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September 2018

This Month's Cover

This month's cover, in honor of the Feast of St. Michael the Archangel (September 29), is Raphael's reproduction of his own earlier miniature, *Saint Michael Vanquishing Satan*. Painted in 1518, it is oil on canvas, measuring 8'10"x5'3". It is on display in the Louvre in Paris. It depicts St. Michael's triumph over Lucifer (Rev. 12:7f), the allegory of the ultimate triumph of good over evil. Despite St. Michael's angelic beauty, the painting is infused with the rich drama of the fierce conflict between the powers of good and evil.

In 1504 Raphael was commissioned by the Duke of Urbino to paint a miniature of this battle. He painted it in oil on the back of a draught board, which is now also on display in the Louvre. Pope Julius II, a great patron of the arts, was so taken with the miniature that he commissioned Raphael to do a fullsized reproduction of it (it was also Julius II who commissioned Michelangelo to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel). Art historians disagree as to whether this reproduction was done by Raphael's own hand or by his students under his direction. He had many extraordinarily talented students, several of whom went on to become great masters themselves. It was common at that time for a master to have his students do much of the work on his own paintings, especially backgrounds and clothing. In any case, this painting of Saint Michael's triumphant victory is rich with his influence, and it ranks among the greatest masterpieces of the Italian High Renaissance.

Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino (1483-1520), known as Raphael (also the name of an archangel), was one of the greatest masters and architects of the Italian High Renaissance. He ranks with Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci as the trio of masters of

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that period. He was hugely prolific, and despite his untimely death of a fever at age 37 he left an enormous collection of paintings. Many are in the Vatican Palace, where his frescoes in the Raphael Rooms represent the most important of his works. The best known of these is *The School of Athens*. After his death his work was temporarily eclipsed by that of his flamboyant rival Michelangelo, but soon thereafter he was recognized as the equal of both Michelangelo and Leonardo.

Richard R. Losch+

A Word from the Editor

The loss of civility is the first step in the loss of civilization. I fear that we are stepping over that threshold. We are being beset on every side by profanity, rage, intolerance and unbridled hatred, and hardly a day goes by that we don't hear of another odious protest or street brawl somewhere. There was a time not all that long ago when people would gather to demonstrate or protest, state their cause and then disperse, and all was done with an aura of at least some civility and respect for the other side. Yes, there were some ugly exceptions, but they were the exceptions. Today it seems that vituperative language, irrational accusations and often actual violence have become the norm. That bodes a serious threat to our society and to our culture. I hear people say, "That's not who we are." That statement chills me, because it is becoming increasingly evident that that is exactly who we are, or at least who we are becoming.

I submit that what is happening is that we are slipping back to human nature. Human nature is an ugly thing. It is natural for us to grab what we want, overcome those who are weaker than we, and lash out at any who offend us. The world of the Mad Max films is an example of a world of raw, undisciplined human nature. Notwithstanding, by the grace of God we can learn to transcend human nature and learn charity, tolerance and forgiveness, and these lead to civility. These are divine attributes, not human ones, and they can be easily lost if we do not work to keep and nourish them. Christ exalted our human nature by taking it upon himself and infusing it with his divine

nature. He elevated it not because it is worthy of elevation, but rather in order to make it worthy because it is in his nature to love and forgive. If we fail to respond to that exaltation we cut ourselves off from it. Every time we indulge in hatred, selfishness and intolerance—every time we do what comes naturally—we are saying to Jesus, "No thanks, not interested."

It takes effort to overcome human nature and act civilly. That effort involves a conscious willingness to accept the gifts of God, and to pray, study, grow, and share those gifts with others that they may learn then as well. It is effort that needs to be exerted if we want to save our civilization, and more importantly, if we want to save our souls.

