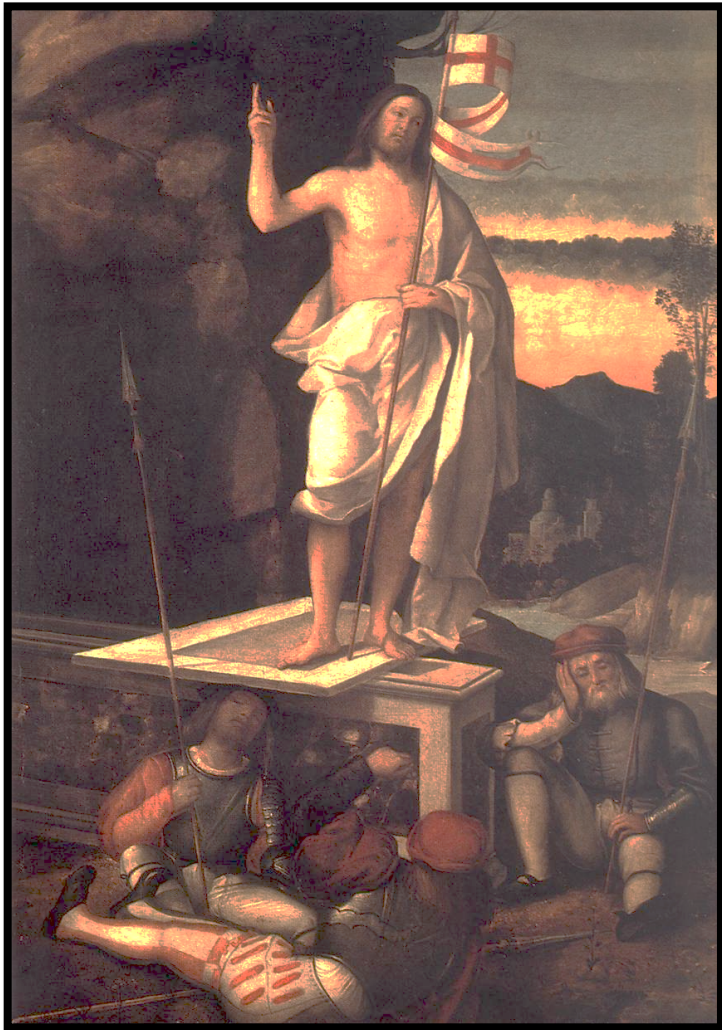


THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church
Livingston, Alabama

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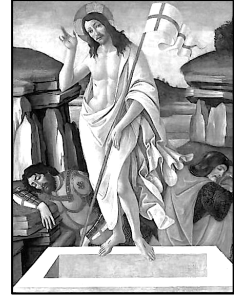
April 2019



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This Month's Cover

Our cover painting this month is *The Resurrection of Christ* by Marco Basaiti (pron. ba-za-ee'-tee). Completed in 1520, it is oil on canvas, measuring 4'7"x3'3". It is in the collection of the Accademia Carrara di Belle Arti in Bergamo, Italy. While it is not an actual copy, it is very strongly influenced by Botticelli's 1490 painting *Resurrection*. Unlike most depictions of the Resurrection in which Christ is emerging from a tomb carved out of the rocks, here (as in Botticelli's) he is rising from a rectangular stone sarcophagus. Of course, the traditional sunrise and sleeping Roman guards are depicted. Christ is holding a white banner with a red cross, also an ancient symbol of the Resurrection. Paintings of the Paschal Lamb always have the Lamb holding that banner.



*Botticelli's
"Resurrection"*

Marco Basaiti (1470?-1530?) was an Italian Renaissance painter who worked mainly in Venice. He is also known as Marco Baxaiti, Marcus Basitus and Marcus Baxiti. Little is known of him other than his signature on about 30 paintings, and a guild ledger from 1530 that records him as a "painter of figures." His family seems to have been Greek. There was a large Greek community in Venice at the time, but they tended to keep to themselves and had little social interaction with the Italian Venetians. This may be why his name varies so much, and why so little is known of his life. He was primarily a portrait painter, but also did many religious themes. There is no known painting of his that deals with any mythological subjects, even though this was a very popular theme in Venice at

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the time. Throughout his life he showed influence by a variety of styles, including the early Italian Renaissance and the Dutch masters. Albrecht Dürer's influence on Basaiti's landscapes is very noticeable after Dürer's stay in Venice in 1505-6.

