

THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church
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This Month's Cover

In honor of the Feast of St. Mary Magdalene (July 22), our cover painting is Correggio's *Noli me Tangere* ("Do not touch me)," also known as *Christ Appearing to Mary Magdalene in the Garden*. Completed c.1525, it is oil on a panel transferred to canvas,¹ and measures 4'3"x3'5". It is displayed in the Museo de Prado in Madrid. It portrays Mary Magdalene in the garden on the morning of the Resurrection, having just recognized the risen Christ. She is wearing a gold brocade gown, although in reality she likely would have worn a simple woolen robe in earth colors. One of the skills of the great artists of the Italian Renaissance was their ability to paint rich complex fabrics, and they rarely missed an opportunity to do so. It is also noteworthy that Correggio does not show Christ's wounds. Considering his usual attention to detail, this was probably intentional.

When Mary turned and recognized Jesus, she apparently reached out to him. He told her, "Do not touch me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father" (John 20:17). This raises the question of why he would forbid her to touch him, yet a few days later tell Thomas to touch his wounds? While St. Jerome's Latin translation (the Vulgate) says, "*Noli me tangere*" ("Do not touch me"), the original Greek has a somewhat different implication. It denotes, "Do not cling to me," not simply "Do not touch me."² The interpretation of this is that she should not cling to him in just his earthly presence, because he must ascend to the Father in order to complete his work of redemption.

Antonio Allegri da Correggio (1489-1534), known simply as Correggio, was the most influential painter of the Parma school during the period known as the High Italian Renais-

¹ This process, developed in the 18th century, is for restoring paintings on wood that has decayed or become worm-infested. The wood is planed paper thin, and the remaining wood is scraped off until there is nothing left but the layer of paint itself. This is then transferred to a canvas backing.

² "Do not touch me" is not incorrect, but *Me mou haptou* (Μη μου ἅπτου) implies an ongoing action, not a momentary one, and it also implies holding on or clinging rather than just a simple contact.

sance (1490-1527). He was born in Correggio in northern Italy. Little is known about his early training, but experts agree that he was trained by his uncle, the famous painter Lorenzo Allegri. In 1503 he moved to Moderna to apprentice under Francesco Bianchi Ferrara. At the completion of his apprenticeship in 1505 he moved back to Correggio, where he remained until at least 1510. By 1516 he had moved to Parma, where he remained most of the rest of his life. There he executed some of his greatest works, in both painting and fresco. Most of his works were of religious or mythological subjects. In ill health, he returned to Correggio in late 1533, where he died suddenly in early 1534. He was buried the next day in Correggio.

Richard R. Losch+

A Word from the Editor

In July we celebrate American independence with fireworks, parades, and much flag-waving, but we tend to forget that with independence comes great responsibility that we would often rather not exercise. Plato, in *The Republic*, said that people do not want liberty, they want rulers who will be good to them. So it is also with the liberty, the freedom of will, that God has given to each of us. The reason that we are sinners is that God gave us the freedom to sin if we so choose. Without that free will, which is freedom to choose, we would be incapable of doing anything but God's will, and would thus be slaves. If we were incapable of disobeying God, we would also be incapable of loving him. Love is a choice, not an emotion (liking is an emotion). In ancient Rome, a small class of elite slaves lived far better lives than they ever could if they were free. Many were content with this, but many wanted to be free even though

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it would mean a harder life for them. In 1941 the German psychologist Erich Fromm published *Escape from Freedom*, in which he masterfully argues that those who cannot cope with the responsibilities of freedom will inevitably turn to a dictatorship, naïvely trusting that under it they will be better off.

No governmental authority, from dictatorship to democracy, can rule without the consent of the people. One man or several cannot rule over millions unless they allow it. Tyranny survives only when the people would rather suffer under it than face the risk and suffering that go with overthrowing it. So it is with the spiritual and moral tyranny imposed by a corrupt secular world. Our God-given free will enables us not only to reject God if we so choose, but also to reject the tyrannical worldly temptations of sin and evil that would tear us from God. That is our choice.

