

THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church
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October 2019

This Month's Cover

This month's cover is a detail from *The Martyrdom of Saint Ignatius of Antioch*, attributed by most critics to Cesare Fracanzano, and dated about 1635. It is a classic of the Baroque style. It is oil on canvas, and the dimensions of the complete painting are 3'4"x4'. It is displayed in the Borghese Gallery in Rome. The painting is somewhat controversial, because critics disagree not only on the artist, but also on the subject itself. Some claim that it depicts the martyrdom of St. Januarius of Benevento (d. A.D. 305 under Diocletian), who, like St. Ignatius of Antioch (d. A.D. 108 under Trajan), was martyred in the Colosseum by wild animals. The majority of critics, however, hold that it is St. Ignatius and was painted by Fracanzano.

Saint Ignatius of Antioch (October 17) was one of the second century Fathers of the Church. Because of the scanty records, little is known of his life beyond what is revealed in his letters. Scholars are not even sure of the date of his death, although it is certain that he was thrown to wild animals in the arena in Rome. The majority place his martyrdom under the emperor Trajan in A.D. 108, although some place it as late as A.D. 140 under Marcus Aurelius. He was the Bishop of Antioch (now Antakya, Turkey). On his journey from Antioch to Rome he wrote a series of letters that are treasures of theology and also of history, as they reveal a great deal about the culture of the Christian Church at the time. It is likely that he knew personally some of the Apostles, including Saint Paul. Ancient tradition says that he was converted very young, and was a disciple of Saint John the Apostle. In that era Christians condemned to death were normally executed locally. The only exceptions were Roman citizens and important prisoners of war. Nonetheless, Ignatius was condemned in Antioch and then

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escorted to Rome for execution by what he called “a band of soldiers.” If he were a citizen, he could have appealed to the emperor and would have been beheaded instead of being tortured in a public spectacle in the arena. Another possibility is that he was considered either very important or very dangerous, and the latter is not likely. His letters indicate that he wanted very much to be a martyr, so even if he were a citizen it is unlikely that he would have requested to go to Rome to be tried before the emperor. There is one other theory, and that is that he was indicted by a legate of the Syrian governor while the governor was away. Since a legate did not have the authority to condemn a freeman for a capital crime, he was transported to Rome for trial and execution. At any rate, the letters he wrote on that long journey are priceless windows into the Christian thinking and the provincial culture of the time.

Cesare Fracanzano (1605-1651) was a Neapolitan painter who worked in the Baroque style. He was born in Bisceglie, Italy, the son of Alessandro Fracanzano, a nobleman of Verona who was a fashion painter (one who decorated palaces and did portraits of the rich and powerful). Cesare and his brother Francesco, who also became a painter, traveled all over Italy with their father as he went from place to place on commissions. Cesare studied under Jusepe Ribera (Lo Spagnoletto), and was strongly influenced by Tintoretto, the Caracci brothers and Guido Reni. In 1626 he moved to Barletta, where he married and established a studio. Only occasionally would he leave for short periods to work on churches or palaces in Naples and Rome. He died in Barletta sometime around 1651.

Richard R. Losch+

A Word from the Editor

Living in the solidly Bible Belt South, I am frequently asked (often in a reproving tone of voice) why we pray to the saints—shouldn't we pray only to God? The answer hangs firmly on the definition of the word pray. If praying means talking only to a deity, then praying to anyone other than God would indeed be idolatrous. Praying, however, is not that

restricted. It simply means entreating—asking sincerely for something. We spend our lives asking for things not only from God, but also from each other. While our prayer life with God should entail considerably more than just asking him for things, technically the *prayer* part of our prayer is when we make a request of him. When we pray to the saints, therefore, we are simply asking them for something—usually that they will pray to God for us or for someone whom we think needs prayer. With that having been explained, the next question is usually something to the effect of “But they are dead. How can dead people pray for you?” The obvious answer, of course, is that they are not in the least bit dead. Their corruptible mortal bodies may be dead, decayed and gone, but the saints are nonetheless far from dead. And if they are indeed saints then they are closer to God than any of us will ever be in this earthly stage of our existence. We regularly ask our friends to pray for us, particularly when we are in some kind of distress, and we likewise pray for others. This is called intercessory prayer, and it is an important part of a healthy prayer life. To use the word pray correctly, we literally pray to our friends to pray to God for us. Why then should we not ask the best friends we could ever have, the saints in heaven who desire only the very best for us, to do the same?

