THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church
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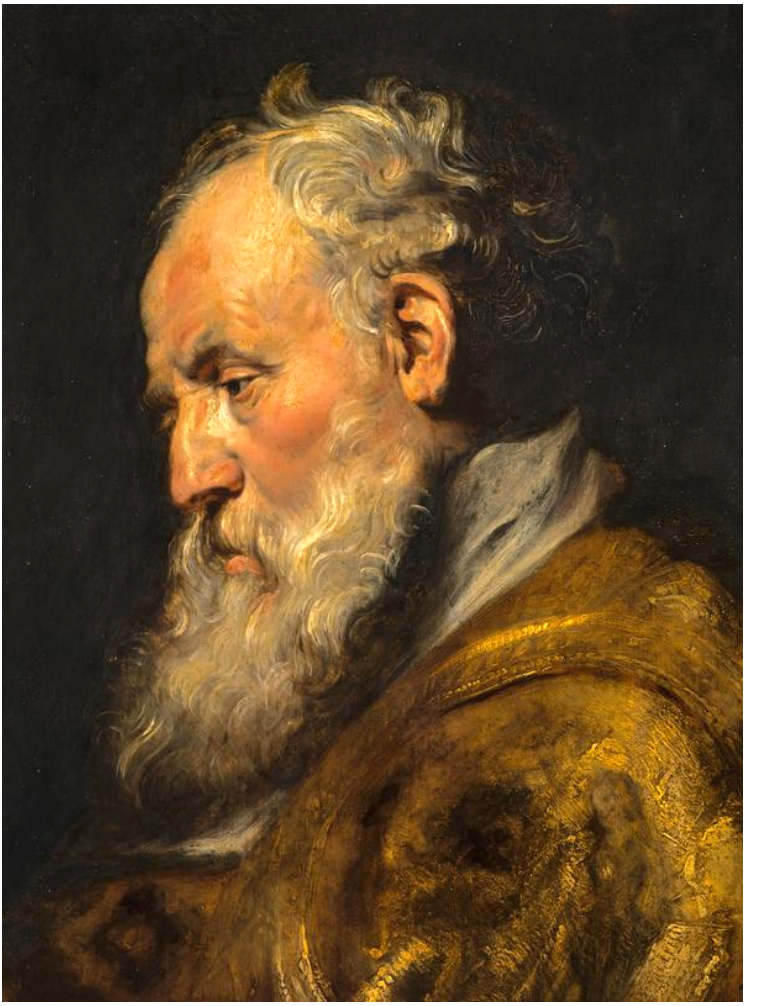

December 2022

This Month's Cover

Our cover this month, in honor of the Feast of St. Ambrose of Milan (Dec. 7), is Peter Paul Rubens' *A Study of the Head of Saint Ambrose*. Completed about 1618, it is oil on a wood panel. It is a small work, measuring 19"x15". It is displayed in the Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh. The detail and energy of the face indicate that was probably a portrait of a live model, and it show the mastery of this great artist. It was not intended as a finished portrait, however, but rather as a preliminary study in preparation for a picture of St. Ambrose in a much larger altarpiece. Rubens frequently painted such preliminary studies. Sometimes they were used by his leading students to be copied by them into the final work. The altarpiece, now in the Vienna Art History Museum, is *Saint Ambrose Refusing the Emperor Theodosius Admission to the Church of Milan*. Ambrose (c. 339-397) was a great theologian, and Bishop of Milan from 374 to his death. He was a friend of Saint Monica, the mother of Saint Augustine of Hippo, and was a primary influence in Augustine's conversion to Christianity.

