hand, releases the child from the Law, and binds him to obedience to God through the faith of Jesus Christ and the guidance of

the Holy Spirit. Paul also emphasizes that circumcision is seen to make the Jews superior to the “Greeks” (a term that in the Bible means all non-Jews), while baptism makes us children of God, all of whom are equal. Jew and Gentile, male and female, free and slave, adult and child—all are equally children of God.

An early major controversy in the Church was whether a person had to become a Jew (and thus be circumcised) before he could be a Christian. Christianity began as a sect of Judaism, and many early Christians maintained that the Faith was meant only for the Jews. Two of the strongest advocates of “Judaizing” originally were James, the first Bishop of Jerusalem, and Peter. Paul confronted Peter over this issue (2:11). Peter eventually came to agree with Paul that Gentiles could be accepted into the Church (Acts 10:1ff.). For many years after that, however, there remained a small number of “Judaizers”—men who taught the necessity of becoming a Jew before one could become a Christian. Apparently some of these had preached in Galatia, and Paul sought to counter their teaching.

Paul emphasizes that if the Galatians revert to circumcision, they are actually renouncing the benefit of baptism and thus renouncing Christ. According to the Law, anyone who “hangs upon a tree” (is crucified) is cursed by God (Deut. 21:23). If they are bound to the Law then they must denounce Christ as cursed (3:13). Circumcision and submission to Torah is not a further step after baptism, but

¹ There is a brutal rite of female genital mutilation, often called circumcision, practiced by some primitive African and Asian ethnic groups. Fortunately, it is not widespread.

² Most Muslim males are circumcised. A few fanatically patriarchal tribes claim that since women cannot be circumcised they are inherently inferior, but this is not the general Muslim view, even among those groups that commonly suppress women. Circumcision is not mentioned in the Qur’an. Shi’a tradition requires it, however, while Sunni tradition considers it recommended although not mandatory.

rather a step backward.

It is the faith of Jesus Christ that is the foundation of salvation through him. In several places Paul uses the expression *pistis Christou* (πίστις Χριστού), “the faith of Christ,” which is often mistranslated “faith in Christ.” It is not our faith in Christ that justifies us. It is the faith of Jesus of Nazareth, Christ in his humanity, that saves us. It is his faith in God, not our faith in him, that enables us to be forgiven of our sins and reunited with God. The Son of God humbled himself to take human nature upon himself, and it was in that human nature that he submitted totally to the will of God. It is that submission to God’s will that saves us. Our faith opens us up to receive the benefits of that salvation, but it is his faith in God, not our faith in him that saves us.

Paul makes an interesting comment in 6:11—“See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand.”¹ In those days writers rarely wrote with their own hand, but dictated to scribes. All well-educated men could read and write, of course, but with the primitive writing tools of the time, writing neatly was a special skill. Good handwriting was considered a basic part of education in the nineteenth century, but not in the first. Less well-educated men, even if they were literate, usually also entrusted their scribes with the job of “punching up” their dictation with the selection

of better words and phrases. For example, there is little doubt that Peter wrote the letters attributed to him, yet the language is of a much higher quality that we would expect of a Galilean fisherman. This was most likely due to the work of his scribes. Paul was very well educated, however, so the language in his letters was undoubtedly his own.² Notwithstanding, he probably dictated most of the letter. Since it he intended it to be passed around from church to church, he would have wanted it in a clearly legible and attractive format. Near the end, however, as was the custom, he chose to write the closing with his own hand. Whether the letters were large because of eye trouble, stiff hands, or simply bad handwriting we can only conjecture, but they were apparently quite different from those of his scribe.

In all his letters, but especially in Galatians, Paul is crystal clear in his proclamation that he preaches under the presence of the living Christ, and is not simply passing on the message of a great but now dead prophet who promised to return some day. To Paul, as he should be to all Christians, Jesus Christ is the living God who is true to his promise, “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:20).

Richard R. Losch+

² His language and style do vary from letter to letter, however. In the first century there were certain “templates” of language and style that were selected according to the nature of the letter and its reader(s). Paul, being well educated, would have been familiar with the various socially expected styles.

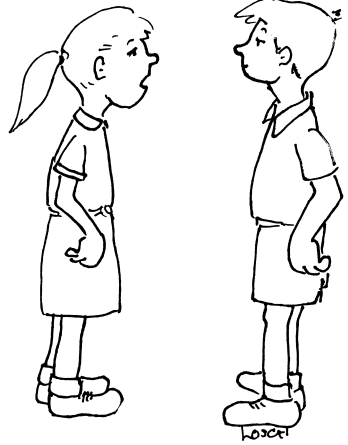
¹ The King James Version mistranslates the Greek as “how large a letter.” The Greek clearly reads “letters,” i.e. the characters used to spell words.

JAMIE

by Richard R. Losch

Don't Forget
+ INTERFAITH
MEN'S
BREAKFAST
OCTOBER 6
7:45 A.M.
+ Mark your Calendar +

LIVINGSTON FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



*"Listen carefully—I can only tell
you once what Sally did, because I
promised not to repeat it."*



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