

THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church
Livingston, Alabama



Volume XXVIII, Number 10

November 2021



November 2021

This Month's Cover

In observance of All Souls' Day (November 2), our cover this month is "Purgatory," a manuscript illumination from the 15th century book of hours, *Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*, "The Very Rich Hours of the Duke of Berry." It is tempera and gold leaf on parchment. A book of hours is a book of the daily prayers used in monasteries. This one contains dozens of magnificent illuminations such as this, and is on display in the Conde Museum in Chantilly, France. It was created primarily in 1412-1416 for the flamboyant bibliophile and art patron Jean, Duc de Berry by the brothers Herman, Paul and Johan Limbourg, famous miniature painters and illuminators. It is unquestionably the world's best example of the International Gothic style of manuscript illumination, and has survived in extraordinarily good condition. This sort of work was normally produced by teams of monks who worked for years on it in their monasteries. It was left unfinished when all three Limbourg brothers died of the plague in 1416, but it was completed in the latter part of the 15th century by two artists who are believed to have been Barthélemy d'Eyck and Jean Colombe.

This illumination shows the souls in Purgatory who are being purified of their sins preparatory to their entry into Heaven. Their sins are being burned out of them in the purgative furnace, and those whose purification is complete are rising with the smoke toward Heaven. Angels are plucking some from the fire because their purification has been completed through the intercessions of saints and the good works and prayers of those who are still living (this is very bad theology, but was a common popular belief in the Middle Ages).

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, email rlosch33@gmail.com, Phone 205-499-0968. Copr. © 2021, Richard R. Losch. Permission is granted to reproduce text items in church 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

November 3 is the feast of St. Martin de Porres-Velásquez. He is on the Church of England and Roman Catholic calendars, but not on that of the Episcopal Church. Notwithstanding, I observe his day and believe that we all should. He is the Patron Saint of several things,¹ but most notably of racial harmony. With the growing racial tension and hatred that we are experiencing in America today, we need more than ever to seek the help of God and the prayers of the saints.

St. Martin was born in 1579 in Lima, Peru. He was the illegitimate son of Don Juan de Porres, a Spanish nobleman, and Ana Velásquez, a freed slave who was of mixed African and Incan descent. After the birth of a sister, Juana, his father abandoned the family. Impoverished, his mother supported them as a laundress. She could not earn enough to support both children, so Martin was sent to a charity Catholic primary school for two years, then was apprenticed to a barber/surgeon to study medicine. He was a devout child, and spent hours every night in prayer. By Peruvian law, only whites could become full members of a religious order. At age 15 Martin applied to the local Dominican order to become a *donado*. This was a volunteer who did menial labor in exchange for the privilege of wearing the Dominican habit and living in the monastic community. Despite his being sneered at as a *chucho mulato* (mulatto cur) by some of the friars, the Prior and most of the monks were amazed at his piety, humility, and miraculous powers of healing. Finally, despite the law, the Prior allowed him to take his vows as a member of the Third Order of Dominicans (a lay brother). Throughout his life he ministered to the sick of Lima regardless of race, and he established an orphanage that was open to children of all races, even though Peru was legally segregated. The state, which was closely tied to the Church, was loath to make an issue of that and did not intervene.

Brother Martin lived a rigorously ascetic life, even more so

¹ Mixed-race people, barbers, innkeepers and public health workers.

than the strict Dominican rule required. During his life the people of Lima regarded him as a saint, and he was a personal friend of two other saints, Saint Juan Marías, a fellow Dominican, and Saint Rose of Lima, a lay Dominican sister. He died on November 3, 1639 at the age of 59. He was declared Venerable by Pope Clement XIII in 1763, beatified by Gregory XVI in 1837, and canonized by John XXIII in 1962.

Since much of the racial harmony that we have achieved in the past 60 years is now evaporating, we need more than ever the intercession of the saints. St. Martin de Porres, pray for us.

Father Rick Lorck+

Be Wordly Wise

Spaghetification

This is a word that would be of little use to most of us, but for some reason it tickles my fancy. Spaghetification (a.k.a. the Noodle Effect) means the squeezing of something into the shape of a noodle. It was coined in the late 20th century by an astrophysicist (allegedly Stephen Hawking) to describe what a black hole does to something as it swallows it. As an object approaches the “event horizon” beyond which it is irretrievable, it is vertically stretched and horizontally compressed until it resembles a strand of spaghetti.¹ The word comes from combining spaghetti and a derivative of the Latin *facere*, to make.

