THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church

Livingston, Alabama

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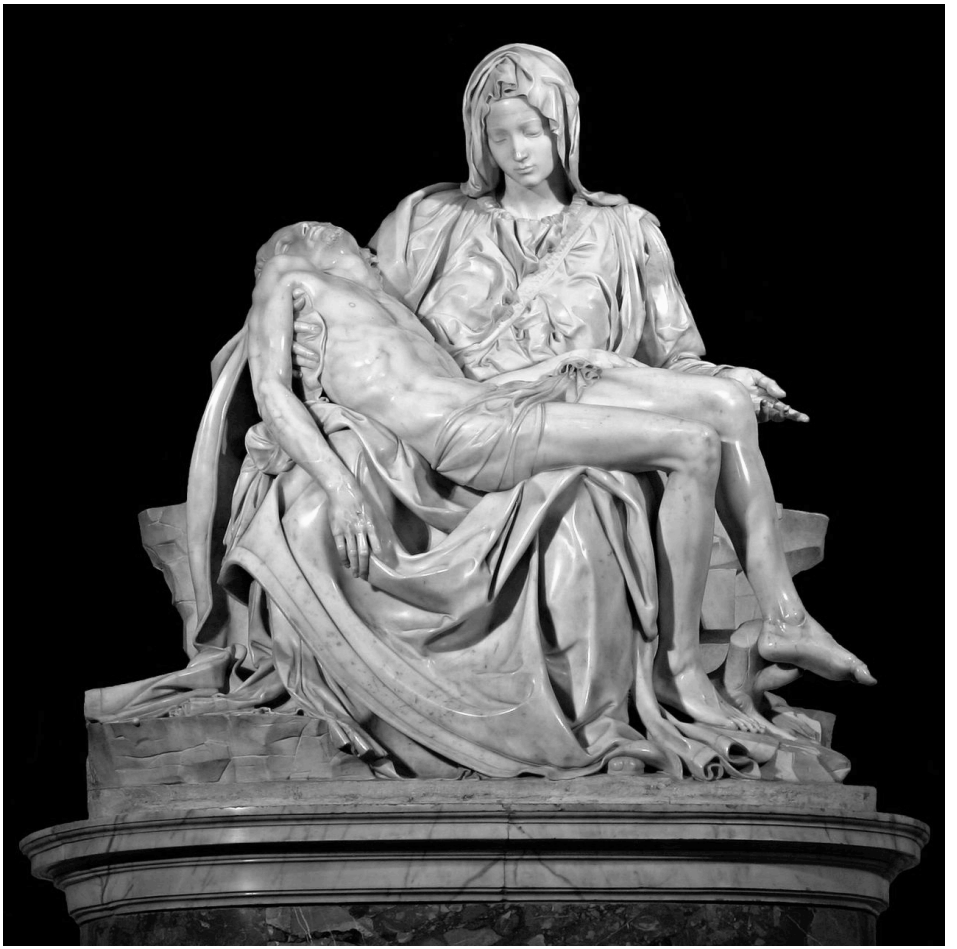

March 2015

This Month's Cover

Our cover this month, the *Pietà* of Michelangelo, is undoubtedly familiar to all. It is certainly one of the most beautiful and moving of all the sculptures of the Italian High Renaissance, and is an appropriate work to consider as we progress in Lent. Completed in 1499, it is 68.5"x75.8" and is sculpted in Italian marble. It is displayed in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. *Pietà* (Italian for "pity" or "mercy") was a common theme in art throughout the Renaissance. Usually executed in sculpture, it represents the Blessed Virgin holding the body of Christ just after it had been removed from the cross. The magnificence of Michelangelo's *Pietà*, however, eclipses all the others. Mary's look of grief overlaid with the peace of God is stunning. It was once said of Mozart that he did not write music, but simply took dictation from God. It could also be said of Michelangelo that his hands simply went where God moved them.

