

THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church
Livingston, Alabama



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September 2016

This Month's Cover

This month's cover painting is Guido Reni's *Saint Michael the Archangel* (whose feast is on September 30). It is oil on canvas with dimensions of about 6½' x 9½', and was completed in 1639. It is displayed in the Church of Santa Maria della Concezione in Rome. It shows the Archangel Michael, wearing a late Roman military cloak and cuirass. His foot is on the neck of the defeated and chained Lucifer, who is about to be cast into Hell. A mosaic copy of this painting is over the Saint Michael Altar in Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome.

Guido Reni (1575-1642) was a post-Renaissance Italian painter who worked in the High Baroque style. He was born in Bologna to a family of successful musicians. As a small child he showed little talent for music, but displayed a great artistic talent that his family fortunately nurtured. At the age of nine he was apprenticed to the Bolognese artist Denis Calvaert. Soon afterward he was joined in that studio by Francesco Albani and Domenichino (Domenico Zampleri), both of whom had a strong early influence on Reni and went on to become great artists. About 10 years later the three went over to the rival studio of Ludovico Carracci. By 1601 Reni's work was well known in Rome, and he moved there to work on the frescoes at the Farnese Palace. In 1607 he was patronized by the Borghese family (the family of Pope Paul V).

In 1618 he went to Naples to work on the ceiling of the chapel of San Gennaro, but the competition among artists in Naples was not only fierce, but also vicious. When he learned of a plot to poison him he returned to Bologna (later Domenichino was poisoned in Naples). He remained in Bologna the rest of his life, travelling occasionally to work on frescoes,

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some of which are among his greatest masterpieces.

In Rome in the 1630s two of the most powerful families, the Barberini and the Pamphili, were bitter enemies. Pope Paul's successor, Urban VIII, was a Barberini. Reni learned that he had been slandered by Cardinal Giovanni Pamphili, and when in 1638 he was commissioned to do a painting of Saint Michael he seized the opportunity to get vengeance and curry favor with Pope Urban at the same time. There is no question that the face of Lucifer in the painting is that of Cardinal Pamphili. The cardinal was furious, but Reni said that he had had a vision of Lucifer, and he couldn't help it if Lucifer and the cardinal looked alike. The painting became enormously famous, which turned out to be a bit embarrassing to Cardinal Pamphili when in 1644 he was elected Pope Innocent X.



*Giovanni Pamphili
(Pope Innocent X)*

Guido Reni died in Bologna in 1642. He is buried in the Basilica of San Domenico alongside of Elisabetta Sirani, one of the greatest women artists of the Italian Baroque period.

Richard R. Losch+

A Word From the Editor

In 1970, in the theological journal *Communio*, a priest-professor at the University of Regensburg wrote a chilling prophecy. He was Msgr. Joseph A. Ratzinger, who would 35 years later be elected Pope Benedict XVI. He wrote, "It seems certain to me that the Church is facing very hard times. The real crisis has scarcely begun. We will have to count on terrific upheavals. The Church will become small and will have to start afresh more or less from the beginning. She will no longer be able to inhabit many of the edifices she built in prosperity. As the number of her adherents diminishes, she will lose many of her social privileges."

He wrote this at a time when Catholic and Protestant churches alike were full—when it was common for Roman Catholic churches to have four or five Masses every Sunday

morning with standing room only, and new Protestant churches were springing up everywhere. Less than half a century later churches of all denominations are often nearly empty, and hundreds every year shut down permanently. In 1970 anyone who did not go to church frequently was generally looked at with a wary eye. Today those who do go to church frequently are looked at the same way. In 1970 the State would bend over backwards to accommodate people's religious beliefs, with the possible exception of the "far out" fringe sects such as snake-handlers and Satanists. Today religion is expected to conform its beliefs to the cultural whims of the State, and Satanists place their shrines in the public square alongside the Nativity scenes and Menorahs that are so detested by the "separation of Church and State" crowd.