Father Rick Losch+

Thanks from Maggie

I received the following email from Maggie Noland:

“Wow! I have received so much more support from St. James’ parishioners than I ever expected! I have gone over the financial goal of \$150, have a number of parishioners praying, and have received many colored sheets! I have engaged my exercise and knitting friends in this endeavor as well as some of the students I tutor and the Mennonite community. Everyone has been wonderful, and I am humbled and awed.”

Christian Valley Baptist Church and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes at USC and UWA also helped. The prisoners whom the Kairos ministry helps will be very grateful.

Richard R. Losch+

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

Blessing of the Animals on October 6th

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, 2019, at 2:00 p.m. in the courtyard. While altercations between animals are extremely rare at these services, we ask that your animals be leashed, tethered or caged. Please invite your friends and neighbors to this happy occasion.

Hiram Patrenos

Evening Prayer & Supper

Our fall Evening Prayer will be on Wednesday, October 16th, at 6:00 p.m. with a "Fall Feast" following in the parish house. Signup sheets for attendance and various food types/dishes are posted on the bulletin board in the vestibule. Please make your plans to attend.

Hiram Patrenos

ECW United Thank Offering

The United Thank Offering (UTO) is a ministry of the Episcopal Church for the mission of the whole church. Through the 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.

The ingathering of the United Thank Offering will be on Sunday, October 20th. Envelopes for contributions (*checks should be payable*

to *Episcopal Church Women or ECW*) are available on the table at the rear of the church and may be placed in the alms basins.

Hiram Patrenos

The Gideons International

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

Don't Take Abraham Lightly

One of the difficulties of studying the Bible (or any literature) in translation is that something is usually lost. The subtle nuances of words in one language are often not carried across into their equivalents in another. It has been observed that reading a translation is like listening to Bach played on a harmonica. You get the tune, but you miss most of the rest of it.

In Genesis 12:3 God tells Abraham, “I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse.” There are two very different words here that are both correctly translated “curse.” The first, in “the one who curses you,” is *meqalalka* (מקללך). This implies to take lightly, despise, or treat with contempt. The second, in “I will curse,” is *aor* (אור). This implies to destroy completely. This passage is much more than a simple threat of a curse for a curse, as in eye-for-eye and tooth-for-tooth retribution. Treating Abraham (i.e. the Promise and the Covenant) with disrespect will bring down the devastating wrath of God. Although it is not a literal translation, perhaps a better English rendering of this passage would be, “The one who disrespects you I will utterly destroy.” This admonishes us that if we take the Faith anything less than seriously and with respect, it would be far better for us not take it at all.

Richard R. Losch+

Be Wordly Wise

This month we are going to consider letters instead of words. The alphabet as we know it today has not always contained 26 letters. In Early English there were no letters *j*, *v* or *w*, but there was the letter *eth* (*þ*), which was pronounced like the *th* in “thee.” By the 14th century it was called *thorn* (with a soft *th*, again as in “thee”, and its symbol had shifted from *þ* to a letter that looked very much like *y*, although it was still pronounced as *th*. This is the source of the advertising construct used in such “cute” signs as “Ye Olde Coffee Shoppe.” While the spelling has the flavor of Old English, this is a strictly modern advertising construct. The “Ye,” however, uses the letter *thorn*, not *y*, and so should be pronounced “The.”

There were no letters *j*, *v* or *w* in the alphabet until the Renaissance. Those sounds were represented by *i*, *u* and *uu* (literally double-*u*). You simply had to know whether *i* represented the sound of the consonants *j* or *y*, or the long or short vowel *i*. Even today without diacritical marks, only the context tells you whether *i* represents a long or short *i* or the sound of a long *ē*. It was the same with the *u* and *v* when *u* represented both.