Be Wordly Wise

-aster

The suffix -aster comes directly from Latin, and although not common, it has a great variety of potential uses. Interestingly enough, in Greek aster means star, but in Latin the suffix -aster means resembling something. It is similar to -oid, as in spheroid (resembling a sphere) and ironically as in asteroid (resembling a star). The suffix -aster is used in botany as part of the name of a plant that bears an incomplete resemblance to another plant, such as oleaster, which somewhat resembles olea, the olive tree. It was also used in that way in 16th and 17th century English. For example, a pilaster (first used in 1534) is an architectural structure that looks like a pillar. In modern English, however, it has taken on a much less complimentary meaning. Added to a noun, it implies an inferior form of that noun. For example, a poetaster is an inferior poet who writes bad verse. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary also recognizes, among others, politicaster (an unstatesmanlike or contemptible politician), criticaster and philosophaster. Adding -aster to a noun is a subtle and civilized way to render an insult without having to resort to profanity or open rudeness, and most often the person won't even realize that he has been insulted.

Richard R. Losch+

Evening Prayer and Parish Supper

Our September service of Evening Prayer will be on Wednesday, September 19th, 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 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

Sunday School Reminder

Our Adult Sunday School will resume on September 9th at 10:00 a.m. The class does not meet on the third Sunday of each month. All adults and high school students are welcome.

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

Fifth Sunday Community Service

The fifth Sunday Community Service this month will be hosted by St. James' on Sunday, September 30, 2018, at 11:00 a.m. Please make your plans to attend and support this Livingston tradition.

Hiram Patrenos

"Just because you do not take an interest in politics does not mean politics will not take an interest in you."

—Pericles (430 B.C.)

The Peace

Ever since its introduction into the Eucharist, the "passing of the peace" has been controversial. Many love it and many hate it, while few are neutral. It goes back centuries, but over time it had pretty well disappeared until it was re-introduced in modern revisions of the liturgy. Its purpose is to recognize our unity in the love of Christ by greeting each other in Christ's peace. Often two strangers would be side by side in church and never so much as speak to each other. The Peace leads us to acknowledge one another. Saint Paul said, "Greet one another with a kiss," and in ancient times the Peace involved a kiss on the cheek. In today's society, at least in America, this is far from popular. For the most part, Americans are not even all that fond of any touching, let alone hugging or kissing.

The passing of the Peace has tended to degenerate from a Christian greeting into a break in the service in which people travel around the nave visiting with one another, often for several minutes. While in Saint James' this is fortunately still reasonably subdued, in many churches the din of conversations is deafening. This results in a jarring break in the peace of the liturgy at a time when the people should be preparing prayerfully for the most solemn part of the service, the preparation of the altar and the consecration of the Blessed Sacrament.

The 2018 General Convention of the Episcopal Church decided not to hasten to a new revision of the Book of Common Prayer. Instead, it has encouraged experimentation and innovation "on the local level" in order to allow new ideas to be tested before any final decisions are made. Saint James' is going to take advantage of this. In order to avoid breaking the continuity and solemnity of the Eucharist, starting September 2 we will move the Peace from its present place, immediately preceding the Offertory, to the end of the service as the dismissal. It is appropriate that as we prepare to leave, having received the Body and Blood of Christ as one people and having been blessed with "the Peace of God which passeth all understanding," we then greet one another with the Peace of Christ.

Richard R. Losch+

Love Your Neighbor

Most Christians, when they hear this precept, think of it as a peculiarly Christian command, given by Jesus himself. It is true that it is a Christian obligation and that it was commanded by Jesus. But what people all too easily forget is that it was given by Jesus the Jew, and that he was simply iterating the Jewish Law. The command to love one's neighbor goes back to the most ancient portions of Torah.

When Jesus' disciples asked him, "Who is my neighbor?", he answered by telling the parable of the Good Samaritan. The Samaritans were a people who despised the Jews and were despised by them, yet in the parable it was a Samaritan, not a Jew, who helped the wounded Jewish traveler. This immediately answered a question that had been discussed for 1000 years. When Torah talks about one's neighbor, does that mean all people, or just Israelites? And if the latter, did Jesus then mean to expand upon—that is amend—the commandments of Torah? As the Son of God he certainly had the authority to do so, but as a practicing Jew he could be justifiably challenged for that by the Scribes and Pharisees.