What has brought about this monumental change? There is, of course, no simple answer, but I believe that ignorance and indifference are at the root of it. There is an ironically humorous story about the man who was asked, "Which is the greater problem—ignorance, or indifference?" He replied, "I don't know, and I don't care." Indifference grows from ignorance, and I am convinced that ignorance is the foundation of the whole problem. Why should anyone commit himself to something about which he knows little or nothing? I lay the responsibility for this ignorance at the feet of my ecclesiastical colleagues. We clergy have failed to teach the Faith, and the Bishops have failed to demand discipline and conformity to that Faith. This is not a condemnation of just the Episcopal Church, but of the entire Christian Church, Catholic and Protestant alike. We have been so interested in political correctness and in promoting "social justice" in order to fill the pews, that we have accomplished nothing more than to empty the pews and to fail in our most important mission, which is to keep souls out of Hell and get them into Heaven.

When Israel and Judah were in exile, most of the people became absorbed into the Mesopotamian culture and religion, and disappeared from history. Among the Judeans, however, there was what Isaiah called the righteous remnant that re-

mained faithful to God. Some returned to rebuild Jerusalem, and others stayed in Babylonia and Persia, yet remained true to their faith. There is a powerful, albeit small, remnant in Christianity that still remains true to the Faith in spite of the worldly pressures to adulterate or abandon it. They are the future of the Church, and a great responsibility has been laid upon their shoulders. Those who strive to meet that responsibility will be richly blessed, despite the difficulties and challenges that they will face in doing so. The phenomenal growth of the Church in the early days was not accomplished by the Apostles, even though they were the leaders and defenders of the true Faith. It was accomplished by countless lay people who dedicated and often lay down their lives to spread salvation to every corner of the earth. Most of these early Christians have been forgotten by history, but are well remembered in Heaven. Those of us who would be a part of that righteous remnant must now do all we can to learn the Faith through study, prayer, communal worship and the sacramental life of the Church. As Msgr. Ratzinger said, "The Church ... will have to start afresh more or less from the beginning." If we are willing to overcome our ignorance and indifference, we can be a part of that new start—and what an exciting adventure that will be!

Father Rick Losch

Acolytes Recognized

On Sunday, August 14, Father Losch recognized Hannah and Joshua Rankin for their service to St. James' as acolytes. Hannah was presented with a silver cross on a gold cord for ten years of service. Josh was presented with a wooden cross on a blue ribbon for two years of service. William Green-Burns was presented his wooden cross with a red ribbon on Sunday, August 21, for four years of service. We appreciate the faithfulness of these young people and commend them for their dedication. We also appreciate the service of Valerie Burnes and Ethel Scott who serve as adult acolytes.

Maggie Noland

Thank You, Charlie Muñoz!

Heartfelt thanks to Charlie Muñoz for once again using his skills as a craftsman to make the silver cross that was presented to Hannah Rankin for her service as an acolyte! Charlie is quite an artisan, and we are fortunate to have him in our midst. He has graciously made a number of silver crosses for our acolytes in the past years, and this adds tremendously to the specialness of the presentation. Hannah's cross is signed with Charlie's name on the back, and is hers to keep.

The wooden crosses that are presented to the acolytes were made by Jim Pate, who was a parishioner of St. James' for many years. These crosses are re-used by the acolytes with different ribbons to signify the number of years served.

We greatly appreciate the time and effort from both of these men!

Maggie Noland

Evening Prayer and Supper

Our September service of Evening Prayer will be on Wednesday, September 21st at 6:00 p.m. with a "Tail Gate Dinner" following in the parish house. Signup sheets for attendance, various food types, items and responsibilities are posted on the bulletin board in the narthex/vestibule. You are invited to bring your favorite wine to share. Soft drinks will be furnished. Make your plans to attend, bring your friends, and wear your favorite school's colors.

Hiram Patrenos

Altar Flower Volunteers

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

Sunday School Reminder

Sunday School for our children as well as the adult class will begin on September 11th at 10:00 a.m.

