

# THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church  
Livingston, Alabama



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September 2015

## *This Month's Cover*

Or cover this month is Luigi Gregori's stunning ceiling fresco of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in the Lady Chapel of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart at Notre Dame University in South Bend, Indiana.

Constantine I was the first Christian Roman emperor. He sent his mother, St. Helena, to the Holy Land to identify the sacred places. Most scholars agree that it is likely that many of the places she identified were accurate. When she identified the location of the tomb of Christ, Constantine built the Church of the Holy Sepulcher over it to protect it. It was dedicated on September 14, 335. Since then on that date there has been as a feast celebrating the Cross as the means of Christ's triumph over sin and evil. Such a festal observance would be inappropriate on Good Friday, so it is observed on the date of the dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

The painting depicts angels bearing the Cross into heaven, surrounded by a horde of saints and angels. One angel holds the nails, one the shroud, one the veil of St. Veronica, and another the legend over the Cross, *INRI* (*Jesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum*, "Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews"). Below it is the legend *Spes Unica*, "[Our] Only Hope."

Luigi Gregori was born in Bologna in 1819. At the age of 14 he was apprenticed to the great Bolognese artist Giovanni Battista Frulli. After completing his apprenticeship he studied in Milan and Naples. He was then invited to Rome to enroll in the Accademia di San Luca, where he studied under Tommaso Minardi. When he completed his studies at the Accademia he was hired as an artist in residence at the Vatican, where he painted a portrait of Pope Pius IX. In 1874 Father Edward Sorin, the founder and first president of the University of Notre Dame, was in Rome visiting the papal



*Luigi Gregori*

court. When he saw Gregori's work he invited him to become the artist in residence at the university. He accepted, and remained for 17 years. It was at Notre Dame that he completed his most notable works, including his masterpiece, the ceiling of the Lady Chapel in the Basilica. The entire basilica is decorated with his paintings. In 1880 Fr. Sorin commissioned a series of murals inside the main building at the university depicting the life and voyages of Christopher Columbus. In 1893 the U. S. Post Office produced a set of 16 postage stamps commemorating Columbus. Gregori's *Columbus Presenting Natives at Court* was selected for the 10¢ stamp.

In 1890 Gregori returned to Italy, where he won a gold medal for the arts. He died in Florence in 1896

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***A Word From the Editor***

An old Hebrew proverb is a clever play on words that I will explain on the next page. It says that if you put your heart before your head you are a fool, but if you put your head before your heart you are a king. One cannot live without both a heart and a head. If either withers to insignificance we die. Today we are living in a polarized society that focuses on one extreme or the other, and is losing the ability to see anything in the middle. The trend today is to base everything on the heart—compassion and feelings—or on the head—logic and intellect—and to forego any meeting of the two. This is a road to destruction. The far left sees the world as it wishes that it were, and refuses to acknowledge that Utopia is an unrealistic dream; the far right sees the world as it really is in all its ugliness, and refuses to accept that it could be made better. The truth lies somewhere between these extremes, but that truth can be realized only when the heart and the head are willing to work with each other.

There are few absolutes in this world. In the universe there is only one absolute, and that is the Truth of God. God gave us the Church, in unity with the Incarnate Son of God and

guided by the Holy Spirit, to help us discern that truth. This requires a great deal of discipline of both the heart and the head. To say that the Church is a gift of God is not to say that it can make no error. In this world the Church has been put into the hands of sinful men, and is thus subject to man's corruption, pride and greed. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would *lead us* into all truth, not that he would hand it to us effortlessly. While that truth is absolute, it is not guaranteed that our understanding of it will be infallible except that the Church will never accept as absolute truth anything that will endanger the salvation of our souls. It may have once taught that the sun orbits the earth, but our salvation does not hang on that. On the other hand, the fact that Jesus Christ is the incarnate Second Person of the Holy Trinity is not even open to discussion other than to be explored theologically. There are basic teachings of the Church on which there is no room for compromise or re-evaluation. We are not meant to conform God's law to our culture, but to conform our culture to God's law. It is the role of the Church to discern that law and to give us the spiritual and sacramental tools to conform to it.

In worldly matters there are no absolutes, and it is foolish to attempt to act as if there are. It is good that we have liberals and conservatives, because each keeps the other alert. As anyone in business knows, healthy conflict is productive. When one side begins to think that the other is all wrong the door is closed on discussion and compromise, and the best solution often remains undiscovered. Let the head continue to struggle with the heart, and may neither ever defeat the other.