Scientists are often whimsical in their choices of names for things. In computer language the term bit stands for binary digit (1 or 0). A unit of 8 bits is a byte. This word was coined in 1956 by the computer scientist Werner Buchholz, who said that 8 bits is quite a mouthful—a big byte. Half a byte (4 bits) is a nybble (allegedly coined by David Benson). The nuclear

¹ It is interesting to note that according to the theories of General Relativity and Quantum Mechanics, if you were that object and remained conscious, an external observer would see you spaghetified. You, however, would be unaware that anything unusual had happened to you. To yourself, you would seem quite normal.

physicist Murray Gell-Mann identified the subatomic particle that makes up protons and neutrons. Protons and neutrons are made up of three of these particles each. He called it a quark, based on a line from James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*, "Three quarks for Muster Mark."

Richard R. Losch+

Liquid Gold, the Great Healer

In the ancient Mediterranean regions there was something so important to their daily lives that they could not have imagined being without it any more than we could imagine being without electricity. Homer called it Liquid Gold and Hippocrates called it the Great Healer. It was olive oil. No one knows when the olive was first domesticated, but the earliest archaeological record we have of it is in Ein Zippori, Israel, dating back to about 3,000 BC. There pottery shards were found with traces of olive oil soaked into the clay. The olive was probably valued for its oil long before it was eaten as a fruit. Olives are not at all tasty until they have been cured. In almost all Mediterranean mythology the olive tree is considered a special gift from the gods. The Greeks said it was a gift of the goddess Athena. According to their legends, when the city of Cycropia was being built they offered to dedicate it to Poseidon (the god of the sea) or to Athena (the goddess of wisdom), depending on which gave them the better gift. Poseidon gave them abundant water, but when they tasted it, it was brackish. Athena struck the ground with her staff and created the olive tree as a symbol of plenty, wisdom and peace. They deemed it the better gift, consecrated the city to her, and renamed it Athens.¹

The first use of olive oil seems to have been in Greece, but its use spread rapidly throughout the Mediterranean world. It

¹ Poseidon was not happy, and sided with Troy against the Greeks in the Trojan War. There is no historical record of Athens before the 7th century BC, but archaeological evidence indicates that it goes back at least to the 11th century, and possibly much earlier. There is no mention of Athens in Homer's *Iliad* (8th century BC), but there is a reference to Athenian ships.

was not only good for food, but also for a variety of other purposes. It provided fuel for lamps, made leather soft and supple, waterproofed and lubricated items, and even softened the skin. It was also used medicinally to treat wounds. The ancients knew nothing about bacteria, but they discovered early that if they poured wine into a wound it was less likely to become infected. This was very painful, of course (ancient wine had a high alcohol content), but then pouring a little olive oil into it soothed the pain. This is why it became a symbol of peace. Olive oil was also used to treat burns and rash. It was so valued that in most cultures it was considered sacred, and was used to anoint kings and holy men as a sign of the sanctity of their office.¹ Whenever the Bible refers to oil it means olive oil.

The ancients had soap, but they rarely used it to wash their bodies. It was harsh and caustic, and while it was good for washing clothing, it was not kind to the skin.² Instead, they would scrub their bodies with damp cloths, then rub olive oil into their skin.³ The Romans and Greeks would rub oil onto their bodies and then scrape the skin with a curved knife called a *strigilis*.⁴ This removed the surface layer of dirt and dead skin in preparation for entering the bath (where no soap was used).

In Judea, it was common courtesy when a guest arrived at your home for you to wash his feet (usually done by a servant, but if you had none you did it yourself), and then anoint his

¹ In Christian tradition the administration of several of the sacraments is accompanied by an anointing with what is called chrism. This is lightly scented olive oil that has been consecrated by a bishop for that purpose.

² Some of our older readers will remember grandma's lye soap. It left you as red as a lobster, but it was gentle compared to ancient soap.

