

THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church
Livingston, Alabama

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February 2020

This Month's Cover

Our cover painting this month, in honor of the Feast of Saint Cornelius the Centurion (February 4), is *Saint Peter Baptizing the Centurion* by Francesco Trevisani. Completed in 1709, it is oil on canvas, measuring 2'4"x1'6". It is displayed in *Pinacoteca Civica di Jesi*, Ancona, Italy.

The story of Cornelius is told in Acts 10. He was a Centurion (roughly equivalent to an E-8 Master Sergeant) in the Roman army in Caesarea. He was doubtlessly what was called a God-Fearer, which was a Gentile who worshiped God and followed the Jewish moral law, but not the ceremonial law. In a vision God told Cornelius to send for Peter in Joppa. At about the same time Peter, who had been reluctant to deal with Gentiles, had had a vision in which God told him, "What I have called clean, do not call unclean." He went to Caesarea, convinced that God wanted him to accept the Gentiles, and he baptized Cornelius. He was one of the very first Gentiles to be converted to Christianity. He could possibly be the same centurion whose servant Jesus healed in Capernaum (Matt. 7:29ff).

Francesco Trevisani (1656-1746) was an Italian painter during the transition from the late Baroque to the early Rococo periods. He was born in what is now Slovenia, but was then a part of the Republic of Venice. His father was Antonio Trevisani, a noted architect, who gave him his early training. He then studied in Venice under Antonio Zanchi, then moved to Rome where he remained the rest of his life. His brother Angelo remained in Venice, where he also became a famous painter. In Rome Trevisani gained the patronage of several eminent clerics, including Pope Clement XI. Through them he received many important commissions in different churches in Rome.

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He also painted the massive canvas altarpiece for the Basilica of the National Palace in Mafra, Portugal. In 1712 he was accorded the honor of membership in the Pontifical Academy of Arcadia. He had many famous students, including Francesco Civalli and Lodovico Mazzanti. He died in Rome in 1746.

Richard R. Losch+

A Word from the Editor

As Christians we are living in a dangerous but exciting era. It is dangerous because there is an aggressive movement today to destroy Christianity. The forces of humanist secularism want to remove all suggestion of religion from the public forum, and their ultimate hope is unquestionably to suppress religion altogether. Fifty years ago the Ven. Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen prophesied that the era of Christendom is ending, and the era of Christianity is dawning. The era of Christendom was when it was easy to be a Christian—at least to be what the world sees as being a Christian. Everyone went to Church, Christianity was the major influence on secular morals and values, and Judeo-Christian values were recognized as the standard for Western Civilization. It was too easy. You went to Church because that was what one was expected to do, and everyone else did so as well. The pews were full, and the Church got lazy about teaching what the Faith is really all about. As a result, whole generations of children grew up with no real understanding of the Christian Faith, the Sacraments, and personal spiritual responsibility. This opened the doors to spiritual indolence, moral corruption, and being more concerned about never offending than about teaching the truth. That era is now dying, and there are many Christians who say, “Good riddance.”

The Christian Church on earth, both Catholic and Protestant, is in deep trouble. It is riddled with financial corruption, sexual decadence, hedonism, hypocrisy, heresy, and loss of supernatural faith. Bishop Sheen foresaw this fifty years ago, and predicted that the Church will shrink to a tiny percentage of its present size, losing most of its material possessions and

worldly influence. The obvious question then is, “Can the Church survive?” The answer is a resounding Yes! Christ never promised worldly prosperity for the Church, and in fact he promised that it would face great trials. He did promise, however, that even the Gates of Hell would not prevail against the Church. He never promised that they would not attack it, or that they would not from time to time seem to be winning, but only that they would not prevail. I believe his promise.

In 1969 another modern prophet, Father Joseph Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI), said, “The future of the Church can and will issue from those whose roots are deep and who live from the pure fullness of their faith. It will not issue from those who ... take the easier road, who sidestep the passion of faith, declaring false and obsolete, tyrannous and legalistic all that makes demands upon men, that hurts them and compels them to sacrifice themselves.” German Cardinal Gerhard Müller recently observed that the Church appears to be worldly because we have adapted ourselves to a Godless world.

