

THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church
Livingston, Alabama

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June 2013

This Month's Cover

This month's cover is *The Young Saint John the Baptist* by Antonio Rossellino. June 24 is the feast of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist. Depictions of Saint John as a boy were very popular in the Renaissance era. This sculpture is unusual, however, in that it is in exactly the same form as was used in ancient Rome. The only difference is that Roman sculpture was almost always polychromed (painted) to make it look as lifelike as possible. This was rarely done in Renaissance sculpture. Rossellino captured a lifelike pensiveness that indicates a deep spirituality. There is no record of who the model was. He appears to be about twelve to fourteen years old, and may well have been a student in Rossellino's workshop. Artists often used their own students as models because they would not have to pay them to pose for the work. The bust was executed in marble in 1470. It is only about fourteen inches tall, which would make it just about life-size. It is in the collection of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

The artist was born Antonio Gambarelli in 1427 in Settignano, a small town that is now a part of Florence. He was the youngest of five artist brothers. While they were all extremely talented, he was by far the most gifted, and was so recognized by his brothers, who were more honored by than jealous of their little brother's genius. Antonio had flaming red hair, and came to be called Rossellino ("Little Redhead"). Not only did the

nickname stick, but his brothers all took it as their family name.

His first training as a sculptor was under his oldest brother Bernardo Rossellino (1409-64), who was the most gifted of the other four, and is still ranked among the great sculptors of the Renaissance. There is no documentary proof, but the legend is generally accepted that Antonio studied under Donatello. His most ambitious work was the tomb of the Cardinal Prince Archbishop of Portugal in Chiesa di San Miniato al Monte in Florence, which he executed 1461-66. It is based on the tomb that his brother Bernardo sculpted for Leonardo Bruni in 1444-47.



Rossellino's greatest skill was as a sculptural portraitist, although his religious reliefs are extraordinary. They follow the tradition established by Luca della Robbia, and are ranked among the finest in the world of art.

There is no record of Antonio Rossellino's death, although it is generally believed that he died in Florence sometime around 1478-81.

Richard R. Losch+

The Tampa Bay Times of April 21 reported that in Florida it is illegal to terminate a pregnancy after 24 months. It is not only illegal, but also rarely necessary.

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A Word from the Editor

With all the recent disasters in the world, the latest being the tornadoes in Oklahoma, I hear more and more the dire prediction that Armageddon is at hand. I can tell you without fear of contradiction that it is, but we do not have the foggiest idea when. The end of the world could happen this afternoon, or it may not occur for millions of years. Jesus said that it is not even given to him to know when it will happen, so how can we know?

In the first place, an explanation is in order. Armageddon is not the end of the world. It is nothing more than a hill near Megiddo in Israel, at the crossroads of several major ancient trade routes. For thousands of years armies have gathered there in preparation for battle. In the Book of Revelation it is used as the allegory for the preparation for the final battle between the forces of good and evil.

The Old Testament prophets warn us that we must always be prepared for the end of things and the judgment of God, and Jesus clearly stood behind those prophecies. When he told us the signs—wars and rumors of war, famines, pestilences and earthquakes—he was not giving us clues to enable us to figure out just when it would happen. He was telling us that we must always be prepared. If there were no wars, no calamities, no disasters, then we would tiptoe through the tulips of life with no recognition that we are responsible for our actions and must prepare for the end, when those actions will be judged. Disasters are not clues about when the end will

come, but omens to remind us that it will come. It will come unexpectedly, and when it happens, it will be too sudden and too late for us to prepare.

I recently saw a documentary about the potential threat of an asteroid wiping all life off the earth. This is a real danger, and with the limits of modern technology, by the time we realize that one is approaching it will be too late to do anything to stop it. That gives us a simple choice. We can live in constant dread, letting this fear take control of our lives. Or we can simply accept that “stuff happens” and go on living, preparing our lives so that we can live each day as if it were our last. It may be or it may not be our last, but as long as we are prepared to stand before God, what difference does it really make?