Critics consider Marco Basaiti to be one of the last masters of the Early Renaissance, but they also deem him to have been consistently out of step with the artistic trends of his time. There is no record of him after 1530, so he is believed to have died about that time or at least early in that decade.

Richard R. Losch+

A Word from the Editor

In *Home Thoughts from Abroad* Robert Browning wrote, "Oh, to be in England now that April's there." April in England (although still cold and wet) is beautiful, but I can say with some assurance that April in Alabama isn't too shabby, either. To me it is a constant reminder of all the gentle gifts of God that we so often tend to take for granted and forget to thank him for. It is a time of warm, balmy sunny days scattered between the late spring rains, when every day the air is scented with something different—sweet olive one day, wisteria another, and honeysuckle or privet on another.

There are many little joys in life, and all too often we relish them for the moment, let them pass on to be forgotten, and never think to give thanks for them. The motivational speaker Squire Rushnell calls them "Godwinks." We rarely forget the great events in life for which we are thankful, such as a loving family, healing from a serious illness or great success in some venture, but it is the remembering of the little things and being thankful for them that keeps us on a positive path in the midst of a very negative world.

Food is not a major thing in my life—I eat to live, not vice versa—but once in a while something special hits the palate that is worthy of thanks for more than just sustenance. Do you ever stop to give thanks for that first taste of a perfectly prepared morsel of food? When you see a magnificent sunset do you just say, "Wow," or do you thank God for letting you see it—or even

for the gift of sight that you could see it at all? The world has no shortage of negativity—all you have to do is turn to any news source to be besieged by it—but right in the midst of it is a plethora of little pleasures that can keep us on a positive course. Don't forget to thank God for a little child's laugh that is filled with innocent joy; for the comical antics of an animal; for a beautiful scene in nature; for anything that even momentarily lifts your spirits. These moments are little tastes of "the peace of God that passes all understanding." They just might be God saying to you, "Hang in there—I'm still here with you." The proper response is, "Thank you."

Father Rick Losch+

Be Still and Know That I Am God

Psalm 46:10 admonishes us that it is in silence that we come to know God. It was not in the mighty wind or the fire or the earthquake that God spoke to Elijah, but in a "still small voice" (1 Kg. 19:12). In preparation for the worship of God on Sunday morning, many seek to pray or meditate before the service begins. When others are talking and laughing together it makes it hard to hear that still small voice. We request that if you want to visit with one another before church, please do it outside before you come in, or wait until after the service. Those who want to prepare in silence will appreciate your consideration.

Richard R. Losch+

ECW Candy and Baked Goods Sale

The Episcopal Church Women will once again have a booth selling homemade candy and baked goods at the Sucarnochee Folklife Festival on Saturday, April 20th. Please make your plans to attend and enjoy a day of great food, entertainment, and interesting art and crafts.

Hiram Patrenos

*Good judgment comes from experience.
Experience comes from bad judgment.*

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 – envelopes with 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, Post Office Box 399, Livingston, Alabama 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 17th. Your donation is tax deductible.

Hiram Patrenos

Services for Holy Week and Easter

- The Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday – On Sunday, April 14th, our observance of Passiontide will begin with the celebration of the Liturgy of the Palms and Holy Communion at St. James' at 11:00 a.m.
- Maundy Thursday – St. James' will observe this day with the traditional Holy Communion and Stripping of the Altar beginning at 6:00 p.m.
- Good Friday – St. James' will observe this day with the Liturgy for Good Friday and the Mass of the Presanctified beginning at 5:00 p.m.
- Easter Day – The Community Easter Sunrise Service will be hosted by First Presbyterian Church at 6:30 a.m. at the Livingston Civic Center. St. Alban's will celebrate The Day of the Resurrection with Holy Communion beginning at 8:30 a.m., and St. James' will celebrate it at 11:00 a.m.

Hiram Patrenos

Holy Week Devotions at UMC

The Livingston United Methodist Church will again this year offer daily noonday devotions Monday through Friday of Holy Week. Fr. Losch will preach on Wednesday. The services will last no more than 30 minutes, and each day the ladies of the church will provide a delicious lunch, to which all are invited. We are grateful to the Methodist Church for continuing to offer this to the community, as they have for many years.

Richard R. Losch+

The Entry into Jerusalem

The common image of Jesus coming into Jerusalem on the first Palm Sunday is one of a humble entry, riding on a lowly donkey, yet being hailed as the Messiah by a cheering crowd in spite of his humility. In fact, this image is quite incorrect. Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was a bold "in-your-face" challenge to the religious and political authorities of Judea.