The release of the Israelites from servitude in Egypt is the foundation of Judaic tradition, heritage and spirituality. Passover, the celebration of that release, is as important a feast to Judaism as Easter is to Christianity. A very large portion of Torah, the Psalms, and the prophecies refer directly to Egyptian servitude and to the deliverance of the Israelites from it. A significant number of those references focus on the fact that having experienced oppression and rejection themselves, they should be particularly sensitive to them against others. For example, "You shall not persecute a stranger, and you shall not oppress him, because you were strangers in the land of Egypt"

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¹ In general, Jews tend to be politically and socially liberal in their attitudes toward other minority groups. Their own cultural experience not only in ancient Egypt, but throughout their history is so ingrained in Jewish thinking that they are very sensitive to oppression, bigotry and rejection not only against themselves, but also against others.

(Ex. 22:20); "The stranger who resides with you shall be to you like a citizen of yours, and you shall love him as yourself, because you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Lev. 19:33f); "You shall love the stranger, because you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Deut. 10:19); "You shall not be in judgment of a stranger ... You shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and the LORD, your God, redeemed you from there" (Deut. 24:17f).1

It is true that there are some passages that allow violence against strangers (as in the slaughter of the people of Jericho), but they are rare, and are vastly outnumbered by passages such as those above. Also, in a huge number of laws the principle of fair and humane treatment of foreigners, even war captives, prevails. It was for this that the Jews considered themselves the Chosen People—not chosen as favorites, but chosen to bring civility to the rest of the world. It is significant that the biblical history of the Jews does not start with Moses or even with Abraham, but with the beginning of the world. This was to show that the peace of the world would be brought through the Jews. God's first words to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, in establishing his covenant, was that "all the nations of the earth will be blessed through you" (Gen. 12:3; 26:2–4; 28:10–14).

It is against human nature even to care about strangers, let alone to love them. This is why in Torah the command is given 52 times in one form or another to welcome, help and be tolerant of strangers. Thus when Jesus said that we must love the LORD our God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves, he was not giving a new commandment. He was quoting Deuteronomy, and affirming it as a principle that must be followed by his disciples. Our neighbor is not our fellow-Israelite, our fellow-Christian, or our fellow-any-other-group. He is our fellow human being.

Richard R. Losch+

¹ The word that is translated strangers (*mitzraim*, מצרים) can also be translated as aliens or foreigners. It is also the word that is used to mean Egyptians, whom the Israelites called Foreigners.

The Parthenon

The Parthenon on the Acropolis in Athens is generally recognized, even in its ruins, to be one of the most beautiful buildings in the world. After the Persians defeated Babylon and released the Jewish captives to return to Judah, they had almost a century of wars with the Greeks. During that time Athens was destroyed, including all the temples and other buildings on the Acropolis. This is why a century later Alexander the Great was so dedicated to the conquest of Persia. In the late 5th century B.C. Pericles, the ruler of Athens, undertook to rebuild the Acropolis as an even more beautiful shrine. The jewel in its crown was the Parthenon, the temple of the virgin warrior goddess Athena Polias, who was the patron goddess of Athens.

The architects were Ictinus and Callicrates and the chief sculptors were Phidias and Praxiteles. All four were considered the greatest in the world in their fields. They employed a level of genius so astounding that it is hard to realize that they could do it without the aid of computers. As one looks at the building, even in ruins, it appears so alive and perfectly proportioned that it is easy to forget that it is constructed entirely of cold marble. The reason for this is that it is in fact not at all perfectly proportioned, and that was intentional. The architects were sensitive not only to the beauty of proportion, but also to the tendency of the human eye to distort and provide false illusions. For example, it would seem that for stonemasons 2500 years ago to make such an enormous floor so perfectly flat would be all but impossible. In fact, the floor is not flat, and was not meant to be. It curves very slightly upward toward the center by only a few centimeters, whereas a perfectly flat floor so large would appear to sag in the middle. Similarly, the columns, which look so straight and robust, are neither straight nor plumb. The perfectly vertical and straight columns so often used at that time and for centuries thereafter always look a bit rigid and brittle. The columns of the Parthenon, on the other hand, have an aura of confidence and rugged stability. The reason is that they are not straight. Their diameter increases very slightly as they rise from the base to the middle, and then decreases slightly again as they approach the top. They are very slightly cigar-shaped, by only a couple of centimeters, which makes them appear to be perfectly straight. If they were actually perfectly straight they would look stiff, distorted and fragile. They also lean inward by only about a centimeter, which makes them look even more stable and more perfectly upright. Modern optometrics and computer models could easily program these effects, but for the ancient Greeks to have recognized and accomplished them is truly amazing.

