

THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church
Livingston, Alabama

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November 2013

This Month's Cover

In honor of the Feast of Saint Andrew on November 30, our cover this month is *Saint Andrew*, an oil on canvas by Georges de La Tour. Sometime around 1615 de La Tour undertook a series of thirteen portraits of Christ and the Apostles. Unfortunately, most have been lost, and little is known about the details of the series. Some were copied by later artists, so a few have been preserved in this way although the originals are lost. Only five of the originals have survived, and only two of these, *Saint James the Minor* and *Saint Jude Thaddeus* are in good enough condition to be exhibited. The other three, *Saint Philippe*, found in 1941, *Saint Thomas* and *Saint Andrew*, both found in 1991, are in such poor condition that they are displayed only in modern copies.

Georges de La Tour was born on March 13, 1653 in Vic-sur-Seille in Lorraine. He was the son of Jean de La Tour, a baker, and Sybille Molian de La Tour, all of whose family were also bakers. Jean's father was a stonemason, but when he married Sybille he left his father's trade and took up that of his wife's family. They had seven children, of whom Georges was the second. They all grew up surrounded by artists, as Vic was an art community. Little is known of Georges' education, but it seems likely that his artistic talent was noticed early in his life, and he was taken under the wing of the local artists. He may well have been the protégé of the Swiss painter Claude Dogoz, who lived in Vic, or of Jacques Bellange,

who lived in nearby Nance. There is evidence that he had friends in the court of the Duke of Lorraine. In 1617 he married the noblewoman Diane Le Nerf, whose father was the duke's treasurer. They settled in Vic. In 1620 he was apprenticed to Claude Baccarat. Sometime around 1622 the duke bought one of his paintings, and in 1624 he bought *Saint Peter* to donate to the convent church in Minimes.

De La Tour sired eleven children in eleven years. His second son, Étienne, would become a famous artist. In 1634 Lorraine fell under French control, and de La Tour took an oath of loyalty to Louis XIII. He may have been granted a title appropriate to his wife's family, because that year in a document he is referred to as "the noble Georges de La Tour." By 1636 he had his own studio with apprentices. That year the plague struck Lorraine very hard. His household was hit, but a surprising number survived. He lost only one, his nephew. It was that year that he painted *Saint Sebastian*, the patron of plague victims.

In 1639 the king called him to Paris and presented him with a thousand francs for some unknown service, which may have been a portrait of the king. A document refers to "Sir Georges de La Tour, his majesty's painter." In 1652 his beloved wife Diane died. He died two weeks later of a broken heart.

Richard R. Losch+

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A Word from the Editor

The term “Old Testament Christians” is something of an oxymoron, and justifiably so. Unfortunately, however, we all too often tend to be exactly that. We frequently speak of God as if he were the frightening transcendent deity of Isaac, who called him The Fear, rather than the loving Holy Trinity, who came into the world to save us. We try to justify our moral values by quoting passages from the Mosaic Law in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. One of the reasons for this is a basic human desire to have a “book of rules” to tell us exactly what to think and do. This removes from us any responsibility for having to make decisions for ourselves and then be accountable for them. This is the very same mentality that is found in the “zero tolerance” policies that have produced so many injustices lately. “Zero tolerance” is a declaration that one is incompetent to deal with individual situations using the basic tools of reason and common sense. This leads to suspending a five-year-old for chewing a Pop-Tart into the shape of a gun, and the threat of a ten-year prison sentence for a boy who accidentally left a fishing knife locked in the trunk of his car in a school parking lot. That is the rigidity that the prophets condemned and Jesus meant for us to leave behind. Blindly following rules is easier than making rational decisions, but it is not the Christian way—it is the disease of bureaucracy.

There is another problem that generally goes along with Old Testament Christianity, and that is Cafeteria

Christianity. That is the tendency to pick and choose which biblical teachings we like, and then to ignore the rest. If we really followed all the Old Testament law, we would never eat pork or shellfish, and we would stone adulterers and cut off the hands of thieves. We cannot condemn Sharia Law and in the same breath selectively pick Old Testament laws to justify our social, political or moral values.