Hiram Patrenos

Christian Martyrdom Can Destroy Islamic Fanaticism

We hear a lot about martyrdom these days every time another Islamic extremist dies in the performance of an act of terrorism. These extremists have been brainwashed to believe that if they die “in the service of Allah” then they are martyrs, and will instantly enter paradise with physical pleasure and in glory. The problem is that they have so corrupted the concept of what service to Allah means that they are willing and even anxious to commit the most heinous acts of violence and murder in the name of the very deity that they call the All-Merciful. This is a distorted teaching that is not at all consistent with the traditional teachings of Islam.

As Christianity has taught from the very beginning, martyrdom has great power. When a Christian willingly lays down his life for Christ the power of God’s love is not only displayed to the world, but is poured forth into it. On the surface this may seem like a paradox—how can the world look at such a sacrifice and believe that a loving God wants this? It does not make sense from a worldly point of view, yet there is no question that the primary force that brought about the huge growth of the Church during the era of Roman persecution was the death of the martyrs. Romans who had become jaded and disillusioned looked at the willingness of these Christians to die rather than renounce their faith, and they wanted what the Christians had. Nero wept in frustration because he could not understand why the bodies of martyrs in the arena, many smiling, looked peaceful rather than terrified.

The particularly interesting thing is that Christianity offers its martyrs no greater reward in heaven than is given to any other holy and righteous person who dies in the Faith. In Is-

lamic teaching, martyrs are given special glory and privilege and even sensual rewards in paradise, especially to those who actively seek to become martyrs. In Christian teaching, going out of one's way to become a martyr is tantamount to suicide, and anyone who does so is in danger of mortal sin. The Christian (as well as the moderate Muslim) does not seek martyrdom, but accepts it if it comes his way. One of the worst aspects of extremist Islam is that it encourages its followers to seek death through what they call martyrdom. It has been observed that one of the main differences between Islam and Christianity is that Allah expects us to give our sons to die for him, while God gave his Son to die for us.

It may be asked, if Christianity is strengthened because of martyrdom, then wouldn't the same be true of Islam? In the case of devout Muslims (or devout people of any faith) who accept martyrdom rather than renounce their faith, it would be true. In the case of the fanatics, however, most die because they choose to die and go out of their way to become martyrs. Most fanatic Islamic "martyrs" die either by their own hands or in acts of violence that they themselves have caused. In Christian theology this is a road to damnation, and by any practical secular standard it does not lead to the strengthening or the growth of the ideology that encourages it.

It is an ill wind, it is said, that blows no good. Even though a good result never justifies the evil that brings it about, good does rise out of evil. Even the greatest mass murder in history, the Holocaust, brought about the reunification and strengthening of the world's Jews, and produced the Nation of Israel. The Church is nourished by the blood of her martyrs, and that nourished Church will eventually see the self-destruction of the fanatics who are slaughtering her martyrs. And those martyrs, if they suffer and die rather than deny Christ, will be rewarded with everlasting life in Christ's heavenly kingdom.

Richard R. Losch+

Headline in the Wellington, NZ *Dominion-Post* on June 9, 2016:
"Grapes Grown in Graveyard Produce a Full-Bodied Wine"

Be Wordly Wise

For Crying Out Loud

Three interesting words derive from the Latin *plorare*, to wail or to cry out. They are implore, deplore, and explore. All three appeared in Latin long before they came into English via French. The Latin words *implorare*, *deplorare*, and *explorare* are formed using the prefixes *in-* (into), *de-* (from) and *ex-* (out of). In Latin, *implorare* means to beg for tearfully; *deplorare* is to weep bitterly or to lament; and *explorare* is to search for something desperately, with the implication of weeping with relief upon finding it, crying out something like “Eureka!”¹ The next time you implore, deplore or explore, remember that these actions could even involve tears.

Richard R. Losch+

Jesus' Revelation of His Messiahship

The Jewish Messianic prophecies said that the Messiah would not be recognized as such until the proper time, and then only by those who would accept him. The Bible tells us that although there were several times that Jesus hinted at it or allowed others to identify him as the Messiah, there was only one time that he ever directly claimed to be such. Outside Caesarea Philippi he asked his disciples who they say he is, and Peter said, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.” It is noteworthy, though, that Jesus did not directly affirm Peter’s claim. He simply said that Peter could not have known this unless God had told him so (Matt. 16:16f). At his trial they said, “If you are the Messiah, tell us.” He replied, “If I tell you, you will not believe me” (Lk. 22:67).