In 1524 the Italian grammarian Gian Giorgio Trissino urged for the addition of the letter *j* to the alphabet. For centuries *j* was what printers call a swash—a flourish that is just an embellishment to a letter. The letter *j* was a swash of *i*, most often used to indicate the end of a series of *i*'s in lowercase Roman numerals. For example, lowercase Roman numerals were *i*, *ij*, *ijj*, *iv*, *v*, *vi*, *vij*, *vijj*, etc. By the middle of the 15th century, however, *j* was also used to distinguish between the different sounds that we know today as *j* and *i*. For the first time the Lord's name was written as Jesus instead of Iesus. However, it would be almost three more centuries before *j* was generally recognized as a letter of the alphabet. It is still not universally accepted as we use it. In almost all Hispanic languages (except Portuguese), *j* is pronounced like *h*, while *h* is always silent; and in most Teutonic languages *j* is pronounced like *y*.

Richard R. Losch+

The Good Shepherd (Psalm 23)

Of all the passages in the Bible, one that is recognized by almost everyone, believer and non-believer alike, is Psalm 23. The Old Testament is full of metaphors of God as the Good Shepherd, and this is epitomized in the 23rd Psalm. Most of Jesus' hearers were thoroughly familiar with the Scriptures. When he referred to himself as the Good Shepherd, they would immediately have recognized this as a declaration of his own divinity, and this infuriated the Pharisees and Sadducees.

When the Bible calls us sheep, it is not using a particularly complimentary metaphor. City folks may think of lambs as cute, cuddly, sweet and gentle little animals, but in reality this is far from the case. Sheep are stupid, smelly, greasy, dirty and stubborn creatures. They do not think for themselves, but are totally dependent on the herd mentality and the guidance and protection of the shepherd. A sheep will never willingly separate himself from the flock, but in a pasture he can become so absorbed with the grass at hand that he will slowly nibble his way apart from them ("All we like sheep have gone astray" [Is. 53:6]). Eventually he can wander out of sight of the flock, and when he suddenly realizes that the flock is no longer there he panics. He looks for some kind of cover, hiding behind a bush or a rock, and starts crying with one of the most pathetic cries in nature. This cry is a dinner bell to any predators in the vicinity, but as the predators approach the sheep will simply stay where he is and tremble and cry. He will not run until he is actually touched, and of course then it is too late. A good shepherd will search for the lost sheep. If he finds him in time the sheep is so terrified that it cannot walk, so the shepherd lifts him onto his shoulders and carries him back to the flock.

The 23rd Psalm is a paean of praise to God the Good Shepherd. Many people read it as a hymn about what they have received from God, but if we read it carefully we see that its focus is on God and his providence, not on us. It opens with the statement that because God is our shepherd, we will not want for anything that is necessary. He may not give us everything that we desire, but he will give us everything that we need—"I shall

not want.” Sheep will not lie down unless they feel safe. He leads us to where our needs are supplied and we can rest in security. “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.” Sheep cannot swim, and are rightfully afraid of active water. Despite the grease in their wool, when it gets wet it is very heavy. If water splashes on only part of the sheep the weight can throw him off balance, possibly causing him to fall into the water and drown. Because of this they will drink only from still or very slowly moving water—“He leadeth me beside the still waters.”

A good shepherd will guide the flock to a safe path, and turn them around if they are heading in the wrong direction. The verb that we translate “restoreth” (“He restoreth my soul”) is *y’shubeb* (יִשׁוּבֵב). This is unquestionably the same word that John the Baptist used when he called on his followers to repent.¹ It means to turn around and go in a new direction. Clearly what the Psalmist² meant when he wrote that line was that God redirects us to a more righteous course—“He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his Name’s sake.”