Christ gave us a neat package that contains absolutely everything we need to be ready for his coming again. It is called the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. In it we become one with him in Baptism, we are fed by him in the Holy Eucharist, and we are enabled to be cleansed of our sins through repentance, confession and forgiveness. The time will surely come that we stand before him for judgment. Whether it is through natural death, accident or disease, a wayward asteroid, or the end of all things, it will surely come to all of us. If we stand before him as one with him, fed and cleansed by him, what is there to fear? But if we are spiritually malnourished and filthy of soul, there is much to dread.

Father Rick Losch

Be Wordly Wise

Ignoramus

Michael Quinion's explanation of this word is too good not to pass on. It is from his weekly blog *World Wide Words* of April 20, 2013:

"It's a satisfying way to tell somebody that he's stupid or ignorant, its Latinate form projecting an aura of dusty academic superiority. It also has a long and interesting history.

"The ancient legal institution of the grand jury now continues only in the USA, but it was once the standard way of deciding whether a person should be charged with a crime. It was called a grand jury because it was made up of 24 men, twice the size of one in a trial, which was a petit jury or petty jury. Grand juries were originally called from among local men who were expected to act on personal knowledge. If they felt the evidence was too weak their foreman wrote the Latin word *ignoramus* on the back of the indictment. This literally meant 'we do not know', from the Latin verb *ignorare*, to be ignorant. In practice it meant 'we take no notice of this'. It was the opposite of declaring the indictment a true bill, which meant the accusation went to trial.

"How this abstruse foreign form from the specialised language of the law became an English word is due to George Ruggle. He wrote a play called *Ignoramus*, mostly in Latin, which was performed on 8 March 1615 at Trinity College, Cambridge, before an audience of some 2,000 which included King James I of England and the future Charles I. It fea-

tured a rascally and ignorant lawyer, the Ignoramus of the title, who used barbarous law Latin of a kind deplored by the university's academics. The king loved the play but his judges and law officers hated it. It caused a huge controversy that led to the name of the play's chief character entering the language.

"Since there is no lack of ignorance and stupidity in our world, we have to decide how to create its plural. A slight knowledge of Latin noun plurals suggests it should be *ignorami*, to match *nucleus*, *fungus*, *terminus*, *cactus*, and *stimulus*. But *ignoramus* never was a Latin noun, so the sensible course is to stick to the rules of English, making *ignoramuses*. That's a mouthful, but it will stop you from sounding like an ignoramus."

No June Parish Supper

There will not be a service of Evening Prayer and a Parish Supper in June. Bishop Marray will visit Saint James' on the previous Sunday, and we will have a parish luncheon on that day. It would be a bit redundant to have another meal four days later.

In July, as we do every year, our service and supper will be on July 4th rather than on the third Wednesday. In August we will be back to normal.

Richard R. Losch+

On April 27 a link on the website of the National Secular Society read, "Don't expect change under Pope Frances." Change in a sofa might be expected, but I doubt we would find much under Pope Francis. But Pope Frances? Now that would be change!

Back From the Sea

For millennia the great Egyptian port city of Thonis¹ was known only in legend and ancient documents, yet apparently nothing of it survived to modern times. Herodotus recounted the detainment of Paris and Helen in Thonis before they returned to Troy and brought about the war that “launched a thousand ships.” It was Egypt’s main Mediterranean port in the early first millennium BC, but at some time after Alexander the Great’s conquest in 331 BC it completely disappeared. He built the great city of Alexandria, which became one of the most important ports in the world. Thonis lost its value and its attention, and sometime in the early first millennium AD it seems to have sunk into the sea.

In 2000 the French diver Franck Goddio discovered some sunken relics off the Nile Delta. The full importance of his discovery was not apparent until recently, when marine archaeologists searching for relics realized that they had discovered the ancient city of Thonis in a remarkable state of preservation. It is unclear what caused the city to sink. It may have been the result of an earthquake that caused a shifting of the deep silt that forms the Nile Delta. The archaeologists found enormous statues, a temple of Amun-Gereb, gold coins, Athenian weights, dozens of sarcophagi, Greek and Egyptian inscriptions, and the remains of over 64 ships that

appear to have been intentionally scuttled. It is not clear why the ships were sunk. There is no indication that they were victims of enemy action. Two theories prevail: either they were sunk as an underwater barrier to keep enemy ships from approaching the harbor except through protected channels, or they were sunk to provide a base for an extension of the land. Further excavation may provide more clues. Even though the excavations have just begun, the site has already provided a huge amount of information about the pre-Roman Egyptian international commerce and economy.