*Father Rick Losch*

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## ***A Hebrew Proverb***

In "A Word From the Editor" I mentioned a Hebrew proverb that is a clever play on words. It says that if you put your heart before your head you are a fool, but if you put your head before your heart you are a king. To understand it you need to know four Hebrew words: *melek* (מֶלֶךְ), king; *lemek* (לֵמֶךְ),

fool; *moak* (מוך), intellect; and *lev* (לב), heart. Since in the Hebrew written alphabet there are no vowels, the only difference in writing between a king (*m-l-k*)<sup>1</sup> and a fool (*l-m-k*) is the order of the first two letters. The proverb says that if you put the heart (*lev*) before the head (*moak*) you put the *l* before the *m*, and you are a fool. If you put the head (*moak*) before the heart (*lev*) you put the *m* before the *l*, and you are a king.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***Erratum***

In the July/August Epistle we said that Peter Paul Rubens died in 1690. That should be 1640. Our failing eyesight was kind to Rubens' longevity, but not to historical accuracy.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***A Little Bit Bigger***

You may have already noticed our new format. Nothing much has changed other than that we are now printing about the same amount of material in a slightly larger typeface, and thus adding four more pages. For those of us whose eyesight is no longer that of a teenager, we believe this will be a help.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***Evening Prayer and Parish Supper***

Our September service of Evening Prayer will be on Wednesday, September 16th, at 6:00 p.m. with a "Tail Gate Dinner" following in the parish house. Signup sheets for attendance and various food types and items are posted in the parish house kitchen. Make your plans to attend, bring your friends, and wear your favorite school's colors.

*Hiram Patrenos*

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<sup>1</sup> The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. is often referred to as MLK. It has been observed that in Hebrew his initials spell his last name.

## ***Moving?***

If you are planning to move, please let us know your new address. If we get a return or forwarding notice from the Post Office they charge us 40% more than first class postage. If you don't want to continue receiving *The Epistle*, please let us know. It is expensive to print and mail it, especially if it just ends up in the trash. You can reach us at P.O. Box 446, Livingston, AL 35470, or email me at [loschr@bellsouth.net](mailto:loschr@bellsouth.net). For future reference, the address and email are in the masthead on the second or third page of every *Epistle*.

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## ***The Blessing of the Racquets***

The Men's and Women's Tennis Teams of the University of West Alabama will visit St. James' on Sunday, September 13<sup>th</sup> for the annual Blessing of the Racquets, and will join us for a barbeque lunch immediately following the service in the parish house. Pulled barbeque will be furnished and signup sheets for other dishes (salads, baked beans, desserts, other dishes, and tea) are posted in the parish house kitchen as well as a sheet for those planning to attend. So that we may know how much barbeque to order, you are asked to sign up or contact Hiram Patrenos (652-4210 or [patrenoj@bellsouth.net](mailto:patrenoj@bellsouth.net)) no later than Sunday, September 6th.

*Hiram Patrenos*

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## ***Sunday School Reminder***

Sunday School for our children and for adults will begin on September 13th at 10:00 a.m. If you would like to volunteer to help with this important ministry for our children, please contact Hiram Patrenos at (205) 499-0506 or email him at [patrenoj@bellsouth.net](mailto:patrenoj@bellsouth.net) as soon as possible.

*Hiram Patrenos*

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*The fact that there's a highway to hell and only a stairway to heaven says a lot about anticipated traffic volume.*

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## ***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*

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## ***General Convention***

In July the Episcopal Church held its 78<sup>th</sup> triennial General Convention. This was a controversial affair, but then every General Convention is controversial—if everyone agreed on every issue, there would be no need to convene. There was the usual spate of resolutions, speeches and routine business activities, and if you wish to review them they are all available on the Internet. There were four major actions that merit our attention.

First, the Convention elected a Presiding Bishop, who will serve a term of nine years. He is the Rt. Rev. Michael Curry, the current Bishop of North Carolina. He will begin his term on November 1, 2015.

The most controversial of all the decisions was the approval of same sex “marriages.” There are those of us who consider this to be a grave moral error, and there are those who believe that it is a step forward in the diversity and inclusiveness of the Church. Either way, the discussion is obviously far from over.<sup>1</sup> The Book of Common Prayer and the Constitution of the Episcopal Church recognize marriage as being between a man and woman, so the Convention got around this by establishing a new marriage rite as a trial for a future Prayer Book revision. This makes it legal. This rite will be

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<sup>1</sup> It is not sufficient to say that it is now the law of the land and of the Church and so the issue is closed. The proponents of abortion thought that *Roe v. Wade* would be the end of that discussion, yet the abortion controversy has continued to rage for the past 42 years.

available for trial in late November. No parish or priest will be required to solemnize a same-sex “marriage,” and authorizing it will be the prerogative of the diocesan bishop. Bishop Sloan has stated that he will allow it, beginning in Advent.