Sir Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) was a Flemish painter who was acknowledged throughout Europe even during his lifetime to be one of the greatest artists of the 17th century, and of the entire Baroque era. He was born in Westphalia, Germany, the son of a prominent lawyer and a mother who was unusually well-educated for that time. His father died in 1587, and the family moved to Antwerp in the Spanish Netherlands (now Belgium). At that time his mother, who had converted to the Dutch Reform Church when she married, returned to Roman Catholicism and had Peter Paul baptized into the Roman Church. In Antwerp he received his education and early art

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training, and at the age of 21 he was admitted to the exclusive Antwerp Guild of Professional Artists. In 1600 he traveled to Rome. There he fell under the patronage of the Duke of Mantua, who commissioned him to paint portraits. The duke sent him to Spain and Genoa, and then back to Rome, painting portraits and altarpieces for important clients. During this time Rubens proved himself to be not only a master artist, but also an astute businessman, earning many important commissions and making valuable contacts. He returned to Antwerp, where he remained until the death of his wife Isabella in 1626. After that he traveled for several years not only painting, but also serving as a diplomat for the Netherlands to Spain and England. When he returned, he married Helena Fourmont, who bore him a son. It was a very happy marriage. In the 1630s he produced a series of works on mythological subjects, including *The Judgment of Paris.* He died in Antwerp in 1640, leaving eight children and a number of students, many of whom, including Anthony Van Dyke, became famous artists in their own right.

Richard R. Losch+

A Word from the Editor

Science embraces questions that cannot be answered, and tyranny embraces answers that cannot be questioned. When people cry, "Listen to the science!", but their "scientific" answers are not allowed to be challenged, it is a pretty good bet that their answers stem not from science, but from ignorance or agenda-based prevarications. So it is also with theology. Theology has been called the queen of the sciences, and justly so. Science is the search for knowledge–the word comes from the Latin *sciens*, knowledge. As we use the word in everyday language, what we usually mean is a search for understanding and an explanation of observable phenomena by analyzing empirical data. In its proper use, however, science means the search for any knowledge through the analysis of any data, including from reason and revelation. Theology is therefore a true science, and like any true science, it does not have the right

to propose answers that cannot be questioned or challenged. It is true that Christianity (along with most other religions in the world) has at times in its history succumbed to the tyranny of thinking that it had all the answers, and allowed no one to question them. However, when anything becomes that rigid it becomes brittle and can break, as happened with in Great Schism of 1054 and the Protestant Reformation of 1518.

This is not at all to say that the teachings of the Church should ebb and flow with changes in cultural values. If God is constant and unchangeable, then so is his Natural Law, that body of immutable truth that he created and that pervades the whole universe. The job of all science, including theology, is to seek to discern and understand that unchangeable Natural Law. It not only requires training and expertise to do so, but also the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who Jesus promised would lead us to all truth (lead us, and not just hand it to us). Just as a politician can claim no expertise in climate or epidemiology, so a layman can claim no expertise in theology or biblical interpretation. However, not even an expert can claim to have answers that cannot be questioned. That is the claim of a tyrant.

Father Rick Losch+

Be Wordly Wise

University

Today we think of a university as an educational institution consisting of professional teachers who impart knowledge to students whose qualifications are screened, and who are expected to pay for the privilege of learning. This is quite different from what universities were originally. Although schools have existed since ancient times, the first university was founded in Paris in 1150. There were earlier schools that are sometimes mis-called universities, particularly those in Bologna and Salerno in Italy, but they were designed specifically for training legal, ecclesiastical or medical professionals, and did not offer instruction in any other subjects. The University of Paris, on the other hand, was the first to offer the "Trivium"

(grammar, rhetoric and logic), and soon afterward it added the "Quadrivium" (arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy). These came to be known as the Seven Liberal Arts. Today these are still considered to be the basis of a well-rounded education. They are called the Liberal Arts because they liberate the mind from the trammels of ignorance.