From the very earliest Christian times it has been the tradition that on that day Jesus entered the city through the eastern gate, while normally the route from Galilee would have led travelers to the western gate. The eastern gate had great significance to the Jews. Whenever the king made a formal entry into the city it would be through that gate, where he would be met by cheering crowds. Also, they believed that the *Shekinah*, the Divine Presence of God, passed only through that gate. Secondly, Jesus was riding a donkey. That would not have been seen as a sign of humility, because only rich and important people normally rode, and even most of them walked except on long journeys. Walking was the standard mode of transportation for everyone else except the sick and elderly.¹ In that case, then, why did Jesus not ride on a horse instead of a humble donkey? Most faithful Jews, even the rich, wanted nothing to

¹ Joseph was not a rich man, and pack animals were very expensive. Despite the traditional image, it is not likely that the Blessed Virgin rode on a donkey when they traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem when Jesus was born. She probably walked all the way.

do with horses because they were symbols of Roman oppression. Even in the days when Judea was free, horses were considered symbols of war. Even the king never rode on a horse unless he was declaring war or going into battle. The choice was always a donkey, which was considered a symbol not of humility, but of peace. Thus when Jesus rode through Jerusalem's east gate on a donkey he was declaring not only that he was coming as a king, but that he was coming in peace. This fulfilled of the prophecy of Zechariah, "Lo, your king comes to you triumphant and victorious, humble and riding on a donkey" (Zech. 9:9). The crowd, hearing that this was Jesus, the Prophet from Nazareth, greeted him as a king. Most probably hoped that he would be another Judas Maccabeus who would raise up a mighty army and drive out the Romans. Throwing garments and palm branches in the path of an entering king was a traditional token of obedience and submission to him.

The High Priest Caiaphas was very rich and powerful, but his position depended on the favor of the Romans. One of his prime responsibilities was to maintain peace in the city. Failure to do so could cost him his position, and perhaps even his life. At Passover time Jerusalem was flooded with pilgrims, often more than tripling the population. This was a very tense time, when the least little thing could spark a major disturbance. Caiaphas' palace overlooked the east gate of the city, and we can imagine him looking out at this spectacle and pulling his hair. This is one of the reasons he was so anxious to eliminate Jesus.

The old Palm Sunday hymn says, "Ride on, ride on in majesty." Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was not the act of a humble prophet, but the triumphal entry of a King who was about to achieve his greatest victory.

Richard R. Losch+

The Epistle is Online

The last six years of *The Epistle*, are now online. Go to <http://rlosch.com> and click on the "Epistle" tab at the top. You can read an issue online or download it as a .pdf file.

Richard R. Losch+

Be Wordly Wise

Resurrection

This word has become so intimately tied to the basic Christian belief that Christ rose from the dead, that it carries that image with it even when it is used in other contexts. It derives directly from the Latin *resurrectio*, rising again, which derives from the Latin prefix *re-*, again, and the verb *surgere*, to rise. Obviously, we also get our words surge and resurgence from this. The word actually has no etymological reference to death. The “again” actually has significance, even though in the Christian context resurrection is a one-time event—we “rose” in mortal form at our birth, and we will rise again in immortal form after our earthly death.

Although the etymology of the word has no reference to rising from the dead, it has been used in that context since long before Christian times. In Christianity the word refers not only to Christ’s rising from the dead, but also to the General Resurrection when all the dead shall rise at the end times. Many Jews (particularly the Pharisees) began to believe in the resurrection of the dead about 150 years before Christ. Thousands of years earlier the Egyptians believed that the goddess Isis brought about the resurrection of her husband/brother Osiris after his murder by their brother Set. In all the Latin writings about this myth the word *resurrectio* was used (the worship of Isis was strong in Rome in the first century BC and thereafter). The same word was used in all the Latin writings about the Jewish belief, so it was the obvious choice of words for the Christian belief as well.

In Christian belief resurrection is not simply a restoration of life to a dead body—that is resuscitation or revivification, and is what Jesus did for Lazarus. Revivification is impossible if the physical body is destroyed or severely damaged. Resurrection is the rising of the body in a new metaphysical form that is no longer subject to physical limitations, aging or decay, so the condition of the physical body is immaterial.