The third action that will cause considerable discussion is the establishment of committees to explore a revision of the Book of Common Prayer and the Hymnal. This has happened roughly every 50 years throughout the history of the Episcopal Church. It may seem a bit soon, but our present Prayer Book is 36 years old and the Hymnal is 35.

Finally, there is serious exploration of proposals to restructure the Episcopal Church. One proposal gives much greater power to the House of Deputies, and especially to its president, and reduces the authority of the Presiding Bishop. Another proposal recommends abandoning the bicameral structure (House of Bishops and House of Deputies) and having bishops and deputies all vote in one house. Nothing official has been done yet—it is all still in the early talking stage—and there can be no change made for several years. Any such changes must be made to the Constitution of the Church, and that will take a minimum of six years, and probably longer. Notwithstanding, several proposals are being hammered out in various committees.

Continue to pray for the Church, the House of Bishops and Bishop Curry. The Church is facing many major challenges, and the next few years promise to be turbulent. She needs the fervent prayers of her people.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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*This summer I discovered that I scream the same way  
whether I'm about to be devoured by a great white shark  
or a piece of seaweed touches my foot.*



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## ***Bishop Curry Elected Presiding Bishop***

The 78<sup>th</sup> General Convention in July elected the Rt. Rev. Michael Bruce Curry, Bishop of North Carolina, to serve a nine-year term as the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church. He was the first Black bishop of a southern diocese, and will be the first Black Presiding Bishop. He was born on March 13, 1953 in Chicago, and was educated in Buffalo, NY. He was graduated with honors from Hobart College in 1975. In 1978 he earned his M.Div. from Yale Divinity School and was ordained a priest in December of that year. He served as Rector of St. Stephen's, Winston-Salem, NC (1978-82), St. Simon of Cyrene, Lincoln Heights, OH (1982-88), and St. James', Baltimore, MD (1988-2000). In 2000 he was elected the 11<sup>th</sup> Bishop of North Carolina. He will assume his duties as Presiding Bishop on November 1, 2015.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***Be Wordly Wise***

### ***Candidates and Elections***

The next presidential election is over a year away, yet it seems to be all anyone is talking about these days. It might be a good time to consider some of the words being bandied about in this discussion, many of which come to us from ancient Rome. This is appropriate, since the Founding Fathers based the structure of our government on the Athenian Democracy and the Roman Republic.<sup>1</sup>

In ancient Rome, the toga was a sign of Roman citizenship, and it was usually worn only by upper class males (and, surprisingly, by prostitutes). Despite John Belushi and his bed-sheets, the toga was at best a cumbersome gown. It was a 20-foot long bean-shaped garment of fine wool that was almost

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<sup>1</sup> In fact, the second official political party in the United States was Thomas Jefferson's Democratic-Republican Party, formed in 1801 to oppose the Federalist Party.

impossible to drape correctly without help, usually that of a slave. It limited the wearer's movement, thus demonstrating that he did not have to do any kind of physical labor himself, but had slaves to do it for him. When a man decided to run for public office he would make the announcement wearing a toga that had been bleached and chalked, making it dazzlingly white. This was known as a *toga candida*, from *candor*, brilliant whiteness. In Rome white was a symbol of honesty, so this toga was a symbol of his purity and honesty (politicians in those days were about as pure and honest as they are today). He thus became a candidate, *candidatus*, one clothed in dazzling white. He wore the *toga candida* throughout his campaign, thus marking himself as a candidate wherever he went. After his election he removed it. Romans joked that once a politician discarded the symbol of his honesty he also discarded his honesty.

The Latin *ligere* means to bind. Adding the prefix *e-* (*ex*) gives us *eligere*, to let loose. The past participle is *electus*, from which we get the word elect and all its derivatives. This is also the root of the word eligible, which means able to be unbound. When a *candidatus* becomes *electus*, he is unleashed. The implications of this in politics are a bit daunting.