Richard R. Losch+

Altar Flower Volunteers

Volunteers are needed to provide Altar Flowers. 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

Fifth Sunday Community Service

Saint James’ will host the Fifth Sunday Community Service this month, on June 30th at 11:00 a.m. We have swapped with the Presbyterian Church because they currently have no minister. Please plan to attend and help to continue this very old Livingston tradition.

Richard R. Losch+

¹ In Greek it was known as Heracleion, and was dedicated to the demigod Heracles.

Parish Directory Update

We will be updating the Parish Directory during June and will publish the updated Directory as of July 1, 2013. Copies of the Parish Directory are available on the table in the Parish House. Please review it for any errors and/or omissions and give any additions or corrections in writing to Hiram Patrenos or e-mail them to him at patrenoj@bellsouth.net.

Hiram Patrenos

Bishop Marray to Visit

The Right Reverend Santosh K. Marray, Assistant Bishop of Alabama, will visit St. James' on Sunday, June 16, 2013. Bishop Marray will be the celebrant at Holy Communion, which will begin at 11:00 a.m. A luncheon will follow the service. Signup sheets for deserts and tea are posted in the Parish House kitchen as well as a sheet for those planning to attend. If you will be attending, you are asked to sign up as soon as possible.

Hiram Patrenos

Thanks to the Grimes'

Many thanks to Virginia and Ben Grimes for the gift of a beautiful Duncan Phyfe sofa to grace our sitting area. This has been in Virginia's family for generations, and she and Ben kindly gave it to St. James'. We are grateful for their generosity and their thoughtfulness.

Richard R. Losch+

Freedom of Silence?

The Department of Justice has released an internal document regarding LGBT (Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transgender) activities entitled, "LGBT Inclusion at Work." Supervisors are required to display pro-gay symbols in their offices to indicate that they are "safe spaces." They are instructed to use only "inclusive" language such as "partner" or "significant other," and not "husband" or "wife." They also must attend all LGBT events sponsored by the DOJ, and are warned, "Don't judge or remain silent. *Silence will be interpreted as disapproval*" (italics mine). Spitting on the Constitution is still optional.

Richard R. Losch+

More on the Gideons

Because of a threatened lawsuit by the Association of American Atheists, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources removed all Gideon Bibles from the cabins in Georgia state parks. They were then threatened with a counter lawsuit on the grounds that the Bibles were not provided by the DNR, but were donated. The DNR returned the Bibles to the cabins. However, next to each Bible there will also be a book about atheism donated by the atheist group.

Richard R. Losch+

Sometimes I want to ask God why he allows poverty, famine and injustice in the world when he could do something about it. But I'm afraid he'll ask me the same question.

Anonymous

Herod the Politician

We generally think of Herod the Great as a tyrannical king and a sycophant of the Romans, but in fact he was much more. Despite his cruelty and depravity, he was, from a purely secular point of view, a very effective king and an extraordinarily talented politician. It can be said in his defense that when we consider his moral values, he was no worse than any other eastern potentate of his time; sad to say, neither was he any better.

In about 128 BC John Hyrcanus, the Hasmonean (Maccabean) king of Judea, invaded Idumea. Idumea was the Old Testament Edom, the land of Jacob's brother Esau. Esau had married a daughter of Ishmael, so the Idumeans were mainly an Arabic people. They had been enemies of Israel and Judah for centuries. Hyrcanus forced all the Idumean leaders to convert to Judaism. One of these was Antipas, Herod the Great's grandfather. Few of Antipas' descendants took their Judaism seriously. It was politically expedient to go through the motions of being a Jew, but most of them were still pagans at heart. The only clear exceptions to this were Herod Philip, who was one of Herod the Great's sons who never ruled, and Herod's grandson Herod Agrippa I.¹

Philip and Agrippa both seem to have been faithful to the Jewish religion.