I said above that while these are dangerous times they are also exciting ones. We are on the cutting edge of a small but rapidly growing movement that is fighting back and working to restore traditional Christian values and worship. We have the opportunity and the blessing of being able to be in the vanguard of that movement. We can be among the “righteous remnant” who remain true to the Faith once deposited with the Apostles, to fight against secularism, ecclesiastical corruption and evil, and to rebuild Christ’s One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. Twenty-five centuries ago, when Judah turned from God and became corrupt, God allowed the Babylonians to destroy it and carry the people away. A small faithful remnant, only a handful of those who were carried off, returned to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple, and to restore Judah. The majority chose to stay behind in the Babylon in which they had become comfortable. We now face the choice of being comfortable “Country Club Christians” or warriors in the Church Militant. How will you choose?

Father Rick Losch

Dr. Glenda S. Curry Elected Coadjutor

At a special Diocesan Convention on Saturday, January 18, the Rev. Dr. Glenda S. Curry, Rector of All Saints' Church in Homewood, AL, was elected Coadjutor of the Diocese of Alabama on the second ballot. Her election must be approved by the House of Bishops, after which she will be consecrated and officially begin in her new position. She will work with Bishop Sloan for six months, and then will automatically succeed him upon his retirement at the end of the year, with no need for further election or approval. Pending approval of the election (which is virtually assured), she will be consecrated in the Cathedral Church of the Advent, Birmingham, on June 27, 2020.

Richard R. Losch+

Outreach Report for 2019

At its final meeting in December, 2019, the Vestry approved and completed our outreach giving for the fiscal year 2019. The following is a list of the gifts made by the parish last year representing outreach giving of just under 10% of our received pledged income for 2019:

Angel Tree – Sumter Health and Rehabilitation	\$468.19
DHR – Elderly Fund	500.00
Diocese of Alabama – Covenant	1,000.00
Holy Trinity Church, Auburn – Hurricane relief	500.00
Wilmer Hall Children's Home	1,250.00
Miscellaneous	190.00
Total Outreach	\$3,908.19

Hiram Patrenos

Forward Day by Day

The new *Forward Day by Day* daily devotional booklets for February, March and April are available in regular and large print editions on the table in the vestibule and in the tract rack in the parish house.

Hiram Patrenos

Shrove Tuesday Dinner

On February 25th at 6:00 p.m., in observance of Shrove Tuesday, we will have a Mardi Gras dinner. Signup sheets for Creole and Cajun dishes or other foods, and for those who plan to attend, are posted on the bulletin board in the vestibule so that we may know how many for whom to plan. In addition to bringing a dish you are invited to bring your favorite wine to share. As always, there will be plenty of good food and fellowship. Please make your plans to attend.

Hiram Patrenos

Parish Directory Update

The Parish Directory has been updated and is available on the table in the vestibule and on the table in the parish house. Please review the Parish Directory for an 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. The next update of the directory is scheduled for July 1, 2020.

Hiram Patrenos

Ash Wednesday Service

On the first day of Lent, Wednesday, February 26th, our observance of Ash Wednesday will be held at noon with a service of Holy Communion and Imposition of Ashes. Please make your plans to begin your observance of the Lenten Season at this special service.

Hiram Patrenos

Prepare for Lent

Lent begins on the 26th of this month. It is none too early to begin to prepare for it by deciding now on what you will undertake as your Lenten self-discipline. Rather than giving up something, consider taking on something extra, such as special daily prayer or Bible study.

Richard R. Losch+

Be Wordly Wise

The Devil You Say!

In almost every Western language the word for “devil” derives from the same Greek root, *diabolos* (διάβολος). Remembering that in most languages *b* and *v* are often interchangeable as words evolve, we have *devil* (English), *diabo* (Portuguese), *diablo* (Spanish), *diable* (French), *diavolo* (Italian), *duivel* (Dutch), *teufel* (German), *djevel* (Norwegian) and *d'yavol* (ДЬЯВОЛ, Russian). The original Greek, *diabolos*, means one who brings down and thus destroys. It stems from the prefix *dia-* (δια-), away from or apart, and *ballein* (βαλλειν), to throw.¹ The devil, then, is the one who throws things apart—the destroyer. The easiest way to destroy someone is to ruin his reputation by accusing him of some heinous act, and the devil is also known as the accuser. The word accuse comes from the Latin *accusare* from *ad causa*, lawsuit.