As you go around the Parthenon, the columns appear to be perfectly spaced. They are not, because if they were they would look as if they were not. The eye can be quite deceptive. As you approach the corners the columns are spaced a little further apart than elsewhere in order to make them look evenly spaced.

Another amazing thing about the Parthenon is the ratio of its width to its length, which is 1:1.618. This is also the ratio of most of the other rectangular measurements in the building. While this may seem at first to be an arbitrary figure, in geometry it is a very important number known as the Golden Ratio. It is also found in various forms in countless shapes in nature, from the shapes of spiral galaxies to that of microscopic sea creatures. A classic experiment is to show a number of different rectangles to a random sample of people and have them select the one they like best. Almost universally people will select the one that is in this ratio. The surprising thing about the Parthenon is that the Golden Ratio was not mathematically identified until Euclid did so a century after the Parthenon was built. It would appear that the architect Ictinus instinctively recognized the beauty of the Golden Ratio, and so employed it.

Richard R. Losch+

¹ If you take a rectangle in the Golden Ratio and cut off a piece to make it into a square, the piece you cut off will still be in that same ratio. You can continue to do that with the cut off pieces *ad infinitum*.

² A spiral using that ratio is called a Fibonacci Spiral, named after a 12th century Italian mathematician. It is the ratio of spiral galaxies, spiral sea shells, sunflower seeds, and almost all other spirals found in nature.

Domitian's Persecution of Christians

There is nothing new about "fake news." For centuries the Roman emperor Domitian (r. A.D. 81-96) has been accused of being a vicious persecutor of Christianity, yet all the evidence is that while there were some martyrdoms during his reign, he was actually quite tolerant of Christians. The first reference to his persecutions was written almost 250 years later by Eusebius (A.D. 268-339), who guotes Melito of Sardis (d. 180), who said that Domitian "brought slanderous accusations against Christians." He also quotes Tertullian (160-220), who claimed that Domitian was "cruel like the Emperor Nero," but more intelligent, and thus ceased his cruelty and recalled the Christians whom he had exiled. Eusebius also quotes Irenaeus (130-202), who said that Domitian's persecution consisted only of exiling Saint John the Divine to the Isle of Patmos, and exiling several other Christians to the island of Pontia. After all these quotes, however, Eusebius then goes on to claim that Domitian, like Nero, had "stirred up persecution against us." The tradition was then expanded by Orosius (d. 420) who claimed that Domitian regularly issued edicts for widespread cruel persecutions. There is no evidence to substantiate this claim. No contemporary pagan writer mentions anything of Domitian's persecution of Christians, even though there are many references to that of Nero (r. 54-68), only 15 years earlier. Despite the lack of any evidence (in fact there is evidence to the contrary), the tradition of Domitian's cruelty and irrational persecutions has persisted for centuries. Brian W. Jones, in his biography The Emperor Domitian, says of the tradition of Domitian's cruelty, "From a frail, almost non-existent basis, it gradually developed and grew large." Domitian was the second son of the emperor Vespasian, and succeeded his brother Titus. Vespasian and Titus were just and good emperors (in fact Titus may well have been the most beloved of all the emperors since Augustus). The brothers had a warm relationship, so there is no reason to believe that he was a "black sheep," but that he was in his father's and brother's mold. The false tradition, however, persists.