³ Scrubbing with a damp cloth was also a common practice in medieval Europe as well. We have a misconception of medieval people being very dirty, but for the most part, except for the lowest classes, they were not. They believed that bathing was unhealthy, but they regularly cleansed their bodies, changed their undergarments, and brushed their teeth.

⁴ Sometimes instead of using oil they would exercise heavily and then go into a sauna-like hot room to work up a sweat.

head with scented oil (Lk.7:44ff). If you could not afford scented oil (which could be quite expensive), a bit of plain oil would do. The amount used depended on the status of the guest. It was a great honor to have your host pour enough oil on your head that it ran down to your collar. Many Jewish men had oily hair and frequently oily collars because of this, but this was a mark of respect and was well-regarded (Psalm 133:2).

We do not know when the pressing of olive oil became a commercial industry instead of a simple family chore, but it seems to have become so in Canaan sometime around the 12th century BC. That was about the same time that both the Philistines and the Israelites invaded Canaan. The Philistines, a Greek people from somewhere in the Aegean, may have brought commercial oil pressing with them. By the 11th century BC there was serious competition in the production of olive oil between Philistia and Israel, particularly the lands of the tribe of Judah. The Philistines had the upper hand, however, and the city of Gath (the home of Goliath) seems to have had a monopoly on the trade. That lasted until 830 BC, when King Hazael of Damascus destroyed the city. After that the kingdom of Judah was the leader in the Near Eastern olive oil industry.

God promised the Israelites a land of milk and honey, but from the point of view of their health and prosperity it was more a land of milk, honey and olive oil.

Richard R. Losch+

The Epistle is Online

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

Richard R. Losch+

If at first you don't succeed, perhaps you should not try skydiving.

Dates from the Past

Many may think that history is a lot of dates from the past, but in one case they may have a point. Dates were a staple food in Judea in ancient times, and were valued not only as a rich and tasty source of nutrition, but also because they can be dried and will keep for extremely long periods of time. They are to this day a staple in most Middle Eastern cultures.¹ There was one variety of date that has been thought to have become extinct about 1800 years ago. In the 1960s some seeds of this variety of date were found preserved in the ruins of Jerusalem from its destruction in AD 70. A few years later some similar seeds were found in the Qumran excavation (the source of the Dead Sea Scrolls). In 2005 some researchers from Israel's Arava Institute planted several dozens of these seeds at a kibbutz outside Jerusalem. Six of them eventually germinated, and to the delight of the researchers, there were both male and female plants, allowing for cross-pollination, reproduction, and the production of fruit. The first large harvest of dates was in 2020, and this year's is even larger. For the first time in almost two millennia, people can again taste what was once a favorite food. According to food experts, these dates taste much like the Medjool dates that are common world-wide today, except that they have a sweeter, honey-like flavor.

Richard R. Losch+

Bishop Curry to visit

The Right Reverend Glenda Curry, Bishop of Alabama, will visit St. Alban's and St. James' on Sunday, November 21st. The service at St. Alban's will be at 9:00 a.m. and at St. James' at 11:00 a.m. with coffee and light refreshments in following in the parish house.

Hiram Patrenos

¹ During Ramadan, when Muslims break their daily fast at sundown, the first food they eat before the evening meal is a few dates. That allegedly soothes the empty stomach and aids digestion.

The Order of Courses at Dinner

Did you ever wonder why we usually start dinner with a soup, and end with something sweet? Nutritionally there is no reason for following any particular order of courses, yet this order has been observed since medieval times. Before Vesalius revealed the wonders of human anatomy in 1543, theories of how the human body works were inaccurate and often bizarre. They were based on the beliefs of the ancient Greeks. Vesalius' work was not widely accepted by the medical community until late in the 17th century. The historian Ruth Goodman goes into fascinating detail on the beliefs about body functions in Tudor England,¹ and these still influence our eating customs today.

The nature of the body and the personality of the individual are determined by four fluids or "humors," blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile. The proper balance of these fluids is essential for a person to be healthy and "of good humor." The primary humor in men is blood, which makes them strong and virile. The primary humor in women is phlegm, which makes them delicate and weaker both physically and mentally (sorry, ladies, we are just reporting what people in Tudor times believed). Diet is essential to maintaining a correct balance of these humors in order to be healthy. Not only is what you eat important, but also how you eat it and in what order.