The most common name for the devil is Satan. This is not actually a proper name, but the Hebrew word *ha-satan* (שָׂטָן), the accuser or prosecutor. In Job, the oldest book of the Bible (9th century BC), we find a minion in the heavenly court called *ha-satan*, whose job is to test the faith of men. He is seen not as an enemy of God, but rather as a challenger or tester of the righteousness of God's creatures. In effect he simply bets God that Job is not really as righteous as God thinks he is. In the Old Testament the word *satan* is never used as a proper name, but within a couple of centuries *ha-satan* was seen as a definite enemy of God who sought to destroy God's work. After the return from Babylon (5th century BC) *ha-satan* is clearly seen as the personification of evil, the opposite of God. He had many names, including Beelzebub (“Lord of the Flies”). By that time he was identified with Lucifer, the fallen Seraph who rebelled against God. In Christian tradition Satan is used as a proper name and is also identified with Lucifer.

Richard R. Losch+

¹ This is also the root of the words ball, ballistic, ballot, and ballet.

A Follow-up on Hellenization

Last month we wrote about the Hellenization of the known world. A recent archaeological discovery has not only confirmed it, but added new information. Although Alexander the Great never tried to take Rome or any part of Italy, the Romans were very much enamored of Greek culture, and absorbed much of it into their own. It influenced their architecture, literature, politics, and even their diet. By the first century BC it even influenced their language. Upper-class and highly educated Romans spoke only Greek among themselves, reserving Latin for speaking to menials and for affairs of state. Even in the latter matter, there were some who criticized Julius Caesar for writing his commentaries on the Gallic wars in Latin. They felt that since he was of one of the noblest families in Rome, he should know better.¹ The Romans tried to prove that they were not really Greek by shaving their beards and wearing what they considered non-Greek clothing. In fact, however, their basic clothing, women's gowns and men's tunics, were very much like those of the Greeks. Upper-class Roman men wore a toga, which was not at all a Greek garment. It was a huge bean-shaped linen cloth that had to be wrapped around the body in a very special way. It was almost impossible to wrap your toga by yourself, thus displaying that you had slaves to do it for you. The common people did not wear togas.²

¹ His argument was that they were official reports to the Senate, and therefore must be in Latin. The truth is that he was a populist politician, and knew that the common people did not like the Greek snobbery of the elite. His uncle by marriage, Gaius Marius (who prepared the way for Caesar's eventual imperial dictatorship), grew up in a northern Italian province and spoke perfect Greek, but with a slight northern accent. Among the snobbish Roman elite he was known as "a country bumpkin with no Greek."

² Cato the Younger (Marcus Porcius Cato Uticensis) was a Senator in Caesar's time (and Caesar's enemy). He was a fanatic Roman purist. Although he was fluent in Greek, he refused to speak it or to have anything to do with anything Greek. Since the tunic was essentially a Greek garment, Cato would not wear one, wrapping his toga around his naked body. Ironically, he was famous as a Stoic, which is a Greek philosophy.

Recent discoveries have confirmed what had long been believed, that in Judea many Hellenized Jews wore Roman clothing rather than the traditional Jewish robes. We also know that every even moderately educated Jew knew Greek, and it is suspected that many of the completely Hellenized Jewish elite spoke Greek among themselves rather than Aramaic,¹ and lived more according to the culture of their Roman rulers than in accord with the traditional Jewish culture.