One of the things that makes Christianity a difficult religion is that it requires us to make our own decisions and then be accountable for them. This is not to say that we can decide for ourselves what is right or wrong—morality is not relative to the times or culture. There is an immutable Natural Law that God established at creation, and it is our responsibility to try to discern it and to form our personal values according to it. That law was revealed in the Deposit of Faith at Pentecost, and the Church has the responsibility for teaching and interpreting it. We have made terrible mistakes in the past and will continue to do so, but we can trust that the Holy Spirit, according to Christ’s promise, will ultimately lead us into all truth. In the meantime we as Christians must do everything in our power to conform to the teachings of the Church and our own consciences through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I know of no better way to do that than through prayer, the sacraments, and a study of the Holy Bible. That is New Testament Christianity.

Father Rick Koch

Be Wordly Wise ***Quarantine***

Today the term “quarantine” is used as both a noun and a verb, and commonly means isolation to avoid the spread of disease. While its original use was also associated with disease, the word itself had a much more specific meaning.

As far back as pre-Old Testament times, societies isolated diseased people from the rest of the population. The best known were the lepers. What the Bible calls leprosy included a host of other skin diseases. True leprosy (Hansen’s Disease) is actually only very mildly infectious. Most of what the Bible calls leprosy was probably impetigo. This is an extremely infectious streptococcal skin disease that is easily cured today, but in the days before antibiotics was hideously disfiguring and could be fatal.

In the Middle Ages, Venice was one of the richest and most powerful city-states in Europe. People came there from all over the world, and brought their diseases with them. In the 12th century the doge (duke) decreed that all ships coming to Venice must anchor in the harbor for 30 days. If after that time they proved disease free, the crew could disembark and unload their cargo. This was known as a *trentine*, from the Italian *trenta*, “thirty.” In the 14th century the Black Death killed 30% of Europe’s population. The isolation period was extended to 40 days. The Italian for 40 is *quaranta*, thus “quarantine.”

Richard R. Losch+

A Christian Cook

We are saddened to announce the death of Father Robert Farrar Capon in September at the age of 88. Fr. Capon was the rector of Christ Church, Port Jefferson, NY for over 30 years. He was a prolific writer whose 27 books were highly regarded for their spirituality and soundly Anglo-Catholic theology. His books include novels, works on spiritual growth, and five books on cooking that emphasize the religious nature and Christian symbolism of food. The best known is one of his earlier works, *The Supper of the Lamb*. Instead of being one of those cookbooks that tells you how to prepare a meal for ten when you have a family of three, *Supper* shows how to get four great meals out of a leg of lamb and understand the theological implications of doing so. A gentle and loving man, Fr. Capon will be missed.

Richard R. Losch+

No Kidding!

The *Borneo Post* on September 27 sported the headline, “Decomposed Corpse Found in Cemetery.” Will wonders never cease!

Thank You!

Many thanks to St. James’ Church, and especially to the ECW, for the wonderful reception and book signing they sponsored last month. The turnout was great. I appreciate their hard work in preparation for it, and their generosity and thoughtfulness.

Father Rick Losch+

Shalom

To non-Hebrew speakers, one of the best known of all Hebrew words is *shalom* (שלום), “peace” or “health.” Jesus’ first words to his disciples after the Resurrection were what is still one of the most common Jewish greetings, “*Shalom aleichem*,”¹ “Peace be with you.” As with most translations, however, it is impossible to find an English word that carries all the subtle secondary meanings of the original. The word *shalom* is closely related to a number of other Hebrew words, two of the most important being *lehashlim* (להשלם) and *leshalem* (לשלם). The former, *lehashlim*, is a verb that means “to fulfill that which is lacking.” The latter, *leshalem*, means “to make a payment” in the sense of completing or fulfilling an obligation on behalf of another person. How appropriate it is for Jesus to have used a word with such implications—by his death and resurrection he fulfilled the Mosaic Covenant and provided the sacrifice that we were lacking for our salvation; and that was his offering in payment for our sins.