Father Rick Losch+

Be Wordly Wise

Bravo!

We are all familiar with the use of “Bravo!” as a cry of approval for something outstandingly well done, but few know what it really means or how it should actually be used. It is Italian and has a variety of translations, depending on the context in which it is used: good, fine, clever, capable, bold, or courageous.¹ Its first known usage as a cry of approval was in the late 16th century, and it seems to have originated as such in musical performances. The superlative form is *bravissimo*! Although *bravo* and *bravissimo* are commonly used regardless of the sex of the performer, purists demand that it be used in its proper Italian grammatical forms: *bravo* for a man, *brava* for a woman, and *bravi* for a group. The same applies to *bravissimo*, -a, -i. Few people pay much attention to English grammar any more, however, so even fewer care about the Italian.

Richard R. Losch+

¹ It is also a Spanish word, but in Spanish it means wild, dauntless, rough, spirited, or courageous; as a noun it means a ruffian or bandit. However, Spanish has also adopted its universal usage as a cry of approval.

The Parable of the Talents

In Matthew 25:14-30, Jesus tells the Parable of the Talents. In order to understand it, we must first understand what a talent was. Today we use the word to mean a natural aptitude or skill, but that is a relatively modern meaning. In earlier English it was a unit of weight, but in biblical times it was a great deal of money. Scholars are not sure of its exact value, since in ancient times there were many conflicting references to a talent's nature and worth. Most estimate that in New Testament times a talent was about 6000 Roman denarii. A denarius was the value of an unskilled laborer's wages for one day (what the KJV calls a "penny"). That means that in America in today's money a talent would be worth somewhere around \$750,000.

In the Parable of the Talents, a rich man plans to go on a journey, so he assigns his estate to the care of three slaves. This was not at all uncommon in those days, as the steward (equivalent to a business manager) was usually a trusted slave. To one slave he entrusts ten talents, to the second five, and to the third one. When he returns, he calls for an accounting. The first two report that they have each invested the talents and have doubled them. The third reports that he has taken no risk of loss, but has kept his talent safe and can return it in its entirety. The master praises and rewards the first two, and reprimands the third, casting him out (probably meaning that he discharges him from his privileged position as an assistant steward).

Jesus does not explain this parable, but the common interpretation of it today seems quite reasonable. We are all given certain talents (gifts, in the modern sense), some more than others, and we are expected to use them in the furtherance of the Gospel. If we are afraid to take any risk, however, and do not use our God-given gifts for his work, then we are in danger of losing even what we have, and of being rejected. We must emulate the first two slaves, and not be timid like the third. If we fail to do what God expects of us and do not use the tools he has given us to do it, then we have failed him. This interpretation seems to make good sense, and although it teaches a

valuable lesson, there is a serious problem with it. It is probably not at all the message that Jesus intended to convey. We hear the story through 21st century Western ears, and not through those of 1st century Mediterraneans.

In ancient times, the universal concept of wealth was that it was a huge pie, of which everyone got a piece. Some got a large slice, some a small one, some a sliver, and some just a crumb. There was only so much wealth to go around, so if your wealth increased, in most cases it was because someone else's decreased. Riches could be gained only at the expense of others.¹ The idea of creating new wealth by innovation, perseverance, and hard work (the basic concept of capitalism) did not become common until 1776, when Adam Smith published *Wealth of Nations*. They believed that while new wealth could be created, it was only from the earth, by mining or agriculture. If a farmer grew more than his family needed and he sold the excess, that extra wealth was considered a gift from God and was acceptable. If he profited from the exploitation of his hired workers, however, that was sinful. Interest on loans was forbidden, because it was considered usurped wealth. A loan was to be given out of the goodness of your heart, and not for profit. Interest on a loan was deemed morally equivalent to theft, because it was taking a little chunk of someone else's piece of the wealth-pie. The Jews felt no responsibility to Gentiles in this respect, however, so money could be loaned to them for interest, and business deals with Gentiles for profit were acceptable.