The word university comes from the Old French *université*, which is derived from the Latin *universitas*. This in turn is derived from *unus*, one, and *versus*, turned or changed into.[1] It refers to a number of individual students turning into a unified and organized body. The first universities were not run by the professors, but by the students. These were serious learners, not wild "college kids." The University of Paris, like several others that followed its example, was a guild of students similar to the trade guilds of the time.[2] They hired experts to teach them. The university was the students, not the professors. At first the professors were not salaried, but were paid by the students on a per-lecture basis. They were paid for each lecture, often after it was finished, and their pay depended on how good the students thought it was. Knowing that whether he would have dinner that night depended on his performance that day was a strong incentive for a professor to prepare and deliver his lecture well. The universities' reputations depended on how well they encouraged the exchange of a wide variety of ideas along with free and open discussion. They were judged on the performance of their graduates, not on their faculty. Our modern universities might do well to remember those origins.

Richard R. Losch+

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[1] *Versus* is the past participle of *vertere*, to turn. *Vertere* has as many varied meanings in Latin as turn has in English. It can mean change direction (turn to the right), rotate (the world turns), alter (the milk turned sour), or develop (the boy turned into a man). It is the root of such words as subvert, invert, converse, reverse, universe, and of course, university.

[2] Soon thereafter a group of English students from the University of Paris formed a university guild and re-formed a school in the English township of Oxonium (Oxford). Many others all across Europe soon followed suit.

A Middle-Class Home in Pompeii

Pompeii was a prosperous Roman city on the Italian coast in AD 79, when an eruption of Mount Vesuvius suddenly buried it in 23 feet of volcanic ash, and froze it in time. Excavations have been going on since the discovery of its ruins in 1748, but as yet only about 65% of the city has been uncovered. A wide variety of buildings has been excavated, including businesses, markets, and private homes, but the majority of the homes have been those of wealthy families, along with a number of dwellings of the poor. Last year, however, a fully furnished middle-class home was discovered, the first to be found there. Rome's socio-economic structure was polarized between the fabulously wealthy and the very poor, with only a small number of families that we might call middle-class. For the most part, the Roman middle class were people who were successful enough to live comfortably, and like the modern American middle-class, they often had to make careful decisions as to how to spend their money and where they had to cut back. Unlike most moderns, however, their regular income was insecure, with no "cushions," and with the threat of suddenly losing everything constantly looming over them. Their nearest thing to security was that most were clients of wealthy patrons. As such they aspired to climbing the social (and thus the economic) ladder, and the strongest hope they had for that was to keep in the good favor of their patrons. Such, it appears, was the life of the family who resided in this recently discovered house.

Romans believed that their homes were protected by tutelary gods called *lares* (singular *lar*). Every home had a *lararium*, which was a shrine to that house's lares. It was usually near the entrance, and every time they left or entered the house they would say a quick prayer to their lares. This recently discovered house had a lavish lararium that any aristocrat would be pleased to have in his home, and that was totally inconsistent with the relative simplicity of the rest of the house. Archaeologists have named the place the House of the Lararium. It is a clear sign of two things: the owner's deep religious belief in

the protection of his lares, and his social-climbing aspirations. In many upper middle-class communities today we find ostentatious "McMansions." These are often lavishly furnished in the entryways and front rooms, but in the parts that the guests do not see they are furnished from the thrift shop. It appears to be the same in the home of this middle-class Pompeiian.

In most houses, the lararium was an alcove or a niche near the entryway, and usually contained a small altar where incense could be burned before a symbol or statue of the lar. In a wealthy house, it could be quite large and beautifully decorated with mosaics or paintings. In today's culture it is considered vulgar to flaunt one's wealth, but in most ancient cultures it was expected. Modesty and humility were not considered admirable virtues. The owner of the House of the Lararium was not a wealthy man, but he did his best to make it look as if he were. While the rest of the house was modest, his courtyard and lararium, the part that most guests would see, were luxurious. Rather than an alcove in an entry room, this lararium was a complete room. Its walls were covered with paintings of beautiful landscapes, scenes from nature, and a wall-to-wall hunting scene. The paintings are not amateurish, but were done by a talented artist and must have been quite expensive. The focus of the room was a niche for the lares, and for two agathodaemon[1] serpents representing prosperity and luck.