Michelangelo di Lodovico di Leonardo Buonarroti Simoni was born in Caprese, Italy in 1475. For generations his family had been bankers in Florence, but when the bank failed his father took a petty government job in Caprese, where Michelangelo was born. When he was still an infant the family returned to Florence. When he was six his father died, and he lived with a stonecutter in Settignano, where he began carving stone fragments from the marble quarry. His extraordinary talent was recognized but not encouraged. He was sent to Florence to study grammar (in preparation for a business career), but all he seemed interested in doing was copying paintings in local churches. He became noticed by many of the masters in Florence at the time, including Domenico Ghirlandaio, who had the largest studio in the city. Michelangelo's father finally agreed to apprentice him to Ghirlandaio at the age of 13. A year later, in 1489, Lorenzo dé Medici asked Ghirlandaio to send him his two best students. He sent Michelangelo and Francesco Granacci. Once under Lorenzo's patronage, Michelangelo's brilliant career was launched.

Michelangelo's achievements are too many and varied to cover in detail here, but suffice it to say that he was the prince of Renaissance artists. He shone as a painter, sculptor, architect, engineer and poet. He is most noted for two sculptures, David and the *Pietà*, and for two prodigious paintings, *The Last Judgment* and the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. He was the pioneer of the Mannerist School in architecture, his masterpiece being Saint Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. Mannerisim was the style of art that dominated Europe after the High Renaissance.

In his own lifetime Michelangelo was known as *Il Divino* ("The Divine One"), and he was the first major artist to have his biography published while he was still alive. In his 60s he had a love affair with the Roman poetess and noble widow Vittoria Colonna, who was 15 years his junior. The two exchanged sonnets until she died in 1547. Michelangelo died and was buried in Rome in 1563, aged 88.

Richard R. Losch+

A Word from the Editor

The latest ISIS atrocities are further indications that we live in an increasingly savage world. We would like to think that these are only the actions of a few depraved fanatics far, far away, but if we open our eyes we can see that it is more than this. Young people from the most unlikely parts of Europe and America are going to Syria to fight for ISIS. Psychologists tell us that such savage violence is attractive to some people, having an almost sexual excitement to it. ISIS and al-Qaeda have distorted their religion into an evil, monstrous caricature of God. I have long cogitated on what is happening to the world to bring it to this state. It is too simplistic just to say that Satan is running rampant. Although this is pure satanic evil, it would not be happening unless we had opened the door to it.

We are well into the second generation of coddling our children, trying to protect them from every possible physical, psychological or social injury. They can't play dodge-ball in school because it encourages aggressive behavior and some child might feel bad about losing or, God forbid, even get a bruise. The slightest insult is deemed bullying and is punished. If a kindergartener kisses a little girl he is in danger of expulsion for sexual harassment, and she is taught that she has been made a victim. We have become so paranoid about weapons that any hint of a gun becomes a major crisis (perhaps we should expel Oklahoma from the Union for its shape).

Being aggressive is part of human nature, especially in children, and more especially in little boys. It is in expressing our violence and then being disciplined for letting it out that we learn to channel and control our basic human instincts. This is the basis of civilization. Without this learning process we remain savages. If we never allow our children to experience bullying, loss, failure and risk of injury then they will never learn to deal with them when the emerge into a harsh and cruel world. Worse, they will never find an outlet for their own natural tendencies toward aggression. In the old days they had such outlets as competitive sports and horribly politically incorrect games like Cops-and-Robbers and Cowboys-and-Indians. Now their outlet is video games which are full of violence, but with no human interaction to teach them the consequences of that violence.

One of the great gifts of religion is that it gives us moral values that teach us to channel our base humanity into productive and superhuman pursuits—superhuman in that they transcend basic humanity and lead us to embrace values and behaviors that are above our natural instincts. Without this we remain nothing more than godless brutes. The Church, for all her faults, is still God's gift to us through which we receive salvation not only for our sins, but also from the beastliness that is in our nature. If we fail to share that faith with our children, we are condemning them. I, for one, do not want to have to answer for that.