The Exodus—History or Myth?

Scholars have long argued over whether the Exodus is true history or simply a conflation of ancient Egyptian and Middle Eastern legends. Although there is no question that there are several inaccuracies and exaggerations in the biblical account, there is also too much evidence available to deny the authenticity of the sequence of events that the Bible describes: A large number of Hebrews (originally a Mesopotamian people) migrated to Egypt and were eventually forced into servitude; they ultimately rebelled and left Egypt, settled in the land of Canaan (which we now call Palestine), developed a unique culture and religion, and became what we now know as the Jewish people.

The biblical account was written after several centuries of having been only an oral tradition, so it is naïve to expect that all the details would be accurate. This does not mean, however, that the basic story is not true. For example, according to the Bible about a million and a half people left in the Exodus. This is unquestionably an inflated figure—it would be the equivalent of leading the entire population of Phoenix into the desert and expecting them to survive. Biblical literalists will argue that nothing is impossible with God, and that is true, but God is also rarely flamboyant. At the time of the Exodus (roughly 1200 B.C.) the entire population of Egypt, including slaves, is estimated to have been between 2 and 4 million. If the Exodus figure were accurate, it would mean that a third to possibly over half the Egyptian population left in the Exodus. That is not in the least bit reasonable, especially considering that of all the ancient cultures, Egypt had by far the fewest slaves.²

¹ Exodus 12:37 tells us that among those who left were about 600,000 men with their wives and children, as well as a retinue of "a mixed crowd" and their livestock, "both flocks and herds," This would be close to 1.5 million.

² In the Roman Empire a millennium later, it is true that almost half the population were slaves. That was not true in Moses' Egypt, however, where slavery was a minor institution. Despite the Hollywood image, the pyramids were not built by slaves. They were built by paid volunteers who believed that by helping the Pharaoh get into heaven by building him a proper tomb, they could also join him there at their own death.

Another question is whether the Israelites ever were slaves at all. There is good evidence that they were corvé labor. This is a labor force similar to feudal serfdom. They would be under the authority of a local lord, and would have to live where they were told. They would be paid a subsistence wage and were required to do the work assigned them. Corvé laborers were not technically slaves, but there is not really a great deal of difference. The main difference is that slaves were chattel property with no rights whatsoever, while corvé laborers were paid—albeit poorly—and enjoyed some basic human and civil rights.

This then raises the question of how they came to be in that state. Ancient documents and inscriptions give us some clues, although much is conjecture based on this scanty evidence. Dr. Richard Gabriel¹ has proposed a fascinating scenario of the events. We know that in the 17th century B.C. there were many independent Mesopotamian mercenary armies in the Middle East. One of the best of these was a group known as the 'Ivrith (the Hebrew word for Hebrew is 'Ivrith [צברית]). We know from the accounts in Genesis that Abraham left Mesopotamia and wandered through the Middle East, and that he was a very competent warrior who led a large band of capable fighters. At about the same time a Semitic people known as the Hyksos conquered and ruled Egypt. They obviously could not rely on the Egyptians for military support, so they would have hired mercenary armies. According to Gabriel, the 'Ivrith would have been a logical one to have been brought in and be well treated, including being given the best land in Egypt (the land of Goshen) to live in. It would also have been reasonable that they would have elevated one of them (Joseph) to a position of great power. Certainly no Egyptian Pharaoh would have elevated a foreigner to the second most powerful office in the land. A century later the Egyptian Ahmose I defeated the Hyksos and drove them out. Obviously one of his first moves would

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¹ Richard A. Gabriel, PhD is a professor of ancient military history at the Royal Military College of Canada. His book *A Military History of Ancient Israel* (Praeger Publishing, 2003) is a modern classic on this subject.

have been to suppress the Hyksos' friends, the 'Ivrith. He made them a corvé labor force—a great humiliation to what had been an elite army—and used them in his many building projects. Over the centuries these proud soldiers would have surreptitiously continued training their sons as soldiers. The amazing military victories of the Israelites after the Exodus indicates that they were far more than a rag-tag band of runaway slaves.