The lararium was the first part of the house to be excavated, and the archaeologists thought they had found another aristocrat's home. As the rest of the house was uncovered, however, it revealed four simple rooms. The exciting part was that most of the furnishings of these rooms were either preserved or had deteriorated inside the ash in such a way that they could be reproduced by pouring plaster into the cavities in the ash. There were two rooms behind the lararium on its level, and two more on top of them as a second story. On the first floor, one room was a bedroom, and the other was for storage. The bedroom

[1] Agathodaemons were Greek deities, usually spirits represented by animals, who ensured good luck, fertility, health, protection, and wisdom.

contained a bed, a wooden chest, and a table. The bed consisted of ropes stretched on a frame, on which was placed a heavy piecer of fabric on which the man slept. It was much like the beds used in colonial America. The chest and table contained a number of items, including glassware and a double-wicked pottery lamp that bore a relief of Zeus transforming himself into an eagle.[1] The fact that he owned a good deal of glass indicates that while he may have had to watch his budget, he was not a poor man. The storeroom had a shelf with an amphora (pottery jar for wine or oil), and a pile of wooden planks that may have been there to make repairs or to build improvements. The room appears to have been unfinished. The walls were not plastered, and the floor was beaten earth. Outside the room was a cabinet filled with jugs, amphorae, and glass plates. Since they were the sort of thing that would normally have been in a storage room, they may have still been working on the storage room when the house was buried in ash. Many of the artifacts in the two upper rooms fell through into the lower rooms during the eruption. These included a stack of wax writing tablets bound together, a set of bronze vessels, and a decorated ceramic incense burner in the shape of a baby's cradle.

Even though members of the Roman middle-class had to struggle for social status and were not financially secure, the owner of the House of the Lararium had enough money to adorn his courtyard with the magnificent lararium, and to decorate the basin of his cistern with fine paintings. He apparently did not have enough, however, to decorate the other four rooms with anything more than enough to make living there decently comfortable. Nonetheless, the display at the front was sufficient to impress his patrons and his own clients that he was a man of respectable status. In Rome that was very important. Sad to say, though, in two days in AD 79 it was all gone.

Richard R. Losch+

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[1] The presence of agathodaemons in his shrine and an image of Zeus on his lamp hints that the owner may have been a Greek or of Greek heritage.

What Have the Romans Ever Done for Us?

In Monty Python's *The Life of Brian*, Judean rebels are plotting an uprising against Rome in which one asks "What have the Romans ever done for us?" One by one they reluctantly answer with a litany of benefits such as roads, aqueducts, safety, buildings, commercial security, peace, and on and on. When someone asks that question today, the first thing that comes to mind is the foundation of Western civilization, including a political structure that inspired the American system of government. Notwithstanding, our heritage from Roman technology is every bit as important as our cultural and political heritage. The Romans were extraordinary engineers.

There are countless jokes about engineers being emotionless pragmatists,[1] but this was not true of the Roman engineers. Many of their works, while technical marvels, were also aesthetically beautiful. Consider, for example, their aqueducts. These structures were beautifully artistic as well as being so important that a city as large as Rome probably could not have existed without them. They carried millions of gallons of water into the city every day from mountain springs many miles away, using only gravity to bring it over great distances. This required amazing accuracy, using a channel that dropped consistently only a few inches each mile. Portions of these aqueducts had to be several stories high, which would have required stonework so heavy that it could not sustain itself. However, by the use of a network of arches (which the Romans invented) they were able to construct enormous but relatively very lightweight structures that were so strong that many of them still stand. An Roman aqueduct in Spain built thousands of years ago still carries water into Segovia. Many of the engineering techniques such as these, which were developed by the Romans, are still used in building construction today.

Another Roman gift to modern life is the sports arena. In the

[1] The optimist says the glass is half full, the pessimist says it is half empty, and the engineer says it is the wrong size.