Father Rick Losch+

ECW Yard Sale

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

Hiram Patrenos

Easter Flowers

Each year St. James' Church offers the opportunity to remember loved ones through donations to the Altar Guild, which provides the lilies and altar flowers in the Church for Easter services. If you wish to make a donation for this—In Memory of, In honor of, or In Thanksgiving for—forms are available at the back of the church or you may print this information clearly and mail it along with your contribution to Carolyn Patrenos, President, St. James' Altar Guild, P.O. Box 399, Livingston, AL 35470. Checks should be made payable to St. James' Altar Guild. Because of the increased costs for these flowers, we ask for a minimum donation of $25.00 for memorials. Publication deadline for inclusion in the Easter bulletin is Wednesday, April 1. Donations are tax deductible.

Hiram Patrenos

Smiles are contagious. Go out and contaminate as many people as you can.

Fifth Sunday Service

Because Palm Sunday falls on the fifth Sunday in March there will not be a Community Service on that day. We will resume the fifth Sunday tradition on May 31 at the Livingston First Presbyterian Church.

Hiram Patrenos

Adult Sunday School

During Lent and thereafter the program for the Adult Sunday School each Sunday will be a study of the Scripture lessons for that day. The lessons will be listed each week in the e-mail that Hiram sends out.

Even if you don't attend Sunday School, studying and contemplating the weekly lessons would be an excellent part of your Lenten discipline.

Richard R. Losch+

"The Epistle" Online

The Epistle is online, back to January 2013. This is an easy way to share it with friends. Go to *rlosch.com* and click on the "Epistle" tab at the top. You can read them online or download them in PDF format.

Richard R. Losch+

Thanks For Pancakes

Thanks to all who worked on the Shrove Tuesday pancake supper: to Rosalie Dew for decorating the tables, and to our cooks Hiram Patrenos, Jimmy Collins, Joe Moore, Roy Underwood and Raiford Noland. Thanks also to William Green-Burns for being an excellent waiter.

Be Wordly Wise

Overcorrection

We normally deal with word origins in this column, but this month we will consider word usage, specifically, grammar. To grammarians, one of the most jarring abuses is what is called "overcorrection." This is correcting a common error, but correcting it in the wrong place. As children we would often say, "Him and me are going to the park." We were corrected, and taught to say, "He and I are going to the park." It was explained that we wouldn't say, "Him is going" or "Me is going," so why would we say, "Him and me are going?" Obviously, he and I are going. Unfortunately, too many people overdo this and correct every instance of "him and me," which leads to "She gave it to he and I." Following the same logic, she didn't "give it to he" and she didn't "give it to I," so why would she "give it to he and I?" To be correct, she gave it to him and me.

This error is becoming increasingly common, to the point that we hear it from people who should know better, such as teachers, supposedly well-educated public figures, and leading radio and TV personalities. It's worth paying attention to this in our own speech, because to many it declares, "I'm poorly educated."

Richard R. Losch+

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The Flag of Israel

The official flag of the State of Israel is handsomely simple. It is a white flag bearing a blue "Shield of David" between two blue bands. This flag actually precedes the creation of modern Israel by over 50 years.

In the latter part of the 19th century there was a migration of persecuted European Jews, mainly from Russia, into Palestine. The region was so barren and desolate that it was almost completely unpopulated. After the Roman expulsion of the Jews in the beginning of the 2nd century AD, Palestine was a prosperous part of the Roman province of Syria. By the end of the fourth century it was primarily Christian, but as the Roman Empire crumbled the land was ignored. Its cities decayed and its farms went to wilderness, and eventually the whole region became a barren rocky desert. When the Muslims conquered it in the late 7th century it was so undesirable that no one wanted to live there except in Jerusalem (because of its religious significance to all three religions) and in a few of the port cities. When the Crusades tried to take the land back for Christianity many of those cities were destroyed, but after the Crusaders were driven back the Muslims rebuilt them. With the exception of Jerusalem, however, most of the rest of the land that is now Israel was virtually uninhabited and was unclaimed by any nation. Although the Ottoman Empire owned it, it was a no-man's land and they had no inter-

est in it. Nonetheless it was attractive to the Jews because it was their ancient homeland. One of the ancient names for Jerusalem was Zion, so they called themselves Zionists.