In ancient times a shepherd had three primary tools. One was a sling, which was a very effective weapon against wolves and lions. The sling is critical in the story of David and Goliath. Another was what we commonly call the shepherd’s crook (*mishant*, מִשְׁעֲנָה), which is translated as a staff. This was a long stave bent at the top into a hook.³ With it he could hook onto a sheep by the neck or a leg and pull it back from danger. It could also be used, like any strong stick, as a weapon. The third tool was the rod (*shibta*, שִׁבְטָה). This was a club, often with bits of metal or sharp stones embedded in the head, much like a medieval mace. It was a formidable weapon at close range. If a

¹ John spoke Aramaic, a language very close to Hebrew. We have only the Greek record of his teachings, but there is no doubt that he would have used a word with the Hebrew root *shub* (שׁוּב), turn around.

² Psalm 23 is one of the 73 Psalms that scholars generally believe to have been composed by King David.

³ A bishop’s crozier is symbolic of a shepherd’s crook, as he is metaphorically the shepherd of his people.

wolf or lion got too close to use the sling, the rod and staff were good weapons of last resort. If we were walking in a place surrounded by deadly enemies, it would be a great comfort to be accompanied by a strong protector armed with good weapons. “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” Remember that in Jacobean English, to comfort meant to strengthen and encourage, not to give ease.

In the fifth verse the metaphor suddenly shifts from a sheep to a human. From the very earliest times a banquet has been a symbol of security, happiness and prosperity. In ancient Israel it was a common practice to hold a banquet in an open place. People were allowed to come in and stand around watching, but not to participate in the food or festivities. This was actually a rather arrogant form of conspicuous consumption—“Look, you wretched peasants, at what a wonderful time I am having with my friends.”¹ This was a very common custom in Jesus’ time. When he was a guest at the homes of tax collectors and other sinners, who were undoubtedly thrilled to be able to dine with such a noted celebrity, the Pharisees and Sadducees stood about chastising him and sneering at the “lowlifes” with whom he was willing to eat. Certainly many of them recalled the verse of the Psalm, “Thou prepares a table before me in the presence of mine enemies,” and were comforted by it.

Banquets in ancient times could be messy affairs. It was common courtesy when guests arrived to have a slave wash their feet, and then the host would pour scented oil on their heads. A few drops were sufficient to be polite, but it was a great honor to have enough oil poured that it ran down onto the collar. Having an oily collar on your robe was a sign that you were respected. At the table, a sign of opulence was to fill the guest’s cup to the brim so that it ran over just a little bit (that was another act of conspicuous consumption, showing that you

¹ This is why when Jesus was at a banquet the prostitute could run up and wash his feet with her tears. No one was shocked that she was there, they were simply shocked that she had the temerity to intrude herself into the festivities, and that Jesus allowed it without reprimanding her.

could afford to waste good wine). “Thou anointest my head with oil. My cup runneth over.” The Psalmist recognizes that God’s welcoming and his bounty have no limit.

In conclusion the Psalmist returns to the sheep metaphor. Despite classic nativity scenes, stables in ancient Israel were extremely rare. The rich hired shepherds to keep their flocks at their own homes, and the poor took care of their own animals. Except for large flocks, the sheep lived in the people’s houses. The humans spent most of their time on the covered flat roof of the house (the Palestinian climate encouraged that for most of the year), and the animals lived in the house (except in deep winter, the sheep slept in the fields). The Psalmist affirms that those who accept being part of God’s flock and who conform to his will shall be secure in his care forever: “Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the House of the LORD forever.”

Richard R. Losch+

Why We Refer to God as He

In February 2019 the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, D.C. resolved that they would no longer use any masculine pronouns to refer to God in their official publications, and that they would promote that policy for the next version of the Book of Common Prayer. I believe this to be a very bad decision for several reasons, not the least of which is that it panders to an inane political correctness that is eroding our culture. There is a tendency today to confuse true masculinity with a puerile chest-beating machismo that is neither masculine nor commendable. The popular expression for that is “toxic masculinity,” and it should in no way be confused with true masculinity. Many psychologists and sociologists maintain that the loss of true masculinity in our culture, and thus of the values it espouses, is one of the causes of modern cultural decay, and is a serious threat not only to femininity, but to women in general.