Richard R. Losch+

Phoenicia–Israel's Ancient Ally

Ancient Israel had many enemies and few friends. In fact, the only neighboring nation with whom Israel never had a war was Phoenicia, and that was not really a nation. It was a confederation of five city-states, Arvad, Byblos,¹ Berytus, Sidon and Tyre.² They comprised for the most part what is now Lebanon and part of Syria. The dominant city-state for most of the history of the region was Tyre, although occasionally Sidon was dominant for brief periods. For this reason the Phoenicians were often known as Tyrians, and sometimes as Sidonians. They never called themselves Phoenicians, which was the Greek word for them. Its origin is unknown, but it may be related to the legend of the Phoenix, the long-lived mythical bird that was cyclically immolated and regenerated from its own ashes. Because of millennia of Middle Eastern turmoil resulting in the destruction of records and documents, most of what we know about the Phoenicians comes to us via the Greeks. This is often a hostile view, however, because for centuries the Phoenicians and the Greeks were rivals for the control of the Mediterranean. The Bible does not tell us much about them beyond the friendship between Phoenicia and the United Monarchy of Israel during the reigns of Kings David and Solomon.

The Phoenicians called themselves as Canaanites. At the time of the Exodus (roughly the 13th century BC) Canaan was a huge confederation of city-states that covered a significant portion of the Middle East. They were pushed back by the incursion of several foreign peoples, the most significant of whom were the Israelites and the Philistines. With intense pressure in the east and south, the Phoenicians started expanding toward the west across the Mediterranean. At one time their

¹ Byblos was a major paper/papyrus producing region. Our word Bible derives from the Greek *biblos* (βιβλος), book, which in turn derives from the name of the city Byblos.

² The modern descendants of these cities are Ruad (Arvad) in Syria, Jbeil (Byblos), Beirut (Berytus), Sayda (Sidon) and Tyre. All but Ruad are in modern Lebanon.

colonies extended as far as Italy and North Africa, the two most important ones being in western Sicily and Carthage.¹ In the course of their expansion, by the beginning of the 11th century BC the Phoenicians had rightly earned the reputation of being the best seamen and the best builders in the world. The confederation, particularly Tyre, became extremely wealthy and powerful through international trade and the success of its colonies. It reached its height under the rule of King Abibaal (d. 981 BC), the father of King Hiram I (r. 980-947 BC).

The Phoenicians and the Israelites had much in common. They were both Semitic peoples, spoke a similar language, and in the later years used the same alphabet. After the Exile in the 6th century, Aramaic had become the common language of both the Israelites and the Phoenicians. Aramaic is a Syrian language that is very close to Hebrew, and is written with the same alphabet as Hebrew. This was the primary language of Jesus.

The religion of the Phoenicians, although pagan, had many similarities to that of the Jews, particularly in the realm of morality and laws. The Phoenician culture was the result of 1000 years of development among all the Canaanite city-states, and it was a rich and beautiful civilization. During the first millennium BC Canaan had been greatly reduced by many invasions, including that of the Israelites in the 13th century, but Phoenicia had inherited the best of the Canaanite culture. They had become arguably the best builders in the world, and their architecture influenced buildings throughout the known world. Some scholars see Phoenician architectural influence even as far away as ancient Britain.² In contrast, most of the other peoples in the Middle East, including the Israelites, were basically nomadic peoples who had only simple cultures.

According to the Bible, King David of Israel (r. 1000-962 BC), when he had united the twelve Israelite tribes into the

¹ Rome's wars with Carthage are called the Punic Wars (264-146 BC). The word Punic derives from the Latin *Punicus* or *Poenicus*, Phoenician.

² There are historians who believe that the Phoenicians built Stonehenge and some of the other henges in the British Isles, although this is arguable.

United Monarchy of Israel, established a political and trade alliance with Phoenicia. In the process he became a personal friend of King Hiram I (or Hiram) of Tyre. Because of the dates of their various reigns it is likely that the original alliance was made with King Abibaal, and that in the process his son Hiram and David became friends (1 Kg. 5:1). Since Hiram was also a close friend of David's son Solomon (r. 962-922 BC), he was probably a good deal younger than David.

Early in his reign David conquered the Jebusite city of Jerusalem, made it his capital, and built his palace there. Israel was an infant monarchy at that point and had no skilled builders, so David turned to his friend Hiram of Tyre for help in building his palace (2 Sam. 65:11ff). David had the money, and the Phoenicians had the skills and materials to build a magnificent palace. It was also David's dream to build a Temple to God, but God forbade it because David was a man of war (1 Chr. 17:1ff). David also, with the help of the Phoenicians, rebuilt the whole city of Jerusalem into a capital that was noted throughout the known world.