There was a loophole. It was considered a little sneaky and was scorned, but it was legal. It was universally believed that slaves had no sense of honor, and therefore honor was not expected of them. That does not mean that they could never be trusted, however. Many slaves were intensely loyal to their

¹ Most ancient cultures had no problem with usury or exploitation. They saw themselves as living in a dog-eat-dog world, where it was natural for the strong to take from the weak. The Jews, on the other hand, had a more humanitarian view of the world, or at least of other Jews, so for them the question of distribution of wealth required serious moral consideration.

masters, and for that reason would never cheat them. It was these who were entrusted to be stewards, many of whom were responsible for the management of huge estates and fortunes. The three slaves in Jesus' parable would have been such as these. Since honor was not expected of slaves, there was no law against their loaning money for interest, managing business deals for huge profits, or even exploiting the labor of other slaves under their oversight. The rich could technically obey the law and abstain from all these profitable but illegal enterprises by turning them over to their slaves to handle. This is exactly the situation in the Parable of the Talents.

Considering this, then, what was Jesus telling his listeners in this parable? When we hear the story, we respect the master who chose at least two of his stewards wisely, we extol the two industrious slaves who turned a nice profit, and we scorn the poor wimp who did not have the courage to take a risk. Jesus' hearers would have had exactly the opposite interpretation. They would have condemned the greedy master who used a legal loophole to enhance his own wealth at the expense of others, and they would have denounced the two slaves who, in their eyes, cheated others of huge amounts of money to please their greedy master and feather their own nests. The third slave, on the other hand, was honorable and courageous. He refused to cheat others, even though he knew he would be in trouble for not doing so. To Jesus and his hearers, he was the only one in the story who was to be admired and emulated. The message, then, was to do what is right even when you know that to do so will get you into trouble. After all, it was he who said, "Take up your cross and follow me," and set for us the example.

The lesson that modern listeners hear, that of using our God-given talents to do God's work despite the risk, is a good and valid one. However, we must understand that the lessons that we as modern Christians see in the Scriptures can often be quite different from what the Gospel writers of 2000 years ago intended to convey to their readers.

Richard R. Losch+

And When He Had Given Thanks

The Christian practice of “saying grace” before meals is by no means unique to Christianity. In fact, it is the custom in almost every formalized religion. There are three common forms of it: blessing God for having given us our food, thanking him for the food, or asking him to bless the food for our use. There are two places in the gospels that specifically mention this. At the feeding of the multitudes, Jesus took the loaves, “and when he had given thanks, he distributed them” (John 6:11). At the Last Supper he took bread, “and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them” (Luke 22:19).

In Jesus’ time (as with many even today), observant Jews would never eat anything without first saying a blessing, even if it were just a snack as they were walking along the trail. As far as we can tell from documents of the time, the blessing was very similar to what is used today. Even though in Judea and Galilee the common language was Aramaic, the blessing would almost certainly have been in Hebrew, the formal language of Judaism. There were several blessings – for bread, for the five grains, for wine, for fruits, for vegetables, and for all other foods – but they all followed the same pattern (“Blessed are you, LORD our God, King of the Universe, who...”). At most meals, and always at the Sabbath meal and special occasions (such as Passover), the father of the household (or the oldest male) blesses the bread with the prayer, “Blessed are you, LORD our God, King of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.”¹ The bread is then broken and distributed to everyone at the table. He then blesses a cup of wine, saying, “Blessed are you, LORD our God, King of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.”² Everyone then takes a sip of wine, and the meal begins. These blessings, or words very

¹ *Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, melek ha'olam, hamotzi lechem min ha'arets* (בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֲדֹנָי יְיָ-לְהֵינּוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַמוֹצֵא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ).