6th century BC the Romans built the Circus Maximus, a chariot racing track. This was the first arena ever to have stands where large crowds of fans could be seated.[1] They expanded it in the 4th century BC, and again in the 1st. This was the first arena where the spectators could sit in tiers so all could see, rather than just standing around the perimeter, as was the case in all other sports venues in the world, including that of the Greek Olympic games. The Greeks had built theaters that used ingenious acoustic technology and seated large audiences, but as much as they loved athletics, they never applied this seating technology to sports venues. By the 4th century BC the Romans were building arenas all over their realm in much the same form as modern football stadiums. The largest and most beautiful of these was the Colosseum in Rome, which opened in AD 80. It was an amazing feat of engineering, as well as being a beautiful work of art. It seated 50,000 spectators.

Another Roman contribution was the building of theaters. They took the Greek acoustic technology and incorporated it into their construction knowledge to develop huge theaters where enormous audiences could hear every word of the performances. The Greeks may have had the upper hand in acoustics and playwriting, but the Romans definitely took the lead in building theaters in which to perform the plays. A famous one is the 2nd century AD theater in Ephesus, which is a major tourist attraction today. A theater in the Israeli city of Caesarea Maritima,[2] built in about 15 BC, is still used for shows today.

Another Roman contribution that we still rely on today is sewer construction. Most ancient cities had gutters to drain

[1] The word *arena* is the Latin word for sand. The Roman games, from chariot racing to gladiatorial fights and the slaughter of criminals for public entertainment, were brutal and very bloody affairs. Arenas were covered with sand to absorb the blood and make cleaning up easier.

[2] Caesarea Maritima was built by Herod the Great in honor of his patron, Caesar Augustus. Herod may have been a Jewish king, but he was a true Roman at heart. He loved Rome, and the Romans loved him. He built Caesarea Maritima using state-of-the-art Roman concrete technology.

sewage and storm run-off into local rivers, but the Romans were the first to develop a system similar to what we use today. The major difference is that today we usually have separate systems, one to drain storm run-off directly into bodies of water, and another to drain sewage into sanitary processing plants. In the 6th century BC the Romans built the *Cloaca Maxima* (Great Sewer), a huge system of underground tunnels that channeled Rome's sewage into the Tiber.[1] It was renovated and expanded in the 3rd century BC, and it is still an important part of modern Rome's sewage system, 2500 years later.

Perhaps Rome's greatest contribution to modern life is concrete. Before that, all important building projects were made with bricks or stones bonded together by some kind of mortar. In the 2nd (or possibly 3rd) century BC the Romans discovered that when they mixed pozzolanic ash (volcanic ash found in the region of Pozzuoli in Italy) with water and aggregate (a fine rubble), it would harden into a substance that was at least as strong as stone. It could be poured into molds for building large structures. They improved concrete over time, and by the 1st century AD they had developed it to the point that the entire Colosseum, as huge as it is, was built of concrete. They also developed forms of it that would set under water, and this is what Herod used to build much of the harbor at Caesarea Maritima that was built under water and still survives today. They usually faced most of their concrete structures with stone or brick for aesthetic reasons. The Colosseum was faced with travertine, but most of it was removed in the Middle Aged to be used for other building projects. Concrete made possible the erection of huge domes (a structure also invented by the Romans). Until 1590, when the dome on Saint Peter's Basilica

[1] Public latrines were scattered liberally throughout the city. They had a water flow that carried the waste into the Cloaca, and the great homes had private latrines that also connected to it. Even so, people often used the streets or dumped their chamber pots into the streets, relying on rain to wash their offal away into the Cloaca Maxima. Rome was not a pleasant place to live, especially in the hot summer months–few cities were.

was built, the dome on the Pantheon (AD 126) was the largest in the world, and could have been built only out of concrete. It is still intact today, and is a major tourist attraction. Much of the Romans' concrete technology was lost during the Middle Ages, as most large buildings such as castles and the great cathedrals reverted to being built of stone and mortar. Ancient documents and modern scientific analyses have unlocked many of the lost secrets, but much is still unknown, including their original formula for concrete that will cure under water.