This is also what Paul would have meant when he spoke of “the peace of God which passes all understanding.” This is not just a sense of calmness, but is rather a deep-seated peace that comes with the assurance of the presence of God and the confidence that all is well and whole (holy).

Richard R. Losch+

Thanksgiving Service

St. Francis of Assisi Roman Catholic Church will be hosting the Community Thanksgiving Service on Tuesday, November 26th, at 7:00 p.m. Please make your plans to attend and join with our friends and neighbors in this Livingston tradition.

Hiram Patrenos

Evening Prayer and Parish Supper

Our November service of Evening Prayer will be on Wednesday, November 20th, at 6:00 p.m. with a spaghetti supper following in the parish house. Spaghetti with meat sauce, green salad, bread and wine will be furnished and signup sheets for attendance and deserts and tea are posted in the parish house kitchen. So that we may plan for sufficient food, you are asked to sign up no later than Sunday, November 17th.

Hiram Patrenos

Altar Flowers

Volunteers are needed to provide Altar Flowers through the season of Pentecost as well as to provide greenery during the season of Advent. 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

¹ Jesus actually spoke Aramaic, not Hebrew, but these words are the same and have the same meaning in Aramaic as in Hebrew.

Wilmer Hall Christmas Contribution

Once again, St. James' will be making a special gift to Wilmer Hall for its Christmas needs. Envelopes are available on the table at the back of the Church and contributions should be made payable to St. James' and designated for "Wilmer Hall Christmas." Envelopes may be placed in the Alms Basins or given to Hiram Patrenos. So that we may forward our gift in time for use this Christmas, please make your contribution no later than Sunday, December 2nd.

Hiram Patrenos

Every Member Canvass

St. James' will be conducting its Every Member Canvass during the month of November. 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, T. Rairford Noland. Pledge cards will be mailed to all members and are available on the table at the rear of the Church. Please prayerfully consider your commitment to St. James', its mission and work.

Hiram Patrenos

The Canadian website castanet.net had the headline, "Man Attacked by Bear in Good Spirits." That's probably a lot better than being attacked by an angry one.

Forward Day by Day

The new *Forward Day by Day* daily devotional booklets for November, December, and January are available in the tract rack in the Parish House.

Hiram Patrenos

Men's Breakfast

The November Interfaith Men's Breakfast will be held at Saint James' Episcopal Church rather than at the United Methodist Church as previously announced. The Methodist Church plans to drop out of the program, so we will need to decide how we want to proceed. Please be sure to attend and give us your input. As usual, it will be on the first Sunday, November 3, at 7:45 a.m.

Richard R. Losch+

4200 BC - a Good Year

Archaeologists excavating a site at Dikili Tash in northern Greece have discovered residue of fermentation in 6200-year-old ceramic pots, indicating that wine was being made in them. The earliest evidence of winemaking is in Iraq, dating back to about 5000 B.C. Grape seeds, a wine-press, a clay fermentation vat and clay cups, all dating back to 4100 B.C., have been found in Armenia. Alcohol consumption in the early ancient world is well attested both in documents and physical relics, but the Dikili Tash wine pots are the earliest ever found in Europe. It is said that making beer and wine were man's first civilized acts.

Richard R. Losch+

The Last Days at Masada

From the time of the first Roman occupation of Judea in 37 B.C., Roman rule was a festering malignancy to the Jews, and they frequently rebelled. Rome was intolerant of rebellion, and brutally put down any uprising. The Romans did not understand why people were unappreciative of all Rome's benefits, and they hated ingratitude.¹ While they squashed any rebellion harshly, they were nothing less than vicious in their response to any harm to Roman civilians. Their usual punishment was the crucifixion of all the men and the sale of the women and children into slavery.

