

THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church
Livingston, Alabama

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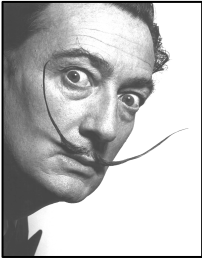
This Month's Cover

Our cover this month is Salvador Dalí's controversial surrealist painting *Madonna of Port Lligat*, painted in 1950. It is the second of two by that name, the first having been painted a year earlier in 1949. Both are quite similar except that the second is huge compared to the first. The first is 1'7"x1'3", while the second, our cover picture, is 9'4"x6'11". They are both oil on canvas. The small 1949 painting is displayed at Marquette University in Milwaukee, WI, and the large 1950 one is in the Nagasaki Prefectural Museum in Japan. It was first displayed in the Carstairs Gallery in New York. It was so large that it could not be brought into the building normally, so a wall was broken open on the sixth floor and the painting was hoisted up by crane. Dalí, who considered it his greatest work to date, was overheard praying that it would fall, because it would be "so spectacular." Many critics (mainly those who hated surrealist art) called the paintings blasphemous, but before allowing either of them to be shown to the public Dalí received the approval of Pope Pius XII. Dalí's wife Gala was the model for the Madonna in both. The focus of the second painting shifts from the look of peace and rapture on the face of the Madonna in the first, to the innocence of the infant, who is the Bread of Life. The painting shows a hole in the abdomen of the Virgin, in which the infant Christ floats freely in the air. There is a similar hole in his abdomen, in which is a loaf of bread, representing the Holy Eucharist. Dalí said that both holes signify the transcendence of the Blessed Mother and of Christ. The meaning of the plethora of symbols surrounding the Virgin and Child is more than we can go into in this article, but it is significant that none of them are rooted in the material earth. They

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all seem to float, denoting again the transcendence of everything spiritual. There are many subtle symbols, such as the cuttlefish bones that serve as the angels' wings. Port Lligat is a small village on the Mediterranean in the northeast corner of Spain. Dalí lived there several years, and used it as a setting for many of his paintings. Likewise, his beloved wife Gala was the model for almost all the women who appear in his paintings.

Salvador Domingo Felipe Jacinto Dalí i Domènech, First Marquis of Dalí de Púbol (1904-1989), known professionally as Salvador Dalí, was a Spanish surrealist painter. He was also



an extremely accomplished draftsman, architect, writer and filmmaker. He is hailed as the greatest of the surrealists. Most people are familiar with his *Persistence of Memory*, more commonly known as “Melting Watches” (limp watches subsequently appeared in several of his paintings). He is also well known

for his seemingly insane lifestyle and his wild-eyed look and flamboyant waxed moustache. There is no question that he was sane, but he loved to have people think that he was quite mad.

Richard R. Losch+

A Word from the Editor

Even though we are still in the depths of winter, the days are getting perceptibly longer, and the promise of Spring is before us. Essentially, this is what our Faith is all about—promise. In the midst of a corrupt and broken world we are given the promise that ultimately we will understand all and that in the end all will be well. The only drawback is that receiving the benefits of that promise is not automatic. Even though we can do nothing on our own to merit it, we are expected do our part by making a serious effort to live the gospel. In this way we open ourselves to receive God’s free gift of salvation. If we do not do our part, God will not force himself on us and we cut ourselves off from him. If we fail to accept his gift, the only alternative is “the outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Hell is not a politically correct concept

these days, but it is nonetheless true that the one subject Jesus talked about more than any other was Hell.

If anyone deigns to explain to you why bad things happen to good people, take what he says with a grain of salt, because he doesn't know what he is talking about. We may come up with some interesting hypotheses, but in this phase of our life we are not given to know. Theologians have argued for millennia about why Christ had to die on the cross, and they still disagree on many points. They accept, however, what the Bible tells us—it was necessary, and it is God's business and his only to know why.¹ Part of the promise is that there is a reason, and that eventually we will understand it. That is what faith is all about—the trust in the promise that eventually we shall understand all, and acceptance of the fact that in the meantime we have a simple choice—to trust that God knows what he is doing, or to submit to living in a cruel and godless world and just “suck it up.” The latter is a pretty sorry way to live out a life.