When the Zionists arrived in the late 19th century they brought with them the latest technology and set out to reclaim the land. They planted thousands of trees, built irrigation systems and roads, and introduced new farming methods. They built an infrastructure that included an ultramodern (for the time) electrical grid. Within a very few years the deserts bloomed and the region became prosperous. Arabs began to move in by the thousands, and the Jews welcomed them. Sadly, the Arabs' attitude was, "Nice job. Now we'll take it over, thank you very much." This aggressive attitude manifested itself viciously when an Arab coalition attacked right after the UN partitioned the land in 1948 and established the State of Israel.

In 1897 the Jews organized the first Zionist Congress to unify and govern their activities. One of their concerns was to design a flag that would identify Israel. Jews all over the world saw themselves as the Nation of Israel, a nation without a land. Now that many of them had a spot that they could think of as their land, they wanted a flag. One member said, "We already have a flag—our *tallit*." The *tallit* is a prayer shawl that every male Orthodox Jew wears underneath his outer clothing (one can usually see its tassels hanging beneath his jacket or blouse). It is a white shawl with blue bands, a fringe, and a long tassel at each corner. It is pulled up over the head during prayer. The Zionist Congress agreed that their new flag would be like a *tallit*, a white flag with two horizontal blue bands. They decided to put the Shield of David, the traditional Jewish six-pointed star, in the center of the flag between the bands.

The Shield of David (also known as the Star of David or the Seal of Solomon) is a symbol that goes back at least to the 2nd or 3rd century AD, but not, as far as we know, to the actual time of David or Solomon. It was used at first by many Middle Eastern peoples, but by the 3rd century it had become particularly associated with the Jews. Its earliest confirmed Jewish use is in a mosaic in a 3rd century synagogue in Jerusalem. It is made up of the intersection of two equilateral triangles. Its origins are obscure, but an ancient rabbinic interpretation is that it represents the relationship between man and God. The downward pointing triangle represents man, standing with his arms uplifted toward heaven. The upward pointing triangle represents God, with his open arms extended toward the earth, pouring forth his blessings. The triangles are often interlaced, representing the complex and resilient interaction between God and man.

When the State of Israel was established in 1948, they adopted the Zionist flag as their official ensign, and the stirring hymn *HaTikvah* ("The Hope") as their national anthem.

Richard R. Losch+

Ancient Builders

Because of our modern technological achievements we often tend to underestimate the accomplishments of ancient and allegedly primitive cultures. In fact, they had some abilities that we can barely match today. For example, the Greeks had surgical techniques and instruments that were still being used by modern surgeons well into the latter part of the twentieth century; although there are many hypotheses, we still do not know how the Egyptians built the pyramids with only human labor[1]; the Aztecs and Mayans built walls with stones that fit so closely that a razor blade cannot be slipped in between them, yet they had not yet invented the wheel (or they chose for religious reasons not to use it); and in many ancient buildings, including the western retaining wall of Herod's temple in Jerusalem (the "Wailing Wall"), there are single stones so huge that it would be difficult to place them even with the heaviest modern machinery.[2]

From ancient times great temples and public works served a dual purpose. Not only were they built for the glory of God (or the gods) or to enhance the infrastructure, but they also made it very clear who was in power. Solomon's temple not only proclaimed the power of God, but it was also a clear statement of the power of Solomon. Roman roads and aqueducts made it easier for the Romans to rule, but they also declared to people who were used only to footpaths and wells that Rome now ruled. One of the first things the Normans did after gaining control of England in the late 11th century was to start erecting great cathedrals and huge castles. When the one- and two-story Anglo-Saxons stared up at a ten-story Norman cathedral they had little doubt that someone far stronger than they was now in charge.