When King David died in 962 BC his son Solomon ascended the throne. He immediately set out to fulfill David's dream of building a Temple, and enlisted the aid of his friend King Hiram of Tyre to do so (1 Kg. 5:2). Like David, Solomon had plenty of money, but he did not have the skilled workmen to do the job. Hiram provided materials, including the prized Lebanese cedar (1 Chr.14:1), and he also provided the skilled workmen. The chief of these, also named Hiram,¹ was the son of a Tyrian (who died) and a Jewish woman of the tribe of Naphtali.² He was not only a master bronze founder (1 Kg.

¹ Hiram Abi or Hiram Abu—in the early Hebrew handwritten script the difference between the letters *yod* (י, י') and *vav* (ו, ו') is hard to distinguish, as it depends only on the length of the tail.

² In the legendry of Freemasonry, Hiram Abi is known by the medieval pronunciation of his name, Hiram Abiff. Solomon King of Israel, Hiram King of Tyre and Hiram Abiff are revered by Masons as paragons of virtue, symbolic of the cooperation of wisdom, strength and beauty.

7:40), but was also unquestionably the Master Builder (chief architect and overseer) of Solomon's Temple.

With the breakup in 922 BC of the United Monarchy into the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah, the bond between Phoenicia and the Jewish kingdoms was weakened. Notwithstanding, both Israel and Judah maintained an alliance with the Phoenicians. The bond with Judah, however, was by far the stronger. The northern kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians in 722 BC, and was never restored. In 589 Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon conquered Judah, destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple, and carried the Judahites into exile. With both her Israelite allies gone and under intense threat from Mesopotamia, the Phoenician Empire began to wane. The struggle to maintain her control of the Mediterranean lasted another three centuries, but with the strong Greek pressures against her colonies in Sicily, with the onslaught of Alexander's empire in 325 BC, and finally with the rise of the Roman Empire and its ultimate destruction of Carthage in 149 BC, Phoenician power disappeared except in her original lands on the northeast coast of the Mediterranean. Even there it was oppressed by the Seleucid Greeks and then the Romans. Rome finally emerged as the dominant power of the entire Mediterranean world.

Richard R. Losch+

Communion—On the Hand or Tongue?

Increasing numbers of people today are returning to the ancient traditional way of receiving Holy Communion, which is to have the priest place the Host directly on the tongue rather than in the hand. Not only is this a more sanitary way to receive, but more importantly, it is more respectful to the Blessed Sacrament. Sanitation should not be a matter of concern when we are receiving the Body and Blood of Christ, but it is nevertheless something that these days most people care about. Receiving on the tongue is more sanitary because the most germ-laden parts of the body are not those that are covered, but rather the hands. They are constantly touching things that other people have touched, including doorknobs, gas pumps, money,

other people's hands, and even the prayer books and hymnals in the pews, as well as the pews themselves. There is no way that your hands are clean when you come up to receive Holy Communion. Far more important than just a matter of hygiene, however, is the concern that the Body of Christ will be placed on this unclean receptacle. On the other hand, the priest not only has washed his hands before beginning the service, but also washes them ritually just before consecrating the Sacrament. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart" (Ps. 24:3f). Only God and the priest know whether his heart is pure, but at least the priest can be sure that his hands are clean before he consecrates and touches the Body and Blood of Christ. From the time of consecration until the cleansing of the sacred vessels, the priest keeps his fingers together to avoid touching anything other than the Blessed Sacrament or the sacred vessels (the chalice, paten and sacred linens). This is not done for the sake of hygiene, but out of respect for the Blessed Sacrament.

I have heard questions asked about the cleanliness of placing the Host on the tongue, but this is not a matter of concern. If the communicant opens his mouth and extends his tongue it is simple for the priest to place the Host on the tongue without ever touching the lips or tongue. Another question that is raised is that of the cleanliness of receiving from the chalice. From a practical point of view, the chalice is made of silver and gold,¹ both of which have strong germicidal properties. That, along with the alcohol of the wine and the fact that the lip of the chalice is wiped each time, assures that it is far cleaner than any unwashed hands.² Granted, germs should not even be con-

¹ Recently ceramic or other base material vessels have become popular. Not only is this unsanitary, but it demeans the dignity of the Sacrament.

² For those who are concerned about hygiene, the practice of intinction is actually potentially very unsanitary. Many Hosts that have been placed on many unclean hands are then dipped into the same chalice before being placed on the tongue. However, the germicidal qualities of the wine and of the gold and silver of the chalice may allay this question.

siderations when we are talking about the Body and Blood of Christ, but we live in a germ-conscious society in which people do pay attention to such things, so we need to address them. Even in ancient times, when no one had ever heard of a germ, cleanliness was deemed a simple matter of respect.