² *Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, melek ha'olam, borei p'ri hagophen* (בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה אֲדֹנָי יְיָ-לְהֵינּוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגֹּפֶן).

close to them, are almost certainly what Jesus would have said when he “gave thanks.” At the Last Supper, regardless of the argument as to whether it was a Passover meal, the meal would almost certainly have started with Jesus’ blessings of the bread and wine, using words similar to, if not exactly like, those above. It is unclear whether it was at this point or later in the meal that he consecrated the bread and wine as his Body and Blood, thus instituting the Holy Eucharist, but its timing in the meal is a moot question.

At the Offertory,¹ which is the preparation of the bread and wine for consecration at the altar, there are many prayers offered privately by the priest. “Privately” means that they are said silently or at low voice. Along with the other traditional prayers, many priests, when they prepare the bread on the paten and the wine in the chalice, say the traditional blessings above, either in Hebrew or in English. This is particularly appropriate since they are very likely the same words that Jesus used at the Last Supper, and they serve as a reminder that our Faith is not an abandonment of Judaism, but rather the fulfillment of it.

Richard R. Losch+

The Epistle is Online

The last ten years of *The Epistle* are online. Go to rlosch.com or rlosch.net and click on the “Epistle” tab at the top. On 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+

¹ Many people confuse the Offertory with the Offering, the collection of alms from the congregation. While the two usually happen simultaneously in the service, they are not quite the same thing. The Offertory is when the priest prepares the bread and wine for the Eucharist, and offers them to God as the elements to be consecrated as Christ’s Body and Blood. The Offering is the gift of alms from the congregation. These alms symbolize the ancient practice of the congregation’s providing the bread and wine for the Eucharist, and they are brought to the altar to be offered and blessed. Nonetheless, even though one leads to the other, the Offertory and the Offering are separate liturgical events.

July Birthdays . . .

- 6 Madelyn Mack
- 7 Meredith Underwood Shah
- 8 Cameron Baldwin
- 13 Chris Thompson
- 14 Lindsey Moore Thompson
- 16 Carl Sudduth
- 27 Ethel Garth Scott
- 29 Mira Muñoz



. . . and Anniversaries

- 8 Charles & Linda Muñoz



August Birthdays . . .

- 8 Garland Scott
- 12 Harris Marks
- 25 Joe Moore



. . . and Anniversaries

- 27 Mitesh & Meredith Shah



Be very cautious of translations of the Bible.

Matt. 26:41b is usually translated,

“The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

It can also be rendered,

“The liquor is ready, but the meat is spoiled.”

ST. JAMES' PARISH NOTICES

from Hiram Patrenos, Parish Administrator

Parish Directory

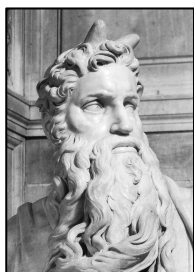
Copies of the updated Parish Directory are available on the table in the vestibule. If, as you are using your directory you discover an error, please give the corrected information to Hiram Patrenos in writing or by e-mail to patrenoj@bellsouth.net. The Parish Directory will be updated again in January.

AI and Archaeology

A great deal of justifiable fear has arisen about the dangers of Artificial Intelligence, but properly controlled, it can also be a great blessing. One of the great problems in the Middle East is the identification of tells which may be important archaeological sites. A tell is a mound that is made up of many levels of destroyed cities, each built upon the ruins of its predecessor over hundreds and often thousands of years. Sometimes the cities were destroyed by enemies, and sometimes by natural disasters or abandonment because of environmental or economic changes. Ancient cities were normally built on sites that were near a good water supply and were easily defended, so when a city was destroyed it usually did not take long for others to rebuild on the same site, right on top of the ruins. Modern technology such as sonar, aerial and satellite observation, and electrical field analysis have greatly enhanced the location of these sites, but AI has offered a huge leap forward. Coupling satellite observations with thousands of pages of data from already known sites, researchers from the University of Bologna in Italy have developed an AI model that has identified tells with an 80% accuracy, almost doubling that of previous methods. There is still a long way to go in this, but it will greatly enhance our ability to preserve sited that might otherwise be lost because of human activity and environmental changes.