The Latin *vovere* means to make a conditional vow to the gods, such as "If you ... then I will ...". It was also used to mean to pray or plead for something. Its past participle is *votum*, from which we get the word vote. Thus to vote for a candidate is to promise to support him in exchange for the fulfillment of his promises to you.<sup>1</sup>

Before beginning any important undertaking the Romans first "took the auspices." This involved observing the flight of birds and the condition of the entrails of birds sacrificed to the gods. This was often done repeatedly, because they would not risk undertaking the project until the omens were favorable. Taking the auspices was the duty of an *augur*, a seer, who

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<sup>1</sup> This is also the root of the words vow, devote, votive and votary.

performed the *auguratio*, the divining. The root of these words is *avis* (or *avis*), bird. Before a newly elected official began his duties he would be “taken to the auguries” or *inauguratus*, inaugurated.

Ancient warships were often fitted with a bronze beak at the prow to be used as a ramming device. This was called a *rostrum*, beak. When the Romans captured an enemy ship they would publicly display its rostrum as a symbol of their victory. The beaks of particularly important ships were displayed on the face of a stage in the Forum called the *Rostra* (plural of *rostrum*). Political candidates stood on the Rostra to announce their candidacy and to speak. To this day we call a speaker’s platform a rostrum.

Our Electoral College system was inspired by the Roman electoral system, in which voting was done by tribes. Although these were originally family groupings, by the time of the Late Republic (Caesar’s time) they were simply political divisions. There were thirty-five tribes. The members of each tribe voted, and then the result counted as one vote per tribe to determine the election. Originally the vote was cast by dropping a white stone for yes or a black one for no into a pot. By Caesar’s time engraved tiles were used. The voting stone was called a *suffragium*, from which we get the word suffrage. The tile was called a *tabella*, from which we get tabulate. By the Middle Ages voting in most places had reverted to the casting of small white or black balls. This is the origin of the expression to blackball something, meaning to vote against it. In Italian these balls were called *balloti*, little balls, whence the word ballot.

In the Roman legislature, any bill that was presented could be stopped by a single member of the Tribunes of the Plebs (the representatives of the common people). All he had to do was cry out “*Veto*,” “I forbid.” In this sense the tribunes were more powerful than the Senate.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Unlike our system, the Roman Senate could not propose legislation. All they could do was approve or disapprove it. All legislation was proposed

The word campaign was originally a military term, meaning a plan of attack. In time it came to mean any plan for achieving a specific goal. Ancient military battles were generally waged in open country. The word comes from the French *campagne*, open country (from which we get Champagne, the French wine producing region). This in turn derives from the Latin *campus*, field or level ground.

As we proceed with the campaigns we might do well to remember the ancient Latin proverb *Cave quod voves*, “Beware what you wish for.”

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***Adam’s Rib***

Whether we take the Genesis story of creation literally or allegorically, the moral and theological lessons that it teaches are the same. The Bible tells us that God took a rib from the man’s side and from it made a woman: “So the Lord God ... took one of the man’s ribs” (Gen 2:21 NIV). Several versions offer an alternative translation in a footnote: “... took part of the man’s side.” Most scholars believe that this is a better translation. The Hebrew that is usually translated rib is *tsela* (צלע). In the singular this can mean either side or rib as we generally think of the term. In Genesis, however, it is used in the plural form. While this can mean the plural of a single rib bone, it more commonly means a side (in the way that we use the term “a side of beef”). The implication is that God split Adam in half lengthwise. This was the ancient rabbinic explanation of the line of symmetry on the human body (especially noticeable at the upper lip, torso, back and buttocks).

In Genesis 1:27 we are told, “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male

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by either the tribunes (roughly equivalent to our House of Representatives) or the consuls (roughly equivalent to the President, of which each year there were two with equal authority).

and female he created them.” When we talk about the image of God we must remember that God does not have a physical body—we are talking about his spiritual attributes. Did God create two humans, a man and a woman, or did he create one being with both the masculine and feminine qualities? God is neither male nor female, masculine nor feminine. He has the attributes of both—he is strong and assertive, yet gentle and nurturing. If he created mankind in his image, then that image would have been similar, containing the attributes of both. This interpretation also resolves the question of the two creation stories in the first two chapters of Genesis. God created one human being, and then, in order that the human might have companionship, he divided the being in half. Each half regenerated into a whole human—one physically male with the masculine attributes, and the other physically female with the feminine attributes. Again, whether we take this story literally or allegorically, its moral implications are profound.

The angels do not have gender, and are not given the power to reproduce. Sexual reproduction is a power given only to the creatures of the earth, and thus they and they only can participate in the ongoing divine act of creation. The forces of evil are intent on corrupting and perverting this divine power because it embodies all that they are not.