One time, however, Jesus directly claimed to be the Mes-

¹ *Eureka* is Greek for “I have found it!” Archimedes was charged by the king to determine if his goldsmiths were using impure gold. According to the legend, he was in his bath when he discovered how to do it, and ran naked through the streets of Athens to the palace, crying, “Eureka!”

siah, and it is significant that not only did he make this claim to a foreign sinner of a particularly hated sect, but also there were no Jews present. The Samaritans were a heretical sect who claimed that the Law was given not to Moses on Mount Sinai, but to Joshua on Mount Gerazim in Galilee; they also claimed that the center of the faith was Samaria, not Jerusalem.¹ They hated the Jews, and vice versa. The Jews held the Samaritans in even more contempt than they did the pagan Gentiles.² It is particularly significant, therefore, that it was to a Samaritan prostitute that he directly revealed his Messiahship.³ When he and his disciples were travelling through Galilee he sent them all into town to buy food. It was then, when he was alone, that he spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well (Jn. 4:4ff). She said, “I know that the Messiah is coming.” Jesus replied, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he” (4:26). This is the only time that he directly claimed to be the Messiah, and that claim was made not to a crowd of faithful Jews, but to a sinful female Gentile (4:17f). She then went back to her people and told them about Jesus, and convinced

¹ Samaria had been the capital of the northern Jewish kingdom of Israel, which had been destroyed over 700 years before Jesus’ time. The southern kingdom was Judah (called Judea in the New Testament), and its capital was Jerusalem. Samaritanism still exists today, and is mainly practiced in Galilee, the region that had once been the kingdom of Israel. To this day the Samaritans gather on Mount Gerazim annually to celebrate the giving of the Law.

² This is why Jesus chose to use a Samaritan in his parable of helping the injured man on the road to Jericho (Lk. 10:30ff). In the parable the Samaritan was a kinder and more righteous man than the self-righteous Jews who should have known better. This was a clear declaration that righteousness and justification involve far more than just saying the right words or making the proper sacrifices. He made the same declaration in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Lk. 18:10f).

³ The fact that she was at the well alone tells us that she was a social outcast. The women of a village would go to the well together each morning to get the water needed for the day. That she was at the well alone at midday tells us that she was not welcome among the other women.

many to follow him.

Why was this important? The Old Testament prophecies see the Messiah as the savior of only Israel and the Jews—some see him as a spiritual redeemer, and some as a military liberator like Judas Maccabeus. This action of Jesus was an open declaration that salvation is available to all mankind, even the lowest—to sinners as well as the righteous, and not just to Jews alone. He also declared that the Messiah came to the world through the Jews when he told her, “Salvation is from the Jews” (4:22). This was a clear rejection of the heresy of Samaritanism, yet not a rejection of the potential salvation of the Samaritans. He went on, though, to say, “The time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks.” This is a plain statement that the Jews are indeed the Chosen People—chosen, however, not to be coddled and preferred, but chosen to bring the Word of God to all mankind throughout the whole world. The Son of God was incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth and came into history as a Jew 2000 years ago. As the Christ, however, he brought salvation to all mankind throughout all time.

Richard R. Losch+

Nicodemus the Teacher of Israel

The Gospel according to St. John tells of “a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council.” He came to Jesus to learn more about his teachings (Jn. 3:1ff), defended him before the Sanhedrin (Jn. 7:50ff), and brought spices to anoint him after his crucifixion (Jn. 19:39). There can be no doubt that this was Naqdimon ben-Gurion, one of the wealthiest and most powerful members of the Jerusalem Sanhedrin. He is mentioned in a number of contemporary documents, including Flavius Josephus’ *Jewish War*. His real name was Bunai ben-Gurion (Bunai the Son of Gurion), but he was given the Greek cognomen Nicodemus (Νικodemος), “Conqueror of the People” because of a

miraculous answer to one of his prayers. In Aramaic and Hebrew, the languages of the ancient non-Biblical documents, Nicodemus ben-Gurion would be transliterated as Naqdimon ben-Gurion (נַקְדִּימוֹן בֶּן גּוּרִיּוֹן).