The food is first prepared in the mouth as if for a stew, by chopping and moistening it. The stomach is like a cauldron into which this stew is placed by swallowing. It is there "concocted" into a fluid and passed into the liver. The parts that are of no use to the body are passed into the intestines to be removed from the body as waste. The fluid is concocted further in the liver, which turns it into blood. The blood then flows to all the other parts of the body where it is turned into whatever is needed locally—muscle, bone, fat, skin or hair. Any excess water is stored in the bladder to be removed as necessary.

In order for the food to be concocted in the stomach it must

¹ *How to Be a Tudor*, Ruth Goodman, Liveright, New York, 2015

be cooked by the body heat before it has a chance to decay. That heat is produced underneath the stomach, like a fire below a cauldron. The primary humor in men is blood, which is hot. The primary humor in women is phlegm, which is cooler. Since their “cooking” is slower and at a lower temperature, it is necessary for women to eat more delicate foods than men if they are to be properly concocted into a useful fluid to be delivered to the liver. Women must also take care not to eat foods that decay easily, since they are slower in concocting them.

The “fire” is underneath the stomach.¹ The first thing you put in a cauldron is the food that needs to be cooked the longest and spoils fastest, since the bottom of the cauldron is the hottest place. You also need some liquid to keep the food from “catching” (sticking). Tudor soups usually contained beef or mutton, oatmeal, beans, and peas, all of which need long cooking times. You would therefore eat a soup or porridge first at a meal in order to put it at the bottom of the stomach. Bread must always be eaten with the soup, because it not only requires long cooking, but it aids in concocting the meat into a fluid. During Lent or on fast days (every Wednesday, Friday and Saturday) there would be no meat, but the soups would still contain oats, beans and peas. On those days the next course would be fish. While it spoils quickly, it can follow the soup because the heat of the soup would help cook it quickly. Men were encouraged to eat only small amounts of fish. Fish encourages the making of phlegm, the woman’s humor, and therefore eating too much fish will make a man weak and effeminate. Beef, on the other hand, is made of pure blood, and thus is a man’s most important food.² Those who needed extra nourishment, such as pregnant women or those who were weak from sickness, were allowed

¹ The expression “to have fire in the belly” originally referred to having good digestion. A man with fire in his belly was hale and healthy, and therefore eager to face a challenge.

² Soldiers were given as much meat as the army could afford. The royal guards were given all the beef they could eat. This is why to this day the British royal guards are called “Beefeaters.”

meat on the fast days (which were required by law) and encouraged to eat as much of it as possible.¹ If you were wealthy enough to have several meats on your table, boiled meats were to be eaten before roasted ones. Roasted meats had been subjected to higher heat and longer cooking time than boiled ones, and thus needed less concocting in the stomach. It was important not to over-eat these foods, however. Food that was lower in the stomach might be well concocted, but heavy foods higher up might remain too cool and thus be underdone.

After the meat dishes was the time to take a good draught of wine or ale. Diners did not have their own plates, but all ate from common dishes. There was also one large chalice of wine or tankard of ale for each four or five diners. You would occasionally take a large drink from it—it was rude just to sip. It was unhealthy to mix food with drink, so you would provide the stomach with sufficient liquid only between main courses. You must not drink after the soup, however, or you would drown the stomach. Next there would be vegetable dishes, which required little “cooking” in the stomach. These would be followed by a salad or fruit. Salads are cooling foods, so it is important not to put them right on top of foods that need a lot of cooking, such as meats.² If you were going to eat fruit you should not take a draught of wine before it. Fruit is watery, and too much liquid would water down the concoction and make thin blood, which in turn will produce weak organs. The fruit might be prepared in a custard, or served in its natural form. The last course would be cheese. It is slow to concoct, but it seals the stomach and prevents food from “coming back.”

To this day we still follow this order of eating our meals.

Richard R. Losch+

¹ The poor, who were by far the largest segment of Tudor society, could rarely afford meat, and were generally prohibited from hunting or fishing. They might have a little meat only at Christmas and perhaps at Easter.

² Most Europeans still eat the salad after the main part of the meal. At some time in the late Edwardian period Americans started eating salad as the first course. It is unknown why this change was made.