The very first buildings at the dawn of civilization were made of wood and natural materials such as reeds, bark and other organic materials, and were often daubed with mud. It did not take long to discover that certain types of dried mud, especially when under pressure, are quite durable.[3] There still survive in many of the more arid parts of the world mud brick walls that are thousands of years old. This led to the discovery of using

[1] Unlike most ancient cultures, slavery was a very unimportant institution in Egypt. Slaves did not build the pyramids. They were built by a corvée labor force made up of farmers who could not work the fields during the annual spring flooding of the Nile. This is described in the Amarna Letters of 1350 BC.

[2] In the city of Baalbek in what is now Lebanon there are building stones dating back to about 7000 BC that are 68'x14'x14' and weigh over 1500 tons. We can only hypothesize how they were quarried, moved and placed.

[3] This includes adobe, but it is also true of many other types of mud. Adobe crystallizes and becomes almost like rock when it is compressed. Many other muds, however, when mixed with organic material like straw and allowed to ferment, form strong and durable bricks. This is what the Israelites made in their latter days in Egypt (Ex. 5:7).

mud as mortar, enabling them to incorporate stones into their buildings. This in turn led to the quarrying of stone, and eventually the use of stone for most important buildings. The use of stone for temples and civic buildings predominated in almost every civilized culture, even in regions where wood was plentiful. Fine wood was used for paneling and decoration, but stone was preferred for the main construction. Solomon's temple was made of local stone, but the wood paneling (mainly cedar) was imported from Phoenicia (modern Lebanon). Wood, however, remained the common building material of the poor in regions where it was available.[1] In many parts of the Middle East, including much of Palestine, wood was scarce but stone was readily available, so most buildings were made of fieldstone mortared with mud. Temples, shrines and important civic buildings, on the other hand, were made of quarried stone.

Some of what we know of ancient building techniques comes from contemporary documents and artwork, but most of our knowledge derives from clues left in the buildings and materials themselves. For example, certain types of scars and markings on stones tell us how they were quarried, dressed, transported or placed.

Quarrying was a daunting process in ancient times. Explosives were unknown, and until the Iron Age the only metal tools available were copper and then bronze, which are not very satisfactory for sawing and chipping stone. Even steel tools, until the discovery of hardened alloys, were not very efficient. Working the stone required patience, strength, and frequent sharpening and replacement of tools. The commonest method of quarrying was to cut a deep slit in the rock behind and along the sides of the block to be quarried. Then wood was driven into the slits and water poured over it for several days. Eventually the wood would absorb enough water to swell up, creating sufficient force to split the rock and free the stone block. That would then be lowered to the floor of the quarry, where apprentices would shape and square it.

Methods of transporting the stone from the quarries to the building sites varied, but they all required a prodigious amount of human labor. Wheeled vehicles were not strong enough for most building stones, so they had to be transported on sledges, rolled on logs, or both. Sometimes huge stones were transported for many miles, and the process might take months. On hard clayey ground they could be slid by wetting the ground in front of them to make it slick. Whatever the method, large stones could require dozens or even hundreds of men to push and pull them. Once at the site, wooden cranes and levers might me used to lift and place them. Sometimes ramps were build to bring the stoned up to the height necessary to set them.

[1] Rome at the time of Augustus was mainly made of wood. He said that he found Rome a city of wood, and left it a city of marble. This was true only of the central governmental section. Most of the city was still wood and mud wattle. This is the reason it burned so readily in Nero's time 50 years later.