The Sanhedrin was the ruling council in Jerusalem. Every major Jewish city had a Sanhedrin, consisting of 23 to 72 members. The Jerusalem (“Great”) Sanhedrin, however, had influence not only in Jerusalem, but also throughout Judea. It consisted of 72 members including the High Priest, who presided over it. It was reminiscent of the advisory council of 70 elders over which Moses presided (Num. 11:16ff). It was not an elected council, but was made up of members appointed by the current members. Its membership was almost exclusively from the social, intellectual and religious elite of Judea.

The Jewish leadership establishment was called in Greek *hoi Ioudaioi* (οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι).¹ This literally means “the Jews” and is generally translated as such. However, in the context in which it was used, not only in the Bible but also in non-Biblical documents, it clearly referred only to the ruling elite and not to all the Jewish people. This was catastrophic for the Jewish people in later generations. In most of the places where the Bible talks about persecution and death of Jesus and his followers by “the Jews,” it was the *Ioudaioi*, the ruling elite, not the people in general who are meant. Notwithstanding, through the centuries all Jews came to be held responsible in the minds of many, exacerbating the already virulent anti-Semitism, and culminating in the Holocaust.

With the exception of a few righteous men like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, the *Ioudaioi* were greedy, power-hungry, and very satisfied with the status quo. Despite Roman brutality they lived quite handsomely and did not want anything to change. They got along tolerably well with the Romans and vice versa—one hand washed the other—and both tended to stay out of each other’s way. Jesus’ teachings posed a distinct threat to the status quo, and thus he was deemed an

¹ Pronounced hoy you-dye-oy.

enemy of the *Ioudaioi*, who felt that they had to eliminate him. This is why Nicodemus first came to Jesus under cover of darkness (Jn. 3:2). He did not want to have to answer to the others as to why he was seeking him out. At that point he was not a follower of Jesus, but had obviously heard enough about him to want to find out more. Later, when Jesus was being discussed in the Sanhedrin, Nicodemus pointed out that they had no right to condemn a man before hearing what he had to say in his own defense (Jn. 7:45ff). Soon thereafter there is no question that Nicodemus had become a follower of Jesus, because after the Crucifixion he openly came with Joseph of Arimathea and brought 75 pounds of myrrh and aloes to anoint Jesus' body for burial (Jn. 19:39).¹ Not only was this an extremely generous and expensive gift,² but it was dangerous to be seen at that time with Jesus' friends. This act could be a serious threat to his status in the Sanhedrin, and possibly even to his membership in it.

Nicodemus was noted in several ancient references as a generous and holy man. Although he was not a toady to the Romans (as many of his colleagues were), he was opposed to the Zealots and to any rebellion against Rome, because he knew that the only possible result would be the destruction of Jerusalem. He was right, of course—in a.D. 70 Jerusalem was leveled as retribution for a rebellion, and in 132 all the Jews were expelled from Palestine for the same reason. Vespasian, the commander of the Roman forces in Palestine, became emperor in a.D. 69. His son Titus (later also emperor) replaced him as commander, and was engaged in a war with the Zealot rebels. Nicodemus, who was agitating against the Zealots, sought to make peace with Titus. Titus' response was to de-

¹ The King James Version says it was 100 pounds, but those would have been Roman pounds. In today's weight system it would be closer to 75 pounds. Nevertheless this was a great act of love and generosity, as this was much more than is needed to prepare a body for burial.

² It is unclear exactly what the mixture of resins was, but its estimated value in today's money could be as much as \$50,000.

stroy the cache of supplies that Nicodemus had amassed to help pilgrims to the Temple in Jerusalem. After that, nothing more is known of him. He may have died in the violence of the rebellion, as many thousands of innocent Jews did.