As we have now passed the Winter Solstice and are moving from darkness to light, the promise of the glory of the Resurrection, preceded by the darkness of the Cross, is before us. Lent and Easter are late this year (Lent does not begin until March 6), but time is irrelevant when it comes to salvation or damnation. What matters is that the promise has been given, and God is as good as his Word. Now it is up to us to accept that promise and to live accordingly.

Father Rick Losch



Where has the time gone? This issue marks 25 years of *The Epistle*. Volume I, Number 1 was published in February 1994. It's been a great ride, and we hope to continue it a lot longer.

¹ For an outstanding discussion of how the Crucifixion effected our salvation, I refer you to Chapter 2 of *The Day the Revolution Began*, N. T. Wright, HarperCollins 2016. Wright is acclaimed as the new C. S. Lewis.

Congratulations

Congratulations to Jimmy Collins, who has been appointed Chairman of the Board of the Bank of York. For the past twelve years Jimmy has been the Chief Executive Officer of the bank, which position has been assumed by Clete Beard. We wish them both the very best in their new responsibilities.

Richard R. Losch+

Outreach Report for 2018

The Vestry at its final meeting in December 2018 approved and completed our outreach giving for the fiscal year 2018. This does not include the generous outreach programs of the ECW. The following is a list of the gifts made by St. James' last year representing outreach giving of just under 10% of our pledged income for 2018:

Angel Tree – Sumter Health & Rehabilitation	\$364.18
Bethany Village at Camp McDowell	500.00
Department of Human Resources – Elderly Fund	500.00
Diocese of Alabama – Covenant	1,000.00
Trinity Church, Apalachicola – Hurricane relief	500.00
Kairos Ministry	125.00
Wilmer Hall Children's Home	<u>1,250.00</u>
Total Outreach	\$4,239.18

Hiram Patrenos

Parish Directory Update

The Parish Directory has been updated and is available on the table in the vestibule and on the table in the parish house. Please review the Parish Directory for an errors and/or omissions and give any additions or corrections in writing to Hiram Patrenos or e-mail them to him at patrenoj@bellsouth.net. The next update of the directory is scheduled for July 1, 2019.

Hiram Patrenos

*My people skills are just fine. It's my
tolerance of idiots that needs work.*

Forward Day by Day

The new *Forward Day by Day* daily devotional booklets for February, March and April are available on the table in the vestibule and in the tract rack in the parish house. They are available in pocket-size and large print editions.

Hiram Patrenos

Be Wordly Wise

Liber and Liber

In last month's article "Christian Books" I mentioned that the Latin for book is *liber*. Someone mentioned to me correctly that in Latin *liber* also means free, and asked if there is any connection. Etymologists are divided on this question. Some argue that slaves were generally illiterate and too poor to own a book even if they could read, so books were symbolic of freedom. If we go just by the numbers this argument may have some validity, but we must remember that in ancient Rome almost all teachers, scribes, librarians and secretaries were also slaves, as were most physicians and a number of poets, writers and philosophers. While the vast majority of Roman slaves were illiterate laborers, nearly half of Rome's intellectual elite were slaves.¹ Most of these lived better than the average free man and some owned many books.

Most languages contain what are called homographs. These

¹ At Rome's height in the early Imperial period (1st to 3rd centuries A.D.) over half the population of most major Roman cities were slaves. Roman slavery, although it was also a cruel and brutal institution, was quite different from American slavery. It had no racial or ethnic implications, and there was distinct socio-economic stratification among slaves. While the majority lived like animals in horrible conditions and were not granted even the most basic human rights, many were well-educated and some lived in more luxury than most free men. There are records of Roman slaves refusing manumission when it was offered because they had a better life than they would have had on their own. There are also records of men freeing a slave in order to adopt him, making him legally his own son as if he were his own biological issue (this happened in the novel *Ben-Hur*). The vast majority of slaves, on the other hand, had short and horrible lives.

are words that are spelled the same and sometimes pronounced the same, yet have different meanings and in most cases came from different sources. For example, the *wind* blows while you *wind* your clock; a word processor is a *type* of computer program on which you can *type* your essays; I *tend* to get nervous when I *tend* small children; he *wound* a bandage around the *wound*. The Latin *liber*, book and *liber*, free may also have been homographs. In many ancient languages we can get clues as to how words were pronounced from how they were used in literature, especially in poetry. This is one of the most valuable tools in determining how languages that are no longer spoken were pronounced.¹ It appears that *liber*, book, was pronounced with a short *i* as in libber, while *liber*, free, was pronounced with an extended *i*, as in leeber.² The two words may well have been homographs with completely different origins.