Richard R. Losch+

Moses's Horns



As soon as tourists gather around Michelangelo's statue of Moses in the Church of Saint Peter-in-Chains in Rome, a tour guide or docent will hasten over to explain why Moses has horns. We normally associate horns with Satan and demons, not with saints and heroes. The explanation usually involves an inaccurate claim of a mistranslation of the Bible. The real reason, however, is more complicated, and possibly more sinister than that.

In the Book of Exodus, after Moses had had a direct encounter with God and had received the Law from him, he came down from the mountain. The people were terrified and turned away from him, because "Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God" (Ex. 34:29). When Saint Jerome translated the Bible into Latin in c.AD 383, he ran into a Hebrew word for which there is no precise Latin equivalent. That word is *qeran* (קֶרַן), "shone," which is used in other passages to mean radiant, emitting beams of light. The Latin idiom for a beam of light is *cornu*, "horn," so Jerome translated it, "*cornuta esse facies*," "[his] face was horned." Although he could have used a clearer phrase, this was not a mistranslation, because it was a reasonable use of a Latin idiom. Nonetheless many of his readers, perhaps not being familiar with the idiom, took it literally as Moses having horns. Jerome's translation, the Vulgate, almost immediately became the most widely read translation of the Bible in the Western Church, and remained so for over 1000 years. It was indeed a remarkable scholastic achievement.

By Jerome's time the Christian Church had become notably antisemitic. This was a grievous fault that would result in many heinous acts not only during the Middle Ages, but right into modern times, with such atrocities as the Holocaust. This was based on a misunderstanding of the Greek *hoi Ioudaioi* (οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι), "the Jews," in the gospels. This did not mean the Jewish people, but rather their corrupt leaders such as many of

the Pharisees, the Temple authorities, and the Jerusalem Sanhedrin. In almost every case in the gospels when we read “the Jews,” we should read it as “the Judean leaders.” Nevertheless, the misunderstanding of this as meaning all the Jews spread rapidly, leading to widespread antisemitism. Scholars have long wondered if Jerome used “horned” intentionally as a subtle antisemitic gibe, but the consensus is that this is not likely. Notwithstanding, it was read that way by many.

Michelangelo was not at all the first to depict Moses with horns, although his statue is certainly the most famous. At first these depictions were probably just because of Jerome’s translation, but by Late Antiquity there appeared clearly antisemitic pictures of Jews with demonic horns, including depictions of Old Testament characters as evil Jews rather than as religious heroes. Such pictures burgeoned among Protestants after the Reformation. The cover picture on Martin Luther’s viciously antisemitic 1543 book *On the Jews and Their Lies* was a woodcut of Michelangelo’s Moses. Needless to say, the Nazis used many of these pictures in their antisemitic propaganda.

Scholars are undecided as to whether Michelangelo put horns on his statue of Moses simply because of Jerome’s translation of the Bible, or whether it was a subtle antisemitic statement supported by that translation. Michelangelo was antisemite, although not strongly so. However, the statue was commissioned by Pope Julius II for his tomb, and there is no indication that he was antisemitic, at least to any significant degree.

Many modern artists claim that the horns on Michelangelo’s Moses were not intended to be horns at all, but rather rays of light. Modern painters such as Marc Chagall usually depict them clearly as light beams. Considering Michelangelo’s genius, however, it is not likely that he would have carved rays of light that accidentally look so much like a pair of horns.

Richard R. Losch+

You can say any foolish thing to a dog, and the dog will give you a look that says, “Wow, you’re right! I never would’ve thought of that!”

—Dave Barry

Jerusalem: Small Town and Great City

When we read of Jerusalem in the Bible, we usually picture it as a place that by ancient standards would have been considered a bustling metropolis. In fact, although in many periods it has been one of the most influential cities in the Middle East, it has never been a bustling metropolis in comparison to many other cities of its time. Today it has a population of around 185,000 people living on 48.3 square miles. By modern standards, despite its being among the most notable cities in the world, that is quite small. Tokyo, for example, has a population of 14,000,000 living on 847 square miles.¹ Although estimates vary widely, the consensus is that during Jesus' time Jerusalem's population was somewhere around 20,000 to 50,000 at a time when that of Rome was well over 1,000,000.