Richard R. Losch+

Yeshua bar-Yosef

That is how Jesus would have been known in his day in Galilee. It is Aramaic (the Semitic Syrian language that Jesus spoke), and it means Joshua the son of Joseph. In Hebrew the name would be Yehoshua ben-Yosef. Yeshua, the Aramaic form of Joshua, is actually a shortened form and would be more equivalent to “Josh,” although it was the common form of the name as it was used in Jesus’ time.

Greek was the *lingua franca* of the world in the first century, and since the books of the New Testament were written to be read not only in Judea but throughout the known world, they were written in Greek—they were not simply Greek translations of earlier Aramaic or Hebrew books. Thus when the Aramaic name Yeshua was transliterated into Greek it had to be put into Greek form. There is no ‘sh’ sound in Greek,¹ and all nouns have to have case endings. The closest the Greek could come to Yeshua, then, was Iesous (Ἰησους). When this came into Latin it was transliterated as Iesus, and since a leading ‘I’ was often written as a ‘J’ we get Jesus.²

Traditionally a child’s name was chosen by the father, so when the angel told Joseph in a dream that he should accept Mary’s pregnancy and name the child Jesus (Yeshua), he did so.³ The angel told him to name him that, “for he will save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). The name Yeshua or Ye-

¹ One of my Greek professors said that the Greeks considered the sound ‘sh’ to be as barbaric as wearing trousers.

² Until the Middle Ages the letter ‘j’ was always pronounced like a ‘y.’

³ Although Joseph was Jesus’ stepfather (God is his Father), as such he had the legal right to name the child.

hoshua means essentially “God Saves,” and this would have had great significance to the Jews who recognized Jesus as the Messiah. They would have recognized the association with Joshua, who with Moses led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt to freedom in Canaan. They would also have clearly understood the association of the name with salvation from sin—being led out of their slavery to sin into the freedom of salvation. Unfortunately most of us who hear the story in modern languages miss this extremely important connection.

In the name Jehoshua (יהושע), the first part, Jeho- (יהו) is the prefix for God’s name, Yahweh (יהוה). This comes from a word that means existence—the very Name of God means “He Who Exists” (“Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I AM has sent me to you’” [Ex. 3:14]). The second part of the name, -shua (שע), derives from the Hebrew verb yasha (ישע), which means to deliver or to save. The word yasha and its derivatives are used 353 times in the Old Testament. In Hebrew, the word has a strong implication of the granting of the gift of existence! To be saved, therefore, is to be restored to the purity of existence. In effect the name Jehoshua, which is the actual Name of Jesus, means “He Who Exists Restores the Purity of Existence.” When we are saved we are lifted out of the falsity of sin and restored to the purity of existence that we knew at our creation. The Holy Name of Jesus denotes this.

Richard R. Losch+

“The Epistle” Is Online

The last three years’ issues of *The Epistle* are online. Go to <http://rlosch.com> and click on the “Epistle” tab at the top, then click on the issue you want to see. You can read it online or download it as a *.pdf* file.

Richard R. Losch+

Is there another word for synonym?

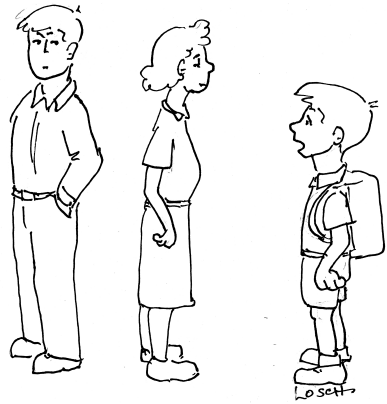
A Touch of Trivia

Every state has an official name. For example, Alabama, like most states, is simply the State of Alabama; Massachusetts is the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (MA, PA, VA and KY are commonwealths, not states). Rhode Island, the smallest state, has the longest official name. It is the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations.

Richard R. Losch+

JAMIE

by Richard R. Losch



*“The teacher asked me
what idiot helped me with
my math homework.”*



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