The key passage in this story is what immediately follows: “This is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). Marriage is the reuniting of the separated. It is the rejoining of the male and female, the masculine and the feminine, into a complete and integrated whole. It is the restoration of the complete image of God, as represented by the family. From ancient times the Jews saw marriage as existing not for the purpose of companionship, but for the establishment of the family, the basic reproductive unit of human society. When companionship was needed God divided the human into two parts. The goal is reunification, whereby they are able to transcend their individual worldly needs, become one integrated (holy) being as a

family, and as such turn to God for companionship.

It was not out of prudishness that the ancient Jews decried adultery, homosexuality, pedophilia and bestiality. They believed that the sexual act has one purpose and one only, and that is to reproduce the human race (“Be fruitful and multiply, and increase in number” - Gen. 1:22). God made it pleasurable in order to encourage that reproduction, not simply to provide a source of physical gratification. Thus sexual activity is acceptable only within the context of marriage, which is the reuniting of the separated into the whole (the holy). Any other use of the sexual act perverts its purpose, since no other use of it can reunite the separated parts of the image of God. Even in situations where reproduction is unlikely or seems impossible, such as in the case of the infertile or the elderly, sexual activity within marriage is blessed. Miracles happen (remember Sarah, Hannah and Elizabeth).

For twenty centuries Christianity has taught the same interpretation as that of the ancient Jews. Within the past few decades, for the first time in human history, society has denied that there are gender differences, and has accepted and even embraced liberal sexuality, homosexuality and transgenderism. We wonder if pedophilia can be far behind (the American Psychological Association no longer lists it as a disorder).

The Church and our society have some serious challenges ahead that will require a deep examination of our theological and moral standards. Perhaps the new standards are valid, but I must confess that I have my doubts. If they are not, we will have some serious answering to do when we stand before the Throne of God.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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*Chocolate is made from the fruit of the theobroma cacao tree.  
That makes chocolate a fruit.  
You're welcome.*

## *Sin and the Law*

The first five books of the Bible, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, are called the Pentateuch. This is from the Greek *pentateuchos* (πεντατευχος), “five-book.”<sup>1</sup> The first five books of the Jewish Bible (the *Tanakh*, תנ"ך, which we call the Old Testament) are the same. In Hebrew they are called the Torah (תורה), “Instruction.” They tell the stories from Creation to the early formation of Israel as a people and a nascent nation, and also contain a plethora of laws and moral commandments. The Torah is the heart of Judaism. The focus of every synagogue is a hand-written scroll of the Torah that is treated with the utmost reverence.

In ancient Greek there was no word for sin. While the concept of disobedience of the gods and violation of their demands goes back to the first realization of deity, sin as we usually use the term is a Judeo-Christian construct. The Greeks had no such concept.

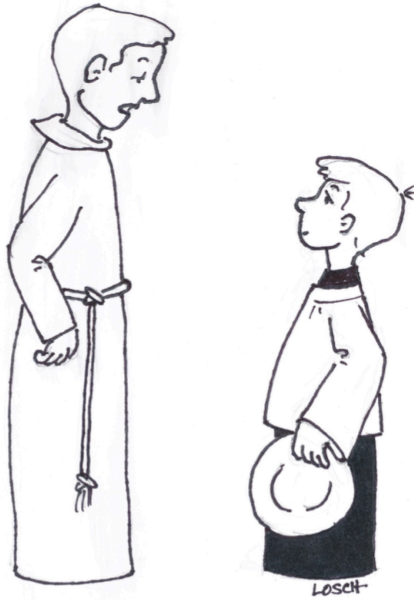
When an athlete would miss the target or bulls-eye, the crowd would chide him by crying “*Hamartia!*” (ἁμαρτία), “Failure!” Basically this meant, “You missed the mark.” This is the word that Saint Paul uses for sin. The goal is perfection (Matt. 5:48), and missing that mark is sin.

There is little question as to why Paul, a Jew, chose to use that Greek term. The root of the word Torah is the Hebrew verb *yarah* (ירא), which means to shoot at a target or to transmit power from one point to another. The Torah teaches the people about the target, the goal of perfection, obedience and adoration at which they should aim. Falling short of that goal, failure to hit the mark, is sin.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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<sup>1</sup> *Penta-* is five. *Teuchos* literally means “tool,” but in some contexts it is translated “book.” The ancient Greeks considered books to be the primary tools of learning. (*Teuchos* has no relationship to the Yiddish homophone *tochis*, “backside.”)



*“Jamie, the next time you hand  
the collection plates to the  
ushers, kindly do not say,  
‘Make ’em cough it up, boys.’”*