When the Israelites began their conquest of Canaan in about 1200 BC, Jerusalem was the capital of a Jebusite (Canaanite) city-state. It was located on a small spur south of the Temple Mount (Mount Moriah), and by modern standards would not qualify as much more than a small town, with a population of 1,000 to 1,500 people and an area of about 12 acres.² After David had unified the Israelite tribes into the United Monarchy of Israel in about 1000 BC, he captured Jerusalem and made it his capital. That small section of the modern city is still known as the City of David. In the middle of the 10th century BC, his son Solomon expanded the area of the city to include the Temple Mount, where he built the First Temple. Since this new area was comprised mainly of the Temple and royal buildings, it did not increase the population significantly, although over the next couple of centuries it expanded to 2,00 to 3,000. In the middle of the 8th century BC the city annexed what is commonly called the Western Hill, almost doubling its area. The popu-

¹ Tokyo's area is about 17 times that of Jerusalem, yet Tokyo's population is about 75 times that of Jerusalem.

² Ancient population estimates vary very widely among scholars. This and the estimates that follow are based on those by archeological experts from Hebrew University in Jerusalem and the University of Tel Aviv.

lation increased proportionately. This population increase probably included large numbers of refugees from the Northern Kingdom of Israel when it was destroyed by the Assyrians in 721 BC. Jerusalem continued slow expansion, and at its height it covered an area of about 160 acres, with a population of around 8,000. Under a constant assault from the Assyrians, it began to decline until it was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC. By that time its population had shrunk to about 6,000, most of whom were exiled to Babylonia. After that, the few who remained or managed to return lived in the old City of David, the original section of the city. After Persia conquered Babylonia and allowed the exiles to return, only a remnant of them actually came back. They also lived in the City of David, and are estimated to have been about 1,000 people living on 40 acres. Jerusalem was the capital of the Persian Province of Yehud. Although it became extremely important religiously as Ezra and Nehemiah reformed Judaism and rebuilt the city walls and the Temple, it remained an unimportant city politically during the Hellenistic period under the Syrian Seleucids. It rose to prominence again after the Maccabean revolt in about 150 BC. Under the Hasmonean (Maccabean) dynasty (c.150-c.50 BC), Jerusalem flourished again as the capital of Judah, reaching a population of about 8,000. With the fall of the Hasmoneans, Jerusalem came under Roman hegemony, ruled by their puppet Herod the Great. This was an era of great prosperity for the city. It expanded rapidly, reaching a population somewhere between 25,000 to 50,000 until its destruction by the Romans in AD 70 in reprisal for a rebellion. Thousands died at the hands of the Romans, and thousands more fled the city and the country. Jerusalem was little more than a pile of rubble until AD 129, when Hadrian built a Roman city, Aelia Capitolina, on the site.¹ Its was populated mainly by Romans and their allies, and from the 4th century until the rise of Islam in the 7th century, it was a mainly Christian city. The evidence is scanty in that era, and estimates of its population range from 20,000

¹ It would not be called Jerusalem again until the time of the Crusades.

to 75,000. In 637 the Muslims captured the city, and slowly over the next couple of centuries it became primarily Muslim, with only a handful of Christians and even fewer Jews. The city was badly neglected, as was most of the entire region, and Jerusalem's population fell to somewhere under 10,000 by the time of the Crusades. It remained an unimportant and neglected city for the next 800 years, until the creation of the State of Israel by the UN in 1948. Thereafter it blossomed into the small but amazingly productive and prosperous city that it is today.

Throughout its history Jerusalem has never been a large city, yet for 3000 years its impact on history and religion has been immense. Many medieval maps, perhaps justifiably, identified it as the center of the world.