After 100 years of Roman oppression the Jews had had enough. From the earliest days of the occupation the main resistance movement had been led by a sect known as the Zealots. Their dream was to raise a guerilla army and expel the Romans, much as Judas and Simon Maccabeus expelled the Seleucids about 140 B.C. In fact, many Zealots were named Judas or Simon.² Among the Zealots there was

a fanatic group who called themselves *Sicarii* ("daggers"). They were essentially saboteurs and assassins. They burned Roman storehouses, pillaged supply caravans, and lurked in alleys, ambushing, robbing and murdering Roman soldiers and civilians. As we mentioned, Rome had zero tolerance for any harm done to its civilian citizens. They felt that soldiers' lives were always at risk—that was the nature of the job—but from its earliest days Rome saw one of its prime duties to be the protection of its citizens. In 67 A.D., in retribution for these *Sicarii* raids, Rome destroyed many of Judea's main cities and slaughtered their inhabitants. They laid siege to Jerusalem, blockaded it, and patiently waited outside the walls for the inhabitants to starve to death.

Not all the Jews were in the resistance, although most were at least sympathetic to it. Many were so politically or financially entangled with the Romans that they did not want to see any trouble. Many others who had been thoroughly Hellenized, while they objected to Rome's brutality, had little complaint with its culture. The majority, however, saw the Romans as foreign invaders, and wanted them out of there. Of the active Zealots, only a relatively small proportion were fanatic *Sicarii*. Like so many fanatic cults, though, they were always in the front lines making the news of the day, so to the casual observer it looked like they represented all the Jews—thus Rome took its vengeance on all the Jews. It was not in

¹ This is one of the weaknesses of imperialism. In the 18th and 19th centuries Great Britain was at a loss to understand why India resisted British rule. They thought that they were taking good care of their "little brown brothers," and the Indians' lack of gratitude mystified them.

² Many scholars believe that Judas Iscariot was a Zealot, and that one of his reasons for betraying Jesus was that he came to realize that Jesus had no intention of fighting the Romans. The last of the Zealots, Simon bar Kochba, led the last major revolt in 132 A.D. that resulted in the expulsion of all the Jews from Palestine.

Rome's nature to worry about sorting out the guilty from the innocent when it came to non-Romans. When there was trouble, the Roman boot came crashing down to crush all who were near the trouble.

Herod the Great, the King of Judea (37-4 B.C.), was a darling of Rome, and he loved everything Roman. This was one of the many reasons that the Jews hated him. In his earliest days on the throne there was a rebellion in Galilee that he put down in short order, thus gaining even more favor with Rome. His throne was unsteady in the early days, however. He had curried favor with Julius Caesar, and after Caesar's assassination he declared his loyalty to Marc Antony, who made him king. In the civil war he sided with Antony against Octavian, and this almost cost him his throne. A brilliant politician, he managed to convince Octavian (later the emperor Augustus) that he would be as loyal to him as he had been to Antony, and he remained true to his word for the rest of his life.

During the Roman civil wars and with the hatred of the Jews, Herod's throne and life were often in danger. There was also the constant threat of the Parthians in the east, who had actually managed to gain brief control over Syria (the Roman province that included Judea). He built Masada on a flat-topped mountain by the Dead Sea. It included a lavish palace and an almost impregnable fortress, and served as a refuge from which he could defend his throne. During an early rebellion he sent his wives and children to

Masada. They were safe from the rebels, but when he returned he found that they had almost starved to death. He refortified Masada, and built cisterns and storage rooms with enough food, water and weapons to sustain a small army for up to seven years. The mountain was virtually unscalable. Anyone trying to scale it could be easily picked off by a single bowman. The only access to the citadel was a path up the side of the mountain. It was so narrow that only one man at a time could go up it, and any invaders could be stopped one at a time by a small band of soldiers at the gate.

Masada's impregnability turned out to be its greatest weakness. Because they knew it could not be breached, the small Roman garrison posted there had become very lax in their guard duty. One night in 67 A.D. a band of *Sicarii* scaled the mountain face and got over the wall. They caught the Roman garrison by surprise and slaughtered them, taking control of the fort. They welcomed Jewish rebels there, and within a short time there were almost 1000 men, women and children there. The Romans paid little attention to Masada, which was no threat to them, until after they had control of the rebellion and had blockaded Jerusalem. When that was done they turned to Masada, and found that there was little they could do. They could surround the mountain and starve the rebels out, but with the huge stores of food and water there that could take as long as ten years. The narrow path precluded any direct attack on the fortress, and if

they attempted to widen the path rebel bowmen could kill them by the hundreds.