Another misconception held by many is that the Romans were the undisputed rulers of the Middle East in New Testament times. That is not at all accurate. There were two great empires at that time: the Romans in the west, and the Parthians in the east. The Parthians were the descendants of the ancient Persians, whom Alexander the Great conquered in the late fourth century BC. After the death of Alexander, his general Seleucus gained control of most of the eastern portion of his empire. The Seleucid empire began to crumble, however, and by the first century BC the Parthians had developed a mighty empire that extended from the Euphrates River in modern Iraq to Afghanistan. They were a highly civilized people, and were equal to the Romans both culturally and militarily.² Although they were a powerful force in the east, the reason that most people today know so little about them is that they had little effect on western culture.

The Roman-Parthian border saw many violent encounters, one of which had a significant effect on Roman government. In 63 BC Pompey conquered the Seleucids and annexed most of their empire to Rome as the Province of Syria (this was a consid-

¹ Agrippa was educated in Rome from the time he was a small child. He grew up in the imperial palace with his schoolmate Claudius, who would eventually become emperor. They were close friends all their lives. It is said that the only two people Claudius could ever fully trust were his Roman prostitute mistress Calpurnia and Herod Agrippa.

² When the Persian Empire was mighty, Rome was an insignificant town by the Tiber marshes. By the time Alexander conquered the Persians, Rome's hegemony extended only through much of the Italian peninsula.

erably larger territory than the modern nation of Syria). Judea was an independent kingdom at the time, and approached Rome to make an alliance. Rome saw the value of having an ally on its eastern frontier, and agreed. Shortly thereafter Pompey, Caesar and Crassus formed a Triumvirate, which was in effect a three-man dictatorship of Rome. Pompey was extremely powerful in Rome, but Caesar's popularity and influence were rising meteorically, so to avoid competition and a civil war (which did eventually happen) they joined forces. They needed money, so they brought Crassus into the deal. He was the richest man in Rome (and possibly one of the richest in history). He was an extraordinarily capable and equally ruthless businessman, and a passingly able general.¹ In 53 BC Pompey and Caesar stroked Crassus' ego and sent him to invade the Parthians, with the thought that if he were successful it would be a great boon to Rome, and if not they would be rid of Crassus and still have his money. He and all his troops were massacred at Carrhae.

It was as all this was happening that Herod burst into prominence. When Pompey took Syria in 63 BC, the two princes of Judea, Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus, were in dispute as to

who should have the throne. They made the big mistake of appealing to Pompey for his decision. The Idumean nobleman Antipater, Herod's father, kept the dispute stirred up as much as possible and urged Pompey to annex Judea into Syria and make him governor. Pompey agreed, and Aristobulus revolted. Pompey defeated him, and took him as a prisoner to Rome, where he died. Antipater was named procurator of Judea, Galilee, Ituria and Idumea. Hyrcanus II was named High Priest, an office second in power only to the king.²

In 40 BC the Parthian emperor Orodes II invaded Syria and gained control of most of the Middle East, including Judea. He installed the boy Antigonos, Aristobulus' son, as the puppet king of Judea. Marc Antony³ immediately launched a counter-offensive and drove the Parthians back, but serious damage had been done to Rome's reputation—it was no longer seen as invincible. As the Parthians were retreating they captured Hyrcanus, cut off his ears, and carried him back to Parthia where he was held hostage. He could no longer be High Priest, as no one who was physically maimed could hold that office. He was, however, still regarded as a

² This was an insult to the Jews, since Hyrcanus was not a descendant of Aaron.

³ After Caesar's assassination Marc Antony, Marcus Aemilius Lepidus and Caesar's adopted son Octavian established the Second Triumvirate. Lepidus was forced into retirement, and Antony died in Egypt after his defeat by Octavian at the Battle of Actium in 31 BC. Octavian became the first emperor, Augustus.

¹ In the slave revolt under Spartacus in 73-71 BC Pompey finally trapped Spartacus' army after a number of other generals had failed. At the last moment Crassus' army swept in and captured Spartacus, and took all the credit for what was actually Pompey's victory. Thereafter Pompey had little love for Crassus, but he needed his money.

an heir to the throne. It was entirely possible that the Parthians could regain power in Judea and set up Hyrcanus as the vassal king.