Pharisees and Sadducees

Every reader of the Gospels will recognize these names. Most think of them simply as enemies of Jesus and his teachings, but this is not at all necessarily the case. In fact, there were very likely a number of Pharisees and probably even a few Sadducees among his followers. The Sadducees were the least fond of him, because his teachings threatened their very comfortable way of life. His challenge of the Pharisees' closed-mindedness did not ingratiate him to many of them, either. The Pharisees and Sadducees were two of three important sects of Judaism, the third being the Essenes. The Essenes were a very exclusive sect of ascetics, most of whom lived in the desert and had minimal contact with any other Jews. Jesus therefore would have had little if any interaction with them.¹ They are not mentioned anywhere in the Bible, but they are described in several contemporary extra-biblical writings.

Occasionally we run into the phrase "Scribes and Pharisees." The scribes were not a sect. Originally scribes, as the word suggests, were literate men who lent out their literary services for a fee. If you were illiterate and needed to have something written or read to you, you could hire a scribe. Most scribes, however, were engaged in making copies of the sacred Scriptures for the Temple, as well as for synagogues and scholars. This was intensive work, because every single letter had to be double-checked for accuracy. If a mistake were made, that entire sheet of the scroll was burned, and the scribe had to start it all over.² Most (but not all) of the scribes were Sadducees who worked with the Temple authorities, so the words scribe and Sadducee were often used interchangeably.

¹ In the middle of the 20th century a huge library of Scriptures and other religious books was discovered in the caves of the Qumran Valley beside the Dead Sea. They came to be known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. Most scholars believe that they were the library of an Essene community who hid them when destruction by Rome was imminent in around AD 68.

² The Torah scrolls in synagogues today are still always handwritten by scribes in the same way. They are never mechanically or digitally printed.

Most Jews were not members of any of these sects. The Essenes were comparatively few in number. The total of Pharisees and Sadducees together represented only a small portion of the Jews, and most of these were from the upper classes. These three sects were relative late-comers, all three having had a common origin during the early Hasmonean (Maccabean) dynasty in the 2nd century BC. Their early roots, however, began in the 12th century BC. Moses had appointed his brother Aaron as the first High Priest, with his descendants to be his successors. Moses and Aaron were of the tribe of Levi. Only Levites could be priests (the Levitical priesthood), but only descendants of Aaron could be High Priests (the Aaronic priesthood). When Solomon dedicated the first Temple in 977 BC he appointed Zadok, an Aaronic Levite, as High Priest. For the next seven centuries every High Priest was of the clan of Zadok, and this was known as the Zadokite High Priesthood. All unblemished¹ male Zadokites were Temple priests, and only they were qualified to be considered for High Priest when an opening came. As such, they were afforded special rank, honor and privilege. This system worked well, and the people respected the High Priesthood. During the Hasmonean dynasty it all fell apart. The Royal family and the Temple leadership were plagued by infighting, conspiracies and corruption, and finally the High Priesthood ended up being sold to the highest bidder, who was not a Zadokite.² Many of the Zadokite priests, knowing where their bread was buttered, remained in service to the Temple. They gradually banded together to form something of a fraternity, bringing into their embrace many of the lay merchants and political leaders who oversaw the daily business operations of the Temple. The group came to be known as *Zadoqi* (צדוקי), which we translate as Sadducees.

Many of the Zadokites wanted no part of this corruption and left the service of the Temple. They had long differed with

¹ Unblemished meant that they had no mental or physical disorders, not even a birthmark, and that they had an honorable reputation.

² By AD 70 the High Priest was not even Aaronic.

the beliefs and practices of the others, and went their separate way. They brought into their fold many non-Levite Jews who believed as they did in the strict observance of the Law and oral traditions. They came to be known as Pharisees. The origin of the term is obscure, but since they were separatists, many scholars believe it came from *naphrod* (נפרד), “separate.” They were dedicated to strict observance not only of Torah, but also of the ancient non-scriptural oral laws and traditions.¹ They were also concerned to find interpretations of the Law that would enable the poor to be able to observe it completely, which could be a very expensive proposition. Unfortunately, by Jesus’ time they had lost sight of this, and demanded strict obedience to the letter of the Law, both written and oral.