At the time of the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, most (but not all) of the Protestant reformers denied that Christ is truly present in the Blessed Sacrament. They said that the Holy Communion was no more than a memorial of the Last Supper and the bread and wine¹ merely symbols of the Body and Blood of Christ. Luther and the leading Anglican reformers did not agree—they believed in the Real Presence²—but to separate their practices from those of the Roman Church they mandated that the Sacrament be delivered into the hand, not placed in the mouth. This remained the practice of the Anglican and Protestant Churches until well into the 20th century, when there began to be a slow return to reception on the tongue in some Anglican churches. To the distress of many Roman Catholic theologians and liturgists, the Roman Church, particularly in America, began administering on the hand after the Second Vatican Council permitted it on an experimental basis in the early 1960s. Many believe that doing so tends to remove the deep reverence and thus the respect for the Sacrament that had been so powerful for centuries. This in turn led to much of the disrespect, indifference and liturgical abuse that is so common today in both the Roman and Anglican Churches. It is hard to hold in awe that which is often treated casually, and that in turn interferes with our supernatural faith that the Blessed Sacrament is indeed the Body and Blood of Christ and not simply a symbolic ceremonial meal.

From the late 2nd century until the Protestant Reformation, the Blessed Sacrament was always administered directly to the

¹ The use of unfermented grape juice in place of wine is relatively modern.

² Luther proposed Consubstantiation, rather than Transubstantiation, as an explanation of how Christ is present in the Sacrament. While this is philosophically awkward, he unquestionably believed in the Real Presence.

mouth. Also, through much of the history of the Western Church, only the priest received from the chalice, on the theologically sound grounds that communion is complete and valid if only the Body or only the Blood of Christ is received. It is now an almost universal practice that communion in both kinds be available to all communicants, although many still prefer to receive only the Host. In the Eastern Churches, a particle of the consecrated bread is placed on a perforated liturgical spoon called a *cochlear* (from the Latin for spoon), dipped in the consecrated wine, and placed in the mouth of the communicant. This is the origin of the practice of intinction.

Throughout most of the history of the Church no one was allowed to touch the Blessed Sacrament or even the sacred Eucharistic vessels or linens except an ordained priest. This is because his hands were anointed and consecrated for that purpose at his ordination, while the hands of the laity are not. It was believed that nothing unconsecrated should touch the Body and Blood of Christ. The argument has been made that the layperson's tongue, as well as his hands, has not been consecrated. For those who have received traditional baptism that is not so, however, because in the traditional baptismal ceremony a grain of salt is placed on the infant's tongue as an act of consecrating it in preparation for the future reception of the Body of Christ.

Reception on the hand will undoubtedly remain a common practice for a very long time, although reception on the tongue is a rapidly increasing in popularity. Those who wish to do so should simply open the mouth wide and place the tongue over the lower lip.¹ This makes it easy for the priest to place the Host on the tongue without touching it. The most important thing, however, is that in any interaction we have with the Blessed Sacrament we remember that this is the Body and Blood of Christ. We should revere it as we would revere Christ himself, because it is indeed He.

Richard R. Losch+

¹ It is said that this is one time that you can stick your tongue out at a priest without being considered rude.

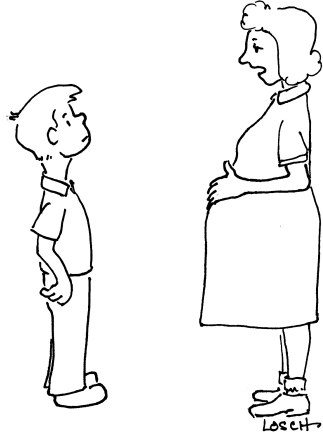
A Touch of Trivia

Cashews are not sold in their shells because the cashew shell is toxic. Cashews are in the family Anacardiaceae, the same as poison ivy. Like poison ivy, part of the cashew plant contains urushiol, an oil that can be fatal if ingested. The irritants are found in the shell oil, but not in the nut itself. Eating raw unprocessed cashews would result in ingesting some of this urushiol, however, so the seeds must be roasted at high temperatures to destroy the offending chemical.

Richard R. Losch+

JAMIE

by **Richard R. Losch**



“I don’t care what your friends told you, Jamie, babies are not downloaded from the Internet.”



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