The commander of the Roman army in Syria was Titus Flavius Vespasianus, who would later become the emperor Vespasian.¹ He ordered the army under the general Flavius Silva to erect eight base camps around the mountain and to build a ramp from the plain to the top of the mountain so that the army and its siege machines could attack the fortress. This prodigious enterprise took three years, but the Romans were patient in their determination to exert retribution. When the ramp was completed the army attacked and took Masada. Their victory gave them little to boast about, however. When they entered the fort they found the bodies of 960 men, women and children, all victims of mass suicide. Rather than submit to crucifixion and slavery, they chose to take their own lives. According to the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, each man killed his own family, then ten men were selected to cut the throats of all the rest. When that grisly job was completed, the ten selected one to kill them and then fall on his own sword. According to Josephus, when the Romans entered the fortress it was on fire. The only survivors they found were two women and five young children who had hidden during the melee. Vespasian ordered their release.

The traditional image is that when the ramp was completed, the army

moved in their battering rams and *ballistae* (catapults) and knocked down the walls of the fort. Recent archaeology, however, has confirmed a different picture that had always been rejected. Josephus' report, which had been scorned for centuries, said that the Romans did not knock down the walls, but rather burned them down. Any modern tourist can attest that the palace and fortress were built of stone, so the idea of burning down the walls is ludicrous. It has always been assumed that the source of the tradition of burned walls was a common Roman siege practice. They would heap great piles of hot-burning wood against the walls and set them on fire. The heat would weaken the mortar, thus making it easy for the battering rams to break them down. The only problem with this is that most of Masada was built with dry-wall construction in which the stones are closely fitted without mortar.² Since most of the roofs were supported with huge timbers, it is reasonable that much of the fortress—at least the roofs—was on fire when the Romans took it, but not the walls. Archaeologists have found evidence of charred timbers in many of the roofless rooms on the site. Scholars have also attributed the burning walls legend to that. Josephus explained in detail why the walls

² Herod built the western retaining wall of the Temple in Jerusalem (the so-called "Wailing Wall") this way and it has lasted for over 2000 years. There is no mortar in it, yet even the Romans, who were experts at demolition, could not tear it down when they leveled the rest of the Temple complex.

¹ It was Vespasian who built the Roman Coliseum, paying for it with loot from the sacking of Jerusalem and the Temple.

burned, but because of the absence of archaeological evidence to corroborate it, it has been rejected as fable.

The outer walls of fortresses were usually of what is known as casemate construction. A casemate wall is a hollow double wall built with small rooms or a trench-like alley between the outer and inner portions of the wall. These rooms (called casemates) were generally used as embrasures for the firing of missiles at a siege army. They were often filled with earth or rubble to redistribute and absorb the shock of battering rams. At Masada only single walls were used rather than casemate walls, because that was all that was required. Attacking soldiers could easily be repelled from the one-man path up the mountain, and there was no way that siege machines could reach the walls (until, of course, the Romans built the ramp to the top). Josephus reported that the Zealots hastily built a jury-rigged casemate wall at the area at the top of the ramp. His account is as follows:

“Great [wooden] beams were laid lengthwise and contiguous and joined at the extremities; of these were two parallel rows a wall’s breadth apart, and the intermediate space was filled with earth. Further, to prevent the soil from dispersing as the mound rose, they clamped, by other traverse beams, those laid longitudinally. The work thus presented to the enemy the appearance of masonry, but the blows of the engines were weakened, battering upon a yielding material which, as it settled down under the concussion, merely served to solidify it.”¹

Silva was a capable and experienced warrior, and quickly realized that he was dealing with more than the simple wall that he knew was used at Masada. It may have been the way the battering rams reacted, but whatever served as a clue he recognized that the walls had been casemated, and he concluded that the inner walls were probably wood rather than stone. He ordered his soldiers to shower the walls with flaming torches. The wooden beams that the Zealots used were undoubtedly taken from the roofs of the inner rooms of the fortress. They were old and dry, and immediately caught fire. As the beams burned away the hastily made walls collapsed and the Roman army gained access to the fortress. When the Zealots realized that all was lost they committed suicide. The suicide of almost a thousand people cannot happen spontaneously, so it is obvious that it was well planned out in advance in case the Romans were victorious.