The Old Testament clearly recognizes that God is neither male nor female. God transcends gender, and the Bible ascribes to him all the attributes that we usually identify both as mascu-

line and as feminine.¹ Nonetheless it consistently refers to God in male terms for good reason. The only choices are to use the masculine *he*, the feminine *she* or the neuter *it*, and since God is obviously sentient and personal, the neuter *it* is inappropriate.² The ancient Jews expected us to have a loving relationship with God, and one cannot relate to or love an impersonal neuter object. In fact *it* would not even have been a choice in the Bible, because Hebrew and Aramaic, then languages in which the Old Testament was written, have no neuter nouns. It is also a construct in almost every language in the world that when the gender is indeterminate, the masculine form is used. Regardless of whether this is politically incorrect and offends a certain segment of modern society, it is a linguistic fact.³

Ancient societies were for the most part patriarchal, yet many worshiped goddesses. Patriarchy was not a factor when it came to the choice of referring to God in male terms. As the Bible sees it, God is committed to making this a good world, and the only way that can be done is to make people good. If we look at history it becomes patently evident that the vast majority of the violence and evil in the world's history has been perpetrated by males, and this is substantiated by modern statistical data. Again, through history we can see that while there have always been evil women, women in general have been a stabilizing factor in almost every society. It appears, then, that if anyone needs to be fixed, it is the males (we hope the extremist branch of feminism does not take this too literally).

For those who believe that the only difference between

¹ To be perfectly correct, we should use the word sex, not gender. Sex is a biological term (there are two of them, male and female) and gender is a linguistic one (there are three, masculine, feminine and neuter). Notwithstanding, we will submit to the common usage and use the word gender.

² The Force in *Star Wars* is called *it*, because it is neuter. It is an impersonal cosmic force, not a sentient personal being like God.

³ This is slowly changing as many now use the non-gender-specific plural "they," "them" and "their" in place of gender-specific singular pronouns. Long ago English slowly moved away from the singular "thee," "thou," and "thy" and replaced them with the plural "you" and "your."

males and females is anatomical, and for those who believe that there are more than two human genders, there is no point in reading any further. A plethora of studies have shown that there are often astounding differences between males and females, even moments after birth when there has been no time to acculturate them to any gender patterns. While this is true, in no way should it be used as an argument that either is superior to the other. The two genders may differ in attributes, but they are in every way equal in value and human rights.

Psychologists recognize the importance of a strong male role model for boys, and the most influential of all role models is a good father. Statistics show that without a positive male authority figure, boys are far more likely to grow up doing harm, and that harm is often directed toward women. It is thus to the benefit not only of young males, but also of women that God be depicted as a male figure, even though he is in fact genderless. If God were depicted as a female, the natural tendency of boys would be to identify the gentler attributes of empathy, mercy and compassion as feminine, and they would be far less likely to emulate them. If God is depicted as a male, however, strong, protective, affirming and sometimes even a warrior, boys are far more likely to want to adopt his gentler attributes of empathy, mercy and compassion as well. On the other hand, psychological data confirm that girls relate to these attributes equally well whether they are displayed by a male or a female role model. The data also indicate that girls respond equally to a male authority figure as to a female one. This may be why relatively so little violence and crime is committed by women.

In 2008 President Obama, basing his statement on proven statistical data, pointed out in a speech, “Children who grow up without a father are five times more likely to live in poverty and commit crime, nine times more likely to drop out of school, and twenty times more likely to end up in prison.” Dr. Alvin Poussant, a Harvard Medical School psychiatrist, commenting on that speech, said, “The absence of fathers corresponds to a host of social ills, including dropping out of school and serving time in jail.” If children have no father or adult male close

friend as a role model and authority figure, at least they can be taught to look to a Father in heaven—a God, not a Goddess—who can represent to them those attributes that they should emulate, and establish moral values such as those in the Ten Commandments that will guide them toward becoming better people.