The Romans' innovative concept of an international network of roads was forgotten for centuries, yet because of their superior road-building technology, many of their roads were still being used in Europe, Africa and western Asia in the time of Napoleon, and many are still in use today. Napoleon revived the concept, giving credit to Rome. For all of modern technology, it is doubtful that any of our modern roads will still be in use with only minor repairs 2000 years from now.

What have the Romans ever done for us? Along with central and underfloor heating, concrete, road networks, advanced water and sewage systems, theaters, sports arenas, and the basic structure of a democratic republic, they also gave us Latin. This has had a profound influence on most of the languages of Europe, including our own. That is a pretty impressive legacy.

Richard R. Losch+

The Epistle is Online

The last nine years of *The Epistle* are online. Go to *http://350rlosch.com* and click on the "Epistle" tab at the top. On a mobile device, click on the blue menu at the top right and select the "Epistle" page. You can read it online or download it as a *.pdf* file. This is an easy way to share articles with others.

Some people seem to have trouble accessing the site from a mobile device. The webserver says it is ATT's fault, and ATT says it is the webserver's fault. Sorry for the inconvenience. We are trying to resolve the problem.

Richard R. Losch+

"The Way" – Early Jewish Christians

During his earthly ministry, c. AD 30-33, Jesus preached a clearly Jewish message, as a Jew, to Jews. Although he had some gentile followers, and ministered occasionally to gentiles,[1] he made it clear that until after his Resurrection his ministry was to the Jews (Matt. 15:24). It was only after the Resurrection that the Apostles were charged to go out and preach to "all the nations" (Matt. 28:19). Church historians call the very earliest Christian activity the Jesus Movement, since the first followers of Christ saw themselves as a movement or sect of Judaism. They called their movement "the Way"[2] (Acts 9:2, 19:23). It was not until they were widely rejected by the Jews that they came to be called Christians (Acts 11:26). That word was probably originally used as a pejorative.[3]

On the Pentecost following the Resurrection and Ascension, the Way (the Jesus Movement) began with the conversion of 3,000 from all over the known world (Acts 2:41). These were faithful Jews who were in Jerusalem to celebrate Passover and Pentecost. Although they accepted the teachings of Jesus, they remained faithful Jews. They followed the Mosaic Law, the Temple rites, circumcision, and the dietary laws. There might have been a few God-fearers among them, but they would have been very few. God-fearers were gentiles who worshiped God

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[1] For example, he healed the Roman centurion's slave (Matt. 8:5ff) and the Canaanite woman's daughter (Matt. 15:22ff), and he first revealed his Messiahship to a Samaritan woman (John 4:25f).

[2] Many Oriental martial and spiritual disciplines include the words *Tao, Tae* or *Do* in their names. These words mean "the Way." Similarly, John and Charles Wesley developed a disciplined spiritual movement within the Church of England called "the Method," and its followers were called Methodists. After John Wesley died the movement broke off from the Church of England and became a mainstream Protestant denomination.

[3] Martin Luther's detractors called his followers Lutherans as a pejorative, and he despised the term. Philip Melanchthon, his leading disciple, encouraged him to use it himself in order to defuse it and remove its negativity. It obviously worked, because they are called Lutherans to this day.

and followed the Jewish moral and ethical laws, but did not follow the ceremonial or dietary laws.[1]

As one might expect, as the Way continued to grow it became increasingly attractive to gentiles. They were welcomed by some, but the majority, including Peter, expected them to be circumcised and be fully converted to Judaism before they could be baptized. This was the first major disagreement in the Church, and is known as the Judaizing Controversy. One side (led by Peter) said that one must become a Jew before being baptized, and the other side (led by Paul) said that while Jews following the Way must continue obedience to the Mosaic Law, gentiles need not be circumcised or adhere to the ceremonial law. This was resolved after Peter had a vision and then baptized the God-fearer Cornelius, the Roman Centurion, and his family (Acts 10:1ff). Scholars estimate that this would have been around AD 40. Thereafter large numbers of both Jews and gentiles came into the Church in Antioch, where the followers of the Way were first called Christians (Acts 11:26b). From then on Paul spent most of his efforts converting gentiles, while Peter ministered to Jews and gentiles, converting both indiscriminately. This ended the Jewish majority in the Church.