The quarry work for Solomon's temple was a little more complicated. By Solomon's time the Jews well understood that God did not actually live in the temple. Nonetheless, that very ancient pagan concept was so imbedded into their culture and that of the Phoenician workmen who actually did the building, that they still acted as if God would live there even though intellectually they knew that he would not. The pagans believed that once a stone was dedicated as an altar to a god, anything that damaged the stone would injure and thus anger the god. Because of this, no metal tools were used to carve an altar. That ancient custom injected itself into the building of the temple, where no metal tools were used on the site (1Kg. 6:7). When the stones were cut in the quarries they were shaped and numbered there, and then moved to the building site, where they were put in place using only wooden instruments. The wood was also prepared in the Lebanese forests and then conveyed in floats by sea to Joppa, then by land to Jerusalem. This required a prodigious amount of planning on the part of the chief architect, called the Master Builder, whose only plans for the completed building were in his head. Most scholars believe that the Master Builder of Solomon's temple was the Phoenician foundry man Huram Abu or Hiram Abi,[1] whose father was Phoenician and mother a Jew of the tribe of Naphtali (1 Kg. 7:13ff).

From ancient times right into the late Middle Ages, architects did not draw finished plans for the buildings they erected. There were basic sketches of what the end result should be, but detailed architectural plans such as we use today were not known. We have several such sketches from ancient Egypt, but none have ever been found from the regions of Syria and Palestine. The Master Builder (architect) was well versed in the strengths and properties of various building materials, as well as being an expert carpenter and stonemason. Most ancient Master Builders started out in the ranks as workmen, learning their skills from other experts. The most skilled, talented, imaginative and intelligent might hope to rise eventually to the position of Master Builder.

The architect would work out with his patrons the general idea of what was wanted, and then he would draw up in his head the images of how to accomplish it. Each day he would give instructions to the workmen on what he expected them to do that day. Perspective drawing was not invented until the Renaissance, so it was difficult even to draw an accurate picture of the finished building. It is hard for us today to imagine erecting a building this way, but the magnificent edifices of antiquity and the glorious cathedrals of mediaeval Europe attest to the efficacy of the method.

[1] In the early Hebrew script it is hard to distinguish the letters *yod* (י, i) and *vav* (ו, u), as the only difference is the length of the tail. His name means "Hiram our father." This may denote what many scholars have long believed, that he was the Master Builder of Solomon's temple. The Phoenicians were reputed to be the best builders in the ancient world.

Critical building materials in all ages are concrete and mortar. If the stone is not incredibly well dressed and tight fitting (as the early Central American Indians could do)[1], then weak mortar will make a weak building. The earliest mortars in most parts of the world were based on limestone, which is crushed, burned, and reconstituted as a sort of paste with sand and water. It conforms to the surfaces of the stones it is to bond and penetrates the pores and cracks on them. It then slowly re-crystallizes as it dries, becoming quite hard and strong. In Palestine and Syria limestone is not plentiful, but gypsum is very common and may have been the usual source of mortar. Gypsum mortar is also easier to make, but it is not as strong or as long lasting as limestone. Insufficient archaeological samples from Palestine have been analyzed to confirm that gypsum mortar was used, but it is likely.

Concrete, a substitute for stone, has been known since very early times, and has been used by almost every ancient civilization, including those in Central and South America. It was generally made from volcanic materials. The masters of ancient concrete making were the Romans. One of their greatest achievements in the art of building with concrete was the discovery of a maritime concrete known as *puteolanus*, made from the volcanic sands found around the city of Puteoli (modern Puzzuoli, near Naples). It would set under water, and was ideal for building sea walls and underwater bridge abutments. It was extraordinarily durable. Many monuments made with it still stand today, two millennia later. The magnificent dome of the Pantheon[2] in Rome was made of concrete, and has survived almost two thousand years of aging, wars and earthquakes. Until the building of Michelangelo's dome on St. Peter's basilica in the 16th century, it was the largest dome in the world. Many of the Roman aqueducts that still carry water today were built either partially or wholly of concrete.

In the late second and first millennia BC the finest builders were the Phoenicians, particularly those of Tyre and Sidon.[3] When Solomon wanted to build the temple he called on King Hiram of Tyre for help. Solomon supplied the unskilled laborers, some of the materials, and most of the money, while Hiram supplied the skilled laborers and fine woods. The Phoenician architectural style was strongly influenced by the Egyptian,

[1] Although they build many amazing monuments without mortar, they also developed a form of concrete from volcanic materials that is hard to distinguish from natural rock. The first clue to scientists that some of the Mayan "rocks" were actually concrete was when they discovered human hair in them.