Richard R. Losch+

The Man Without a Wedding Garment

Jesus told the parable of a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son, and the guests treated him contemptibly and would not come (Matt. 22:2-14). He then sent his servants out “into the highways” and brought in off the streets anyone who would come, apparently regardless of social status. When the king came to greet his guests he saw a man who was not wearing a wedding garment. He had him bound hand and foot and “cast into the outer darkness, ... for many are called, but few

¹ We can even do the same with English pronunciation. The so-called English Accent was a contrived accent created in the late 17th century for upper-class university students, although it was quickly adopted by most higher-class Englishmen to distinguish them from the lower classes. From a study of the literature of the time linguists believe that the normal accent in London in Shakespeare’s time was very close to a modern Irish brogue.

² English pronunciation might lead us to think that it would be the other way around, since we have such words as liberty and library, but we must remember that English did not develop until many centuries after Latin was no longer a commonly spoken language.

are chosen.” On the first reading this seems horribly unfair. The poor man was hauled in off the street, and then punished because he was not properly dressed. If we understand the culture of the time, however, this story takes on a whole new meaning.

In first century Palestine, as in most ancient cultures, weddings were quite different from what they are today. In the first place, they were not considered a particularly religious matter other than that every act was religious, because the concept of separation of church and state was unheard of. Marriage, however, although it was considered established and blessed by God, was not deemed a sacramental bond as it is in Christianity. The ceremony did not take place in the synagogue, and it was not usually solemnized by a rabbi or priest. It generally took place in the groom’s home or even more often in that of his parents, and even for the poor it was a very important occasion in which the whole village usually participated. Unlike today, the bride’s family had little to do with it, and in many cases they did not even attend the ceremony if it took place a long way from their home. Marriages were arranged, often years in advance, and sometimes even before the bride and groom were born (“If I have a daughter and you have a son...”). If the families lived a great distance apart, it was not even all that uncommon for a bride to meet her new husband for the first time on the day of the marriage. For the bride, marriage was often a terrifying occasion rather than a joyful one.

Among the wealthier classes, the wedding banquet sometimes lasted for days. There might be a great feast for a large number of guests, and then the “inner circle” would be housed, fêted and entertained for days. These banquets were great opportunities for ostentatious show.¹ One aspect of such a banquet, which would certainly have been observed by any king, was that every guest was provided with a lavish wedding robe that was his to keep. He would put it on before ever entering the place of the banquet. To have refused to accept it and wear

¹ Or as Thorstein Veblen called it in *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, “conspicuous consumption.”

it would have been an open insult to the host.¹ When the man in the parable failed to put on the wedding garment, he was either showing disdain for the king, or he did not think himself worthy to accept such an expensive gown, or he took the invitation so casually that he couldn't be bothered with the expected custom. In either case, he entered the banquet room in his daily clothes with the dust of the street still on him. This was an insult to the king, and thus the man was cast out. If he felt himself unworthy of accepting the king's gift, he should have left before ever entering the banquet hall.²

The meaning of this parable is obvious, and would have been so to Jesus' original listeners. If we hold God in disdain or deny his very existence, or if we refuse to accept that he has made us worthy despite our unworthiness, or if we take him for granted and fail to respond to his gifts, we cut ourselves off from him. Regardless of the reason for refusing God's offer of salvation, doing so cuts us off from it and leaves us in the outer darkness. To expect to receive his benefits without doing our part in conforming to the expected repentance and righteous living is to demand largesse of God but to offer nothing in return. This is an insult to God and subjects us to being "bound hand and foot and cast into the outer darkness."

Richard R. Losch+

"If I were looking for the true Church in the world today, I would look for the one Church which did not get along well with the world; in other words, I would look for the Church which the world hated."