A third group of Zadokites, the Essenes, retreated to the desert, where they formed monastic-like communities. There they lived a life of prayer and study, and rigidly observed all the complex disciplines of priestly life and ritual purity that were required of all priests serving in the Temple. They were very exclusive, but they did occasionally take in new members. Among these were non-Levites, but they, too, even though they could not be priests, were expected to observe all the rules that pertained to Temple priests. It was a very disciplined lifestyle.

The Sadducees believed only in what is clearly stated in the Torah. Heaven, Hell, angels, demons, resurrection of the dead, and even an afterlife are not mentioned in the Torah (what we call the first five books of the Old Testament), so the Sadducees denied them. They believed that the soul dies with the body, and that God rewards and punishes righteousness and sin in this life. If the righteous suffer, it is because they have committed some sin that is apparent only to God. If sinners prosper, it is because they have done something outstandingly good that outweighs their evil. Job and the Prophets refute that, but since they are not part of Torah the Sadducees ignored them.

The Pharisees took an opposite view. All those things that

¹ By the early 3rd century AD these oral traditions would be written and become the Mishnah, which is an important part of the Talmud.

the Sadducees denied had been believed by the earliest Israelites, and had become very strong in the oral tradition after the Babylonian Exile. The Pharisees had little complaint with Jesus' theology. It was his interpretation of how mankind should express it that they objected to. While they would not have said it that way, their attitude was definitely that man was made for the Sabbath, not the Sabbath for man. They demanded strict, inflexible adherence to the Law and the oral traditions.

While the Sadducees controlled the operations of the Temple and were hand-in-hand with the ruling authorities (including Rome), the Pharisees were clearly the religious leaders of the Jews. They were scholars and teachers of the Law, and most of them were very well educated. The majority were good men, but had missed the point. Most of the common people did not trust the Sadducees, looking upon them as many today look upon politicians. They often feared the Pharisees because of their strict requirements and enforcement of the religious law, but they nonetheless respected them. Many of them were wise and reasonable men, as Nicodemus appears to have been.¹

In AD 70 the Romans destroyed the Temple and leveled Jerusalem. The Jews dreamed that it would be rebuilt, but another revolt in 128 ended the dream. The emperor Hadrian planned to build a Roman city, Aelia Capitolina, on the ruins, and erect a temple to Jupiter where the Temple had stood on the Temple Mount. He expelled all the Jews from Judea and repopulated it with people from the other provinces. The Jews knew that the day of the Temple and thus of animal sacrifice (and of the Sadducees) was over. That was the dawn of the Rabbinic Period, which laid the base for Judaism as we know it today. Most of the early Rabbis (teachers) were very likely Pharisees.

Richard R. Losch+

¹ Some of the most popular episodes in the video series *The Chosen* are those that deal with Nicodemus. While a great deal more is added to his story than what the Bible tells us about him, there is nothing that is inconsistent with the biblical account. According to the Bible, Nicodemus was a powerful Pharisee ("a teacher of Israel") who was very interested in Jesus' teaching, and who may well have been secretly a disciple.

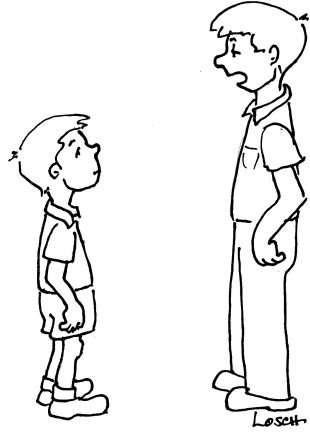
A Touch of Trivia

The Mayflower sailed from Plymouth, England to Massachusetts Bay at an average speed of 1½ mph, taking 3 months for the 3,125-mile trip. It was supposed to go inland up the Hudson River, but it was blown off course and first spotted land at Cape Cod. Supplies were running short and winter was setting in, so they chose to anchor in what is now Plymouth Harbor. It was too late to start building, so they stayed on the ship all winter, starting the settlement in the spring of 1621.

Richard R. Losch+

JAMIE

by Richard R. Losch



“The worst part of being a grown-up is that people expect you to act like one.”



Saint James' Episcopal Church
P. O. Box 446
Livingston, AL 35470

Non Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Livingston, AL
Permit No. 186