This does not only apply to boys, but also to adult men. Boys who were taught good values by a strong, positive and loving father continue to hold those values in their adult lives. The influence of the father follows them throughout their lives. In the same way, the influence God had on us as children continues to influence us in our adult lives, even if we have faded away from the Church, and even if we have lost our faith in God altogether. “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6).

There is no question that a strong woman can also teach these same values to boys. Countless women without husbands have been extraordinarily effective in raising good sons who have sound values and are important contributors to society. Notwithstanding, statistics prove that while many women do achieve this, the odds are not in favor of their success.

Depicting God as a male, therefore, is considerably more than just a vestige of a patriarchal society. This was understood even in ancient times, as we can see in many records of ancient interpretations of Biblical passages. As we mentioned above, since most of the mayhem and violence in the world is committed by males, and much of that is against women and the weak or defenseless, it is to the benefit of both males and females that God is depicted to developing males not only as a male role model, but as one who abhors such ill behavior.

Richard R. Losch+

The Epistle is Online

The last six years of *The Epistle*, including this issue, are online. Go to <http://rlosch.com> and click on the “Epistle” tab at the top. 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

Going to the Dogs

In the last July/August article “Dogs in Ancient Israel,” we omitted an important point. In Jesus’ encounter with the Canaanite woman (Matt. 15:21ff), he tells her that it is not fit to take the bread intended for the children and throw it to the dogs. Many people read this as a rude insult to the woman (and to all Gentiles), but that was not so. In earlier times most people in the Middle East despised dogs, but by Jesus’ time they were not only used as work animals (particularly in herding), but they were also kept by many as pets and companions. Unlike pets in modern Western society, however, they were never considered part of the family, and they were not allowed in the house. Even when such animals as sheep, donkeys or chickens were brought into the house in bad weather, dogs were rarely allowed to enter (among other things, they frightened the other animals). A dog might be allowed in for protection under the most severe weather conditions, but normally he was definitely considered an outsider. When Jesus identified the Canaanite woman as a dog, therefore, it was not to dehumanize her. He was simply pointing out that she was an outsider, not a member of the family of the Covenant. It was not considered fit to give the benefits of the Covenant to those who were outside of it.

Jews generally lived on the flat roofs of their houses, where they cooked, ate and slept, going inside only when the weather was really bad. The Palestinian climate allowed that during most of the year. The roof was shaded with a palm-thatched or tent-cloth canopy. When they ate, they might toss an occasional tidbit to the dog on the ground below, and if something fell from the table they might kick it over the edge. This is what the woman was referring to when she said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” At that point, acknowledging her faith, he healed her daughter. The New Covenant, under which all mankind was open to receive God’s Grace, would not be sealed until his death on the Cross. Even so, the blessings of the Old Covenant would not be denied to those whose faith brought them to God.

Richard R. Losch+

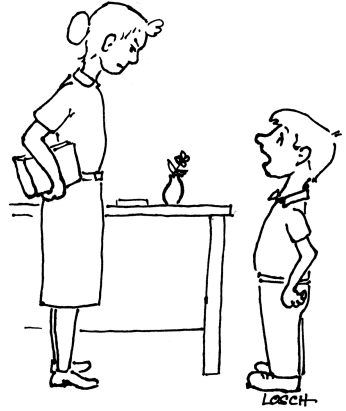
A Touch of Trivia

Would you like to put on a huge party to impress your friends? You can rent the Principality of Liechtenstein—yes, you can rent the whole 160-acre country—for \$70,000 a night for a minimum of two nights, complete with customized street signs and valid temporary currency. This includes accommodations for up to 150 people, although its 38,000 citizens will remain. On your arrival you will be presented with a symbolic key to the country, and you and your guests will enjoy a wine-tasting at the royal palace of Prince Hans-Adam II, the head of state.

Richard R. Losch+

JAMIE

by Richard R. Losch



“First you tell me to accept myself for who I am, and then you tell me that I have to change my ways!”



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