++Ven. Abp. Fulton J. Sheen

¹ A modern vestige of this is that at many Orthodox Jewish weddings and Bar Mitzvahs the male guests are provided with a *yarmulke* (skull-cap), often lined and beautifully embroidered, to wear during the ceremony and then to keep as a souvenir.

² It should be noted here that in Jesus' time a man normally owned one lightweight tunic over which he wore his one wool robe. To own more clothes than that would have been a sign of notable wealth. For an average man to be unexpectedly invited to a wedding and be given a wedding garment to keep would have been a major event in his life.

Saint Matthias the Apostle

Saint Matthias (February 24)¹ is the thirteenth Apostle, elected by the other eleven to replace the dead traitor Judas Iscariot. Jesus chose twelve Apostles as a symbol of the twelve tribes of Israel, so after Judas hanged himself the others felt it necessary to bring the number back up to twelve. There were actually thirteen Israelite tribes, but only twelve of them had tribal territories. The thirteenth, the Levites, were the hereditary priests. They had no land, but were dispersed throughout the other twelve tribal territories. In compensation for their lack of land they had other special privileges and authority as priests. As the Chosen People the Israelites were chosen to bring to the world a knowledge of God, with the priestly Levites as their spiritual guides and as their bond to God through the holy sacrifices. In Jesus' band the twelve Apostles denoted the twelve tribes, charged with bringing the Gospel to the world, while Jesus, the Eternal High Priest, was emblematic of the priestly Levites, their bond to God through his sacrifice on the cross. There is little question that the remaining eleven recognized the importance of this symbolism, and were thus moved to replace the lost Judas.

Among Jesus' many followers there were two who particularly stood out for their faith, loyalty and abilities. These were Joseph Barsabbas, also known as Justus, and Matthias (Acts 1:21ff.). The Apostles prayed for God's guidance, then cast lots on the two; the lot fell on Matthias. This was a standard way of making a decision in those days. When the High Priest in the Temple had to make an important decision he did it by casting lots. The exact method is not known, but he had on his breastplate sacred stones known as *Urim* and *Thummim*, lights

¹ This year his feast is translated to February 25 because the 24th falls on a Sunday. The only fixed-date feasts that can be observed on Sunday if they fall on that day are All Saints' Day and Christmas. All others are translated (moved) to another nearby date or, in the case of lesser commemorations, simply dropped from the calendar for that year. Sunday is always a commemoration of the Resurrection, and that takes precedence over all other feasts and fasts.

and truths. These were used for the casting of the lots. What kind of stones the Apostles used to select Mathias is unknown, although they may have been sacred dice. These were dice that were consecrated and never used for gambling or any other profane purpose. The Apostles, like the Temple priests, believed that God would guide their fall to display his will.¹

As the Christian Church grew and expanded throughout the Roman Empire, it became evident that the leadership, the Bishops, had to be greater in number than just twelve. This increase also signified the Church's recognition that Christ came for the whole world, not exclusively for the Jews. We do not know just when the number began to increase, but it was very early. Subsequent Bishops, however, were selected either by acclaim of the people or by election by ballot, not by the casting of lots. Although the bishops represented the Apostles, they were not called Apostles unless they had witnessed the Resurrected Christ. Saint Paul is the only Apostle who never met Jesus before the Crucifixion, but he witnessed him on the road to Damascus and thus called himself "the least of the Apostles."

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 it online or download it as a .pdf file. This is an easy way to share articles with others.

Richard R. Losch+

*Why do they lock gas station bathrooms?
Are they afraid someone will clean them?*

¹ The lots that the Roman soldiers used to cast lots for Jesus' tunic (John 19:23f) were more mundane—they were simply gambling dice. Although there were variations (some were four-sided pyramids and some more than six-sided), most were six-sided cubes with pips, much like modern dice. Gambling was very popular with soldiers, and hundreds of dice have been found in archaeological digs of Roman military encampments.