Herod faced a dilemma. He loved Rome. He had been educated there, and he welcomed the Roman presence in Judea. As long as the Romans retained power, he was the obvious successor to his father as the ruler of Judea. If it were not for Hyrcanus and Antigonus, Rome might even make him king. The Romans recognized his loyalty and competence, and they usually rewarded such traits. On the other hand, if the Parthians won, being a friend of Rome, he was finished—but if he wooed the Parthians



Herod the Great

the Romans would abandon him. He decided to stick with the Romans, and he saw an opportunity to gain an advantage. As soon

as the Parthians had been driven back, Herod rushed to Rome and sought out Marc Antony. He swore fealty to him, also throwing in a huge bribe for good measure. He brought the boy Antigonus with him, supposedly to convince Antony that Antigonus should be king. He argued that the Parthian threat was great and that Judea needed a king, and since Antigonus was the rightful heir he should be the one. He was no fool, however, and he knew that Antony would not put a boy on the throne of such a tender region. Antony no doubt saw right through Herod, but he also knew that Herod had proven himself completely loyal to Rome, and that he

had carried out all his assignments with unusual competence. He convinced the Senate to appoint Herod King of Judea. They gave him custody of Antigonus, who was to live in Herod's palace and be treated with the respect due to royalty. Herod appeared to treat the boy like his own son, but his scheming mind never forgot that Antigonus was a Hasmonean prince, and had a greater claim on the throne than Herod did. A few months after Antigonus moved into the palace there was a terrible "accident," and the boy drowned in a swimming pool. Herod had married the Hasmonean princess Mariamne, thus guaranteeing that his children by her would be legitimate claimants to the throne.¹ The prince Hyrcanus II was still a problem, however, as he also had a stronger claim than Herod, even though he was a hostage in Parthia.

In 37 BC Orodes died. His successor, Phraates IV, did not seem to have any intention to expand his empire to the west, so he was less of a threat to Rome. Herod immediately grasped the opportunity and opened diplomatic relations with him, telling the Romans that he was doing so to ameliorate even more any bad blood between the Parthians and Rome. While there is no direct documentary evidence to

¹ None of his children by Mariamne ever reigned, but his grandson through her, Herod Agrippa I, became king of Judea. Herod executed his son Alexander, Agrippa's father, because he thought he had designs on the throne. Mariamne convinced him to spare Agrippa and send him to Rome to be educated.

show it, if one reads between the lines it appears that the relationship between Herod and Phraates was actually amicable. Herod had managed to become a friend with both the Romans and the Parthians, who remained intensely hostile to one another.

As a friend to both Parthia and Rome, Herod was in the enviable position of having his throne reasonably secure regardless of which empire got the upper hand in Palestine and Syria. The only thing that stood in the way was Hyrcanus, whom the Jews still regarded as their legitimate king even though he was a hostage in Parthia. Herod, however, was a political genius. Somehow he managed to convince Phraates to turn Hyrcanus over to him as a token of their newfound friendship. Soon after Hyrcanus returned to Jerusalem Herod executed him. Now no one stood in the way of the throne.

Herod's political genius would be sorely tried a few years later. Rome had been torn by civil war for almost a century by Marius and Sulla, then Sulla and Pompey, then Pompey and Caesar. Herod had seen that Caesar would be the victor, and aligned with him through Marc Antony. After Caesar's assassination Herod saw that Antony had the upper hand in the civil war with Brutus and Cassius, and did everything in his power to strengthen his ties to him. Antony's co-ruler was Caesar's nephew and adopted son Octavian, who was little more than a boy with no significant political or military experience. What Herod did not see was that Octavian was far more capable than one would expect of a

very young, physically frail and inexperienced man, and that he was also completely ruthless in his ambition to gain power. When Antony became obsessed with Cleopatra, Octavian launched a propaganda campaign against him that eventually turned most of Rome against him even though earlier he had been their darling.¹ Octavian's political genius, allied with the outstanding military talent of his best friend Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa,² brought about the defeat and deaths of Antony and Cleopatra in 31 BC. During this conflict the Jews saw a chink in Rome's armor, and staged a revolt. Herod fled to his desert fortress Masada, fearing that if Rome's power in Judea flagged he might be overthrown. He managed to put down the revolt (thus even more ingratiating himself to Rome), but he left his family at Masada for safety. When he went back to retrieve them he found that they had almost starved to death. Because of that he fortified and supplied Masada so well that it would be possible for an entire army to remain there with no outside supplies for up to ten years.³

¹ It is noteworthy that Octavian (later called Augustus) was ruthless, brutal, and unscrupulous as he rose to power. After he became emperor, however, he turned out to be one of the most just, reasonable and able of all the Roman emperors, and the people, including most of his conquered subjects, adored him.