Richard R. Losch+

A Touch of Trivia

George Washington owned the largest whisky distillery in America. By the end of the 18th century, lack of crop rotation had badly weakened the tobacco industry, so many plantations turned to growing grain. This was a more stable but much less profitable crop. Washington planted grain in several of his exhausted tobacco fields, but rather than selling his grain on a glutted market, he built a distillery at Mount Vernon. His plantation manager, James Anderson, was a Scot with distilling experience. The distillery had six pot stills, and was completed in early 1798. Anderson ran it with a primary staff of only five slaves. Rather than aging the whisky, it was barreled and sold for immediate export and tavern sales.¹ Each barrel contained 30 gallons of whiskey. In 1799, the year of Washington's death, when the average American distillery produced only 700 barrels of whisky a year, Washington's produced 11,000.

Richard R. Losch+

¹ It is also noteworthy that every barrel was made at Mount Vernon by Mount Vernon craftsmen from wood grown and milled on the estate, and with iron hoops that were mined, smelted and crafted there.

What Is He Doing Up There?

Percy Dearmer was a very influential liturgiologist in the Church of England in the early 20th century. He said that his mother had never been very active in the Church and had little understanding of it, particularly of its ceremonial. She was concerned that when the priest was at the altar during the Holy Eucharist, all his movements and manual acts were somewhat suspicious. Someone told her, and she half believed it, that he had a crab up there, and that he was moving around at the altar trying to keep it from crawling off. During the Offertory and the Ablutions¹ the priest seems very busy, and many people wonder what he is actually doing. We will attempt to explain it briefly (he is not playing with a crab).

First, we need to explain the paraphernalia that are used in the Holy Eucharist. There are two, and sometimes three, sacred vessels. The plate that holds the bread is a *paten*, and the cup is a *chalice*. Many churches reserve a few particles of the Blessed Sacrament for adoration and for emergency Communion. This Reserved Sacrament is kept in a third vessel, a covered breadbox called a *ciborium*, which is usually kept in a sacred chest that if on the altar is called a *tabernacle*, and if in the wall of the sanctuary is called an *ambry*. The chalice and paten are on the altar. The paten rests on top of the chalice, over which is draped a white linen napkin, the *purificator*. On top of the paten is a stiff white linen square called a *pall*. This is used as a cover for the chalice during the service to protect it from dust or insects. This is all covered with a *veil*. The veil is a cloth that usually matches the altar hangings and the priest's vestments. On top of it is a matching rigid cloth container called a *burse*. In it is the *corporal*, a large square of white linen that is spread onto the altar at the Offertory. The sacred vessels, covered with the burse and veil, are usually placed on the altar in advance of the service, although some priests prefer to carry

¹ The Offertory is when the priest is preparing the bread and wine for consecration. The Ablutions, the "washings," are when the priest cleanses the vessels and re-covers them after the people have received Communion.

them in when they enter at the beginning of the service. Near the altar there is a table or shelf called a *credence*. On this is a container of bread (usually in the form of wafers), a cruet of wine and one of water, a *lavabo*¹ bowl for washing the priest's hands, and a lavabo towel for drying them. So much for the paraphernalia. Now we will explain what the priest does with all of this.

After the priest says the Offertory Sentence (one of several biblical verses reminding the people to be good stewards), he turns to the altar to prepare the elements for the consecration.² He uncovers the vessels, puts the burse and veil to one side, spreads the corporal out on the altar, and places the chalice and paten on it. If the Reserved Sacrament is present, he then retrieves it (in the ciborium) and places on the corporal. The server then brings him the bread box from the credence, usually gives him an estimate of how many will receive Communion, and the priest counts out the hosts (wafers) and places them on the paten or directly on the corporal to be consecrated. The server then brings him the cruets of wine and water. The priest pours wine into the chalice, nixing it with a small amount of water.³ Finally, the priest ceremonially washes his hands, symbolic of approaching God's altar in purity. The server pours

¹ From the Latin *lavabo*, I will wash (“*Lavabo inter innocentes manus meas, et circumdabo altare tuum, Domine*: I will wash my hands among the innocent; and will compass thine altar, O Lord” [Ps. 26:6]).