Saint Valentine's Day

While everyone is aware that February 14 is Valentine's Day, it is amazing how few are aware that for centuries it was called Saint Valentine's Day, and was a Christian feast day in honor of a saint.¹ Because so little is known about Saint Valentine the day is no longer observed on most Christian liturgical calendars. February 14 is now dedicated to Saints Cyril and Methodius, 9th century missionaries to Russia. Notwithstanding, many still pray for the intercession of Saint Valentine for the strengthening of their marriages or their bonds of love. As a secular holiday, Valentine's Day is one of the biggest spending days of the year. The National Retail Federation projects that in 2019 Americans will spend \$18.2 billion on flowers, candy and cards alone. That comes to about \$56 per person for every man, woman and child in America.

No one knows for sure just who Saint Valentine really was, but he is not to be confused with the 4th century Gnostic heretic Valentinus. The name derives from the Latin *valens*, worthy or powerful, and was a popular name in Late Antiquity. *Valens* is also the source of the word valor. The oldest and most credible legend is that he was a 3rd century Roman priest named Valentinus. The legend of Saint Valentine may be a conflation of the stories of several Christian martyrs of the time.

By Roman law a soldier could not marry.² Some were secretly married and often brought their wives along with them claiming they were mistresses, but the government wanted no family entanglements among their soldiers. The army always provided a good supply of female "companions" for the soldiers, even on the front lines. By the 3rd century many soldiers were secretly Christian, and wanted to marry rather than disobey the Christian moral law against adultery. Valentinus secretly solemnized many marriages of soldiers, but was finally

¹ It is also not, as I often hear it pronounced, "Valentines Day."

² This law was slowly fading out of observance by the end of the 3rd century, although some commanders observed it strictly. In the 4th century, when Constantine legalized Christianity in Rome, it was abolished.

found out. On February 14, A.D. 279 he was martyred (there is a historical record of his execution). There is little other hard evidence of his life and actions, yet the legend is so early and deeply rooted that it is credible. Because of the lack of firm evidence, however, the Roman Catholic Church removed his feast day from the liturgical calendar in 1969.¹

Saint Valentine is the patron saint of engaged couples, happy marriages, love and young people. Since the High Middle Ages his feast has been associated with courtly love. One legend says that when he was in prison he healed the jailor's young blind daughter, and when he was taken away to be executed he left her a note signed, "Your Valentine." This is said to be the origin of sending Valentine's Day cards and notes with the message, "Be my Valentine."

Another legend tells that Valentinus, because of his miracles, was highly successful in converting Romans to Christianity, including some very important ones. He was taken to the emperor Claudius II, who took a liking to him. He tried to convert Claudius, however, who flew into a rage and demanded that he renounce Christianity. When he refused, Claudius condemned him to death.

It is unclear when Valentine's Day took on a secular meaning along with its religious observance, but it appears to have been sometime in the Middle Ages. Some claim that it was in full flower by the time of Geoffrey Chaucer (1340?-1400), who described it in detail in *Parlement of Foules*. Many scholars on the other hand argue that since there is no known reference to it before that time, Chaucer invented the whole thing (not a rare practice for Chaucer) and thus created many of the secular Valentine's Day customs that are still in practice to this day.

Richard R. Losch+

¹ This was under an edict of Pope Paul VI. He removed several saints' days from the calendar because there is so little firm evidence of their lives and legends, or because their legends were unacceptably unrealistic. One of these was Saint Christopher. They are still considered saints and people are free to pray for their intercession, but they are no longer observed on the liturgical calendar.

Lent Is Late This Year

Although we usually expect Lent in February, it will start late this year (March 6), but that is not the latest it could be. The dates of Lent depend on the date of Easter, which is a “movable feast.” That means that its date varies from year to year. Most Christian feasts have fixed solar calendar dates,¹ but Easter is theologically linked to the Jewish feast of Passover that it is also closely tied to Passover’s date. The Jewish liturgical calendar is lunar, so the date of Easter is determined by the lunar rather than the solar calendar.