² Herod Agrippa was named for him.

³ Because of this it was possible for a group of only a few hundred Jewish rebels to hold off the entire Roman army at Masada for three years in the great revolt of AD 67-70.

Octavian's victory over Antony left Herod in great danger. He had been a strong supporter of Antony for years, and openly supported him in his war with Octavian. The Romans were strong believers that "the friend of my enemy is my enemy," so this should have marked the end of Herod.

Herod's political genius once again turned things about. He surrendered to Octavian, and made his case for how loyal he had been to Antony. He then said that now that Antony was dead he would give the same degree of loyalty to Octavian. Octavian bought it, and allowed Herod to remain on his throne. Herod was as good as his word, and supported Octavian (Augustus) for the rest of his life.

The Jews hated Herod for many reasons. He was not a Hasmonean nor a descendant of David, and this was the only line that the Judeans would accept as their authentic king. His only Hasmonean wife, Mariamne, he murdered in a fit of rage.¹ He was an Idumean, a descendant of Esau and Ishmael, and thus mainly an Arab. The Idumeans (Edomites) were ancient enemies of the Jews. He was an appointee of the hated Romans. Although he was technically a Jew by religion, his grandfather had been forced to convert at sword point, and the Herods had never taken their Jewish faith seriously. Although polygamy was legal in Judea, it had not been

practiced for centuries, and was deplored. Notwithstanding, Herod had ten wives, many of whom were pagan.

The Bible tells two main stories about Herod the Great. It was he to whom the Magi came searching for the newborn Christ (Matt. 2:1ff), and it was he who ordered the massacre of the infants in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:16). Despite the many Renaissance paintings showing hundreds of dead children, the actual number of murders was probably about twenty-five or so. The Romans, who were used to that sort of thing, would have paid very little attention to this as long as it did not interfere with Roman interests or taxes, and this is why there is no Roman record of it. Such slaughters were common in those days.

It was not Herod the Great who ordered the death of John the Baptist or who tried Jesus. That was Herod's son Herod Antipas. Although the Bible calls him king, he was actually a tetrarch. When Herod died, Augustus split up his kingdom and set up four of his sons as co-rulers, each being responsible for a specific region. Antipas was the Tetrarch of Galilee. It was because Jesus was a Galilean that Pilate sent him to be tried by Herod.

The Bible and popular history portray Herod as a monster, and perhaps by modern standards he was. He was immoral (or perhaps amoral), ruthless, and false to the faith he claimed to profess—typical of an Eastern ruler of the time. By the worldly standards of his time, however, he was a very capable and effective king.

Richard R. Losch+

¹ It appears that she was the only one whom he really loved. It is reported that for the rest of his life he would often wake up in the middle of the night and wander through the palace calling for her.

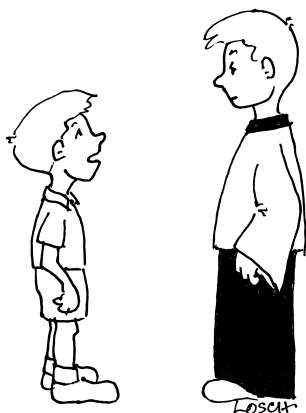
A Touch of Trivia

Between 5/15/41 and 7/16/41, Joe DiMaggio got a base hit in 56 consecutive baseball games, an all-time major league record. DiMaggio hit .409 during the streak (source: Baseball Almanac).

Medicare enrollment is projected to rise from 52 million in 2013 to 66 million in 2021, an increase of 27% over the next 8 years. Medicare expenditures over the same 8 years are projected to rise from \$598 billion in 2013 to \$1 trillion in 2021, an increase of 67% (source: Medicare).

JAMIE

by Richard R. Losch



*"Mommy prays for me every night.
She says, 'Thank God Billy's finally
in bed!'"*



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