And now we come to Moses. He was raised in the palace as a member of the royal family, but they knew he was a Hebrew. so he was not qualified to be in line to become Pharaoh. There were only two lines of training for a royal male. Either he would be educated to be a high-level government officer, or he would be trained to be a general. The Egyptians had one of the best armies in the world at the time, so Moses would have been well educated as a military commander. When he killed the Egyptian and had to flee Egypt, he had the discipline and skills necessary to survive in the desert and make his way to Midian in Arabia. There he met his future wife Zipporah and her father, Jethro, a descendant of Abraham by his second wife, who trained him in Abraham's religion. When Moses returned to Egypt he was ready as a general, and the Israelites were ready as his army, to defy the Pharaoh Ramses II and leave Egypt. While much of this is Richard Gabriel's conjecture, it is entirely consistent with the historical and archaeological evidence that we have of that period, and it is far more reasonable than a literal interpretation of the biblical story.

Another major question is which tribes were actually in Egypt?¹ The Bible rather loosely indicates that the thirteen

¹ We often speak of the twelve tribes of Israel (Jacob), but there were actually thirteen. Jacob had twelve sons, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulon, Joseph, Benjamin, Gad, Asher, Dan and Naphtali. Joseph was not the patriarch of a tribe, but his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh were, as were each of Jacob's other eleven sons. After the conquest of Canaan twelve tribes were given territories, while the thirteenth tribe, the Levites, who were the hereditary priests, were distributed throughout the other twelve lands. They had no territory of their own, but as priests the Levites had special rights, privileges and authority.

eponymous tribes of Jacob's sons were there. A more careful exegesis of Genesis and Exodus, however, along with a large body of extrabiblical evidence, indicates that it is probable that only the tribe of Levi actually settled in Egypt, became suppressed, and finally left in the Exodus. It is significant that a large number of Levite names (such as Hophni, Hur, Merari, Mushi, Phinehas, and even Moses) are Egyptian, while Egyptian names are very rarely found in any of the other tribes. It is possible that the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh might have also been there, since they were the sons of Joseph by his Egyptian wife Asenath. Also, after the Exodus these two never really felt a part of the confederation of tribes that eventually became the nation of Israel, but were constantly harassing the others. It is reasonable that when the Levites went to Egypt most of Jacob's descendants remained in Canaan, which was the land promised to Abraham, and the land where most of his descendants lived at least until the time of Jacob. Instead of thirteen tribes leaving Egypt and conquering Canaan, it is entirely possible that the Levites, under the command of Moses after leaving Egypt, rallied the other tribes to rise up and take Canaan from within. This again would explain their otherwise unlikely rapid conquest of the strong and well-fortified Canaanite confederation of city-states. It does not deny the biblical account, but actually affirms it. It does not challenge the basic story, but only some of the details of it, which one would hardly expect to be precise after 500 years of oral tradition.

Richard R. Losch+

The Epistle is Online

The last five years of *The Epistle* are now 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+

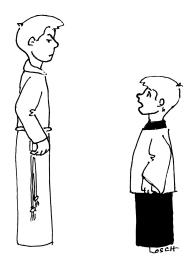
Bored? Run into a busy store and shout, "What year is it?" When someone answers, run out yelling, "Woohoo! It works! It works!"

A Touch of Trivia

Of the 42 delegates to the Constitutional Convention in 1787, only 3 refused to sign. One was Elbridge Gerry of Marblehead, MA. He refused because he did not believe there should be a Vice President. He said that the "closed intimacy" between the two offices "makes it absolutely improper." In 1813 he became James Madison's second Vice President. Gerry is best remembered for redistricting his congressional district to garner votes. Its shape made it look like a salamander, and his opponents called it a Gerrymander. The word is still used today.

Richard R. Losch+

JAMIE by Richard R. Losch



"I don't know how to act my age. I've never been this age begore."



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