The Vernal Equinox is the date that the lengths of the day and night are equal, and it marks the official beginning of spring. Astronomically it can fall on March 20-22. At the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325, however, the Church fixed the Ecclesiastical Vernal Equinox at March 21. It then set Easter as the first Sunday after the first full moon on or after the Equinox (the Paschal Full Moon).² That means that if March 21 is a Saturday and has a full moon, then Easter will be the next day, March 22. That is the earliest possible date, and the latest is April 25. This year it is on April 21. There will be a full moon on March 20, a day before the Ecclesiastical Equinox, so we have to wait four weeks for the Paschal Full Moon

Lent begins 46 days before Easter, so the date of Ash Wednesday varies with that of Easter. We think of Lent as being 40 days, but since Sunday can never be designated as a fast day, the 6 Sundays of Lent are not counted as part of the fast.

Richard R. Losch+

¹ Feasts with fixed dates can vary if they fall on a Sunday or interfere with a more important movable day (such as Ash Wednesday). Sometimes they are just dropped for that year, but more often they are “translated”—moved to another date. The only fixed feasts that can be observed on their regular date even if it is a Sunday are All Saints’ Day and Christmas.

² The Eastern Orthodox Churches set Easter as the first Sunday after the first full moon *after* (not on or after) the Equinox, and also require that it must be after the Passover. For this reason Easter often falls on different Sundays in the Western and Eastern traditions.

The Power of Graffiti

For centuries scholars have argued as to whether in ancient times Jerusalem was pronounced *Yerushalayim* or *Yerushalem*. In the Middle Ages a group of Jewish scribes known as the Masoretes inserted the Tiberian vowel pointing into the Hebrew Scriptures in order to stabilize their pronunciation. Up until their time the spelling of the city had varied among many different documents, so its pronunciation was unclear. The Masoretes believed that in Herod's time the city was pronounced *Yerushalayim*, and so they inserted the Hebrew letter *yod* (י, *i* or *y*). Many scholars said they had no justification for doing that, but a recent discovery has vindicated them.

Last October a section of a Roman pillar drum was unveiled that had been discovered in an archaeological dig in Jerusalem. When the Romans destroyed buildings or cities they would often save good stones from them and re-use them in other buildings. Frequently these stones had inscriptions on them, and the Romans would simply place them so the inscriptions did not show. This pillar section from a Roman building that had been erected after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 bore a Hebrew graffiti saying, "Hananiah son of Dodalos of Jerusalem." We have no idea who these people were, but people often left their names behind in graffiti just as they do today.¹ On the other hand, it may have been the name of the man that carved the column (stonemasons frequently left their names on their work). The pillar section was clearly from 1st century Jerusalem, and the graffiti was written in a style of Hebrew script that was common only in the time of Herod the Great. The word Jerusalem was spelled with the *yod* (ירושלים), and was thus unquestionably pronounced *Yerushalayim*.

The Jerusalem Column, as it is called, is the only inscription from the Second Temple period in which the name of Jerusalem is spelled out in full.

Richard R. Losch+

¹ "Fools' names and fools' faces are oft displayed in public places."

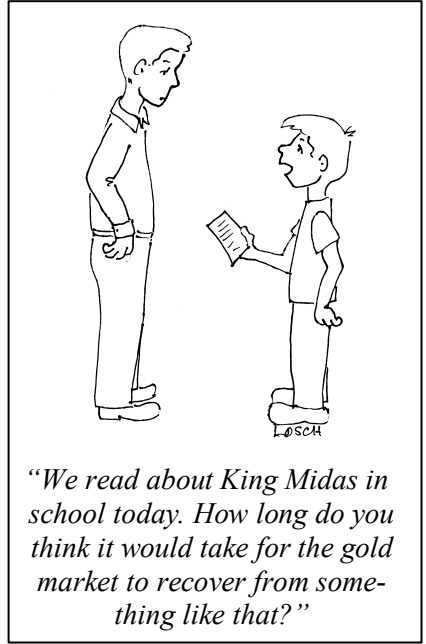
A Touch of Trivia

When George Washington died in 1799 he held the rank of Lieutenant General (three stars), which was at that time the highest military rank in the United States. Three stars did not seem a sufficient honor for all that he gave his country, so at the American Bicentennial in 1976 Congress posthumously awarded him the rank of General of the Armies. This bears five stars, but it is superior to the rank of all other five-star generals except that of General John J. Pershing, who also bears the rank of General of the Armies.

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JAMIE

by Richard R. Losch



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