While the building of this hastily made casemate wall was a brilliant idea, there is little archaeological evidence of unusual amounts of earth or of burnt beams in the area at the top of the Roman ramp. On the other hand, for a number of reasons there has been little excavation at that point. Josephus’ account is entirely reasonable even though there is little hard evidence to corroborate it—yet there is equally little evidence to dispute it. As it became apparent that the Romans would succeed in building the ramp and have battering ram access to the walls, the Zealots had only two alter-

¹ *The Jewish Wars*, VII.311-314)

natives. With the Roman camps surrounding Masada, escape was not an option. They could accept defeat, which would mean certain death for the men and slavery for the women and children, or they could try to hold off the Romans until they finally gave up and figured that the victory was not worth the effort. Rome was extremely patient, so there was little likelihood of the latter, yet that was the Zealots' only hope. If they could reinforce the wall so that the Romans could not breach it, they would be safe. After all, there was enough food and water to last for several more years.

The best plan would be to increase the thickness and height of the wall with masonry, but there was not enough time to do that. There were plenty of stones available, but to get them would require the dismantling of other buildings. That was not only very labor-intensive, but the entire complex was built of large and extremely heavy dolomite stones. Wood beams, on the other hand, were readily available in the ceilings and roofs of the buildings in the complex. The obvious solution, then, was to build the wooden casemates as Josephus described them. This would also explain why the burned out rooms were not contiguous—several rooms had had their wooden beams removed to build the wall, and thus there was nothing in them to burn. Since they had to work at night in order to avoid the rain of stones from the Roman *ballistae*, the project probably took about two weeks. The one thing the Zealots did not count on was that Silva was a bril-

liant strategist with years of experience, and he quickly realized that the rebels must have used wood, and proceeded to burn it.

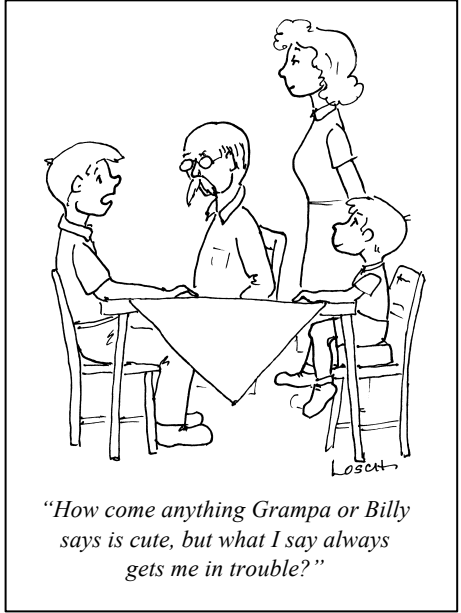
A recent find not only corroborates Josephus' account of the suicide, but provides us with a blood-chilling tie to the events of that last day at Masada. Yagael Yadin, the archaeologist who began the Masada excavations, died in 1984, but his crew has continued to work there ever since. They recently discovered 11 potsherds, each inscribed with a name. One of them was that of Eleazar Ben Ya'ir, the Zealot leader. It is very likely that these were the lots that had determined the ten men who would kill all the rest, and the one who would then kill those.

After the Roman victory Masada did not fare well. The Zealots removed most of the ceiling beams to use in the wall, and before the wall was finally breached they set fire to the rest of the complex. What they did not burn the Romans did, setting a blaze that could be seen for miles as a beacon of Rome's invincibility. With no roofs, the wind and rain, aided by several major earthquakes over the centuries, destroyed most of what was left. When Byzantine monks reached the top of the mountain in the 6th century A.D., they found nothing but mounds of ruins. Masada remained in that condition until the middle of the 20th century, when Yagael Yadin began his excavation. Today Masada is a major tourist site.

Richard R. Losch+

JAMIE

by Richard R. Losch



"How come anything Grampa or Billy says is cute, but what I say always gets me in trouble?"

Don't Forget
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