[2] The emperor Hadrian was an accomplished architect and engineer. It is believed that he was the designer of that dome.

[3] Phoenicia (modern Lebanon) was never a true nation, but rather a confederation of city-states. The primary ones were Tyre and Sidon, who were rival rulers of the whole confederation, with Tyre in power most of the time. The Phoenicians were not only the finest builders, but also the finest seamen in the ancient world. Many scholars believe that Stonehenge may have been built by early Phoenicians.

although it became the standard for most architecture in the Middle East.

Many of the greatest achievements in ancient architecture in the latter part of the first millennium BC were initiated by the Greeks and then improved and enlarged upon by the Romans. The Greeks designed some of the most beautiful buildings in history, the queen of which was the Parthenon on the Acropolis in Athens. Long before the discovery of Fibonacci mathematics,[1] almost all the faces and angles of the Parthenon are based on the Fibonacci "Golden Ratio."

Roman architecture from the 6th century BC on had a strong Greek flavor. The Greeks invented the arch, but the Romans perfected it and made it an integral part of much of their architecture. Properly built, the arch is an extremely strong yet light construct, and it enabled the Romans to build aqueducts of immense length that still stand and supply water today, 2000 years later. The principle of the arch is also incorporated into the dome, and many ancient Roman domes still stand (we mentioned above the dome on the Pantheon).

Another impressive achievement of the Romans was artistic brickwork. The Egyptians were masters at laying brick in such a way as to erect very strong walls, but it was straightforward and plain. The Romans discovered that they could lay bricks at different angles to make very attractive designs, yet at the same tine distributing the forces so that the walls were even stronger than when the courses of brick were simply laid horizontally. While the Greeks experimented with laying brick in artistic designs,[2] they sacrificed strength for beauty. The Romans learned to combine beauty and strength in brickwork.

Decorative columns are another Greek invention that was an important part of Roman architecture. The Greeks discovered how to curve columns so that they looked straight both at a distance and close-up. This was to overcome an optical illusion that makes straight columns appear to be thinner at the middle when viewed close-up. Columns were usually set on a base called a pedestal.[3] At the top is a capital, which is generally designed after one of three Greek designs, the Ionic, Doric or Corinthian, or after one of two Roman types, the Tuscan or Composite, which are based on the Greek designs. Columns were originally used just for support, but by the height of Greek culture they were decorative as well, often serving no structural purpose.

Ancient builders are to be admired. What they accomplished without modern science, technology and machinery is nothing short of astounding.

Richard R. Losch+

[1] An explanation of Fibonacci numbers is beyond the scope of this article, but suffice it to say that Fibonacci proportions are found throughout nature and the universe, and psychologists agree that they are instinctively deemed beautiful by most humans.

[2] There are some fine examples at Delphi.

[3] Some modern columns are placed on a simple square base called a plinth.

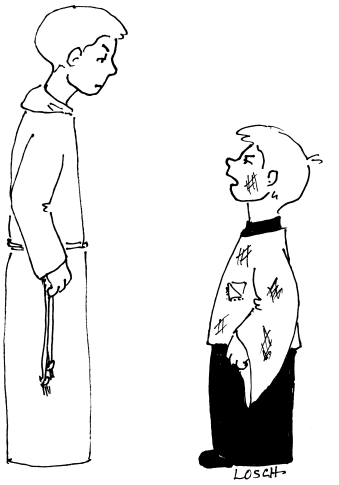
Don't Forget

INTERFAITH MEN'S BREAKFAST
MARCH 1
7:45 A.M.

Mark your Calendar

SAINT JAMES' EPISCOPAL CHURCH

JAMIE **by Richard R. Losch**



"Bobby started the fight when he hit me back."

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