² The altar end of the church, regardless of its compass orientation, is referred to as the East. For most of the Church's history the priest has faced east (*ad orientum*) to celebrate the Eucharist. Symbolically he is leading his people to God, not turning his back to them. Starting in the late 20th century it became popular to move the altar out from the wall so the priest could celebrate behind it, facing the people (*ad populum*). Many churches have adopted this, though many have retained the ancient tradition.

³ Wine represents a gift of God that has involved human effort, and water is a pure gift directly from God. Commingling them represents Christ, in his divinity, also taking upon himself humanity through his Incarnation. The practice probably also has roots in the fact that ancient Romans considered it vulgar to drink wine straight without a little water mixed in.

water over his fingers into the lavabo bowl, and the priest wipes his hands on the lavabo towel. If the alms are brought to the altar he then receives them, blesses them, and elevates the chalice and paten as a symbol of offering them to God. He then turns to the people. All through this process, traditional prayers are offered privately by the priest. “Privately” means that they are said silently or at low voice. They are sometimes called “secret” prayers, but there is nothing private or secret about them. The word simply means quiet. They are the priest’s prayers, and are not meant for congregational participation. The service then continues with the Great Thanksgiving.

After the people have received Communion, there is another period, called the *ablutions* (cleansing), when the priest seems “busy” at the altar. That is when he cleanses and puts away the sacred vessels. Any particles of the Sacrament that have not been consumed are placed in the ciborium and returned to the tabernacle (only the consecrated bread is reserved – the wine is consumed). Then any crumbs that might remain are gathered up and deposited in the chalice, a small amount of wine is put into the it to rinse it of any remaining Sacrament, and this is consumed. Finally, the server pours wine and water over the priest’s fingers to rinse them of any crumbs, and the priest consumes that. He then wipes the chalice with the purificator, and places the paten and pall on top of it; he then moves it aside, folds the corporal and places it in the burse, and covers the vessels with the veil and burse. The service then resumes with the Post-Communion Collect (Prayer of Thanksgiving).

Most of what we have described cannot be seen by the congregation, not out of any attempt to hide it, but simply because there are usually too many other people and things in the way. Most of what is done is simply a practical and respectful preparation and cleanup, but it makes the priest look very busy up there. There are no crabs involved.

Richard R. Losch+

*A religion without Christ is like an automobile without an engine.
It may be comfortable to sit in, but it will get you nowhere.*

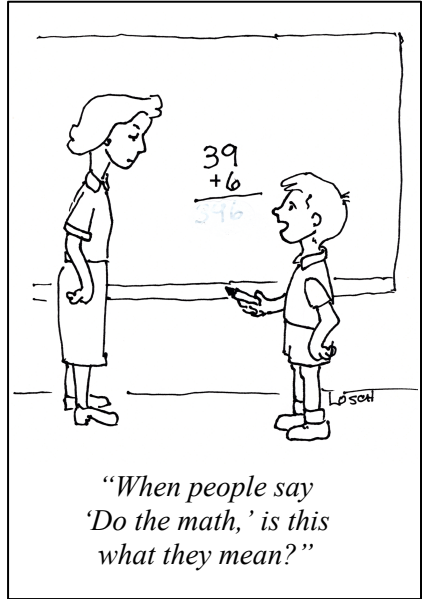
A Touch of Trivia

For 20 years, 1993-2003, 10% of the electricity used in the United States came from Russian nuclear warheads. In the Megatons to Megawatts program, Russia agreed to convert 500 tons of weapons-grade uranium into nuclear reactor fuel and sell it to the U.S. for use in nuclear power plants. This represented about 20,000 Russian nuclear warheads. Russia's profit was \$17 billion, and the U.S. was able to buy the fuel at well below the normal price. The deal was a winner for all.

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