As more and more gentiles were converted, the emphasis on the Jewish law decreased, and in time it became evident to the Jews that this was not just a sect of Judaism. They expelled the Jewish Christians from the synagogues, and Christianity came to be regarded as a separate non-Jewish religion. Although the Jews rejected the idea, Christians saw themselves not as a separate religion, but as the Messianic fulfillment of Judaism.

Richard R. Losch+

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[1] Saint Luke was a Greek physician who may have come to Jerusalem with the Romans. Most of the God-fearers were Romans and their auxiliaries, although some were also from Judea's gentile neighbors. Luke was probably a God-fearer before becoming a Christian. It is unlikely that he ever met Jesus personally, although he may have heard him preach. There is little reason to doubt the validity of the ancient tradition that after the Resurrection he became a confidant of the Virgin Mary.

Every Member Canvass

We have begun our Every Member Canvass. Pledge cards are available on the table at the rear of the church. The Vestry needs this information so that it can budget appropriately for the upcoming year. If you have any questions regarding our parish finances, please do not hesitate to speak with a member of the Vestry or our Treasurer, Hiram Patrenos. Pledge cards are available on the table at the rear of the church and may be placed in the alms basins or mailed to St. James' Church, P.O. Box 446, Livingston, AL 35470. Please prayerfully consider your commitment to St. James', its mission and work, and return your card no later than Sunday, December 4th.

Hiram Patrenos

Christmas Flowers

Each year St. James' Church offers the opportunity to remember loved ones through donations to the Altar Guild, which provides poinsettias and other decorations in the church for Christmastide. If you wish to make a donation for this (in memory of, in honor of, or in thanksgiving for), envelopes with forms are available at the back of the Church or you may print this information clearly and mail it along with your contribution to Carolyn Patrenos, P.O. Box 399, Livingston, AL 35470. Checks should be made payable to St. James' Altar Guild. Because of the increased costs for these flowers and decorations, we ask for a minimum donation of $50.00 for memorials. The deadline for inclusion in the Christmas bulletin is Sunday, December 18th. Your donation is tax deductible.

Hiram Patrenos

Special Services for Christmas

Our Christmas celebration will begin on Saturday, December 24th, Christmas Eve, with our traditional Christmas Eve Mass at 5:30 p.m. Father Losch will be celebrate, and our nursery will be open. On Sunday December 25th, Christmas Day, we will have Holy Communion at 11:00 a.m.

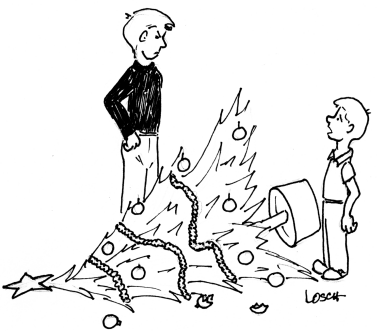
Hiram Patrenos

A Touch of Trivia

In 1988 Danica McKellar, a 13-year-old hopeful actress, won the role of Winnie Cooper in the hit series *The Wonder Years*, and became an instant international star. When the show closed in 1993 she went to UCLA, and was graduated Summa Cum Laude. She earned her PhD in mathematics at the University of Chicago, and published six books on mathematics. In 2006 she co-authored a ground-breaking proof, the Charles-McKellar-Winn theorem. Well done, Winnie, well done.

Richard R. Losch+

JAMIE **by Richard R. Losch**



"Nobody's perfect."

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