By the first century AD the culture of the Roman Empire should be properly called the Greco-Roman culture, and that is the culture that is at the root of modern Western civilization. It is essentially a myth that each country conquered by Rome was allowed to continue to live in its old ways. It was expedient for the Romans to leave the religion and administrative structure essentially alone, but the controlling classes of these countries all fell into the Greco-Roman way of life.²

The recent discovery of a garum factory in Ashkelon (in modern Gaza) indicates that this even extended to their diet. Garum is an odorous strong-flavored sauce made from fermented fish, and it was a staple condiment on every Roman table. It probably served the same purpose that hot peppers and hot spices serve in southern Asia and Central America, which is to cover up the taste of tainted food that is still edible but is beginning to turn. This is an important consideration in a warm climate when there is no refrigeration. Garum was as basic to the Roman table as salt and pepper are to ours.

The manufacture of garum was a terribly foul-smelling process, involving the fermentation of decomposing fish. Because

¹ Aramaic was the language of Palestine in Jesus' time. It is a Semitic language very similar to Hebrew. By the first century AD Hebrew was virtually a dead language, being used only by scholars and for religious purposes, much as Latin would be later in Medieval Europe.

² "Independent, self-contained ethnic groups unrelated to their surroundings are a scholar's fantasy. The social and political world these [first-century Jewish] people lived in was Greco-Roman." —Anthony J. Saldarini, "Babatha's Story," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, March/April 1998.

of that there were very few garum manufacturing plants, and they were usually on the outskirts of the less desirable sections of a few large coastal cities. Pompeii was the primary source of garum in Italy, and they exported it all over the Roman world. The presence of a garum factory in Ashkelon indicates that there was a significant demand for it in Palestine, more than there would have been from just the Romans who were living there. This confirms that many of the Jews in the region were leaning more toward Roman cuisine than to the very restrictive diet permitted by the Torah.¹

The site of the factory was used as an industrial site several times in the next few centuries, the last being a 5th century wine bottling plant run by a Byzantine monastery. On the site are some mosaic fragments and the remains of large kilns used to make ceramic wine jars. Excavation of that site is what led to the discovery of the garum factory.

Richard R. Losch+

Where and What is Palestine?

The name Palestine is from a Roman corruption of the name Philistine. The Philistines were 12th century BC invaders from somewhere in the Aegean, who settled in the region now known as the Gaza Strip shortly after the Israelites had settled most of Canaan. That region in Gaza came to be known as Philistia. They were enemies and briefly conquerors of the Israelites, but were subjugated by King David in the 10th century BC and were thereafter absorbed into Israel. When the Romans conquered the kingdom of Judah in the 1st century BC, they annexed it into the Province of Syria. Syria was comprised of vast territories in the Middle East, including Aram, the nation we call Syria today. The Romans referred to the southwestern portion of the province as *Palestina*. This was not a defined territorial name, but simply a loose regional designation, used

¹ This is what today is called a Kosher diet. The Hebrew word *kosher* (כשר) simply means clean, but it implies consistency with Jewish dietary laws.

much as we use the terms “the Middle West” or “the South.” We use the name Palestine liberally, but there has never been a nation called Palestine or a people called Palestinians.

In AD 132, after a series of rebellions, the Romans in retribution destroyed most of the major Jewish cities¹ and expelled most of the Jews from Judea. They repopulated it with immigrants from all over the Roman Empire, and tried to erase all memory of the nation of Judah that had existed there for over 1000 years. They forbade the use of the name Judea, referring to the region only as *Syria Palestina*, which was still just an undefined designation of the southwestern Syrian Province.

The new population was made up of people from all over the Roman Empire, consisting of many races and ethnicities. The one group that they did not bring in was Arabs, because only a tiny part of Arabia was in the Empire, and the Romans had very poor relations with the Arabic tribes. Much of the land was given to veterans as a pension.² By the beginning of the 5th century AD the entire region was Christian, with a small but significant population of Jews (Islam did not yet exist).³ With the exception of a handful of Phoenicians in what is now a Lebanon, and a few remaining Jews in what had been Judea, none of the original population of the region were left. In the 7th century AD, very soon after the birth of Islam, Arabian and Egyptian Muslims invaded and conquered Palestine. They slaughtered, drove out, or forcibly converted almost the entire population, turning it from a Christian into a Muslim region in a very few years. With the exception of a few brief back-and-forth periods during the Crusades, it remained in Muslim hands

¹ Jerusalem had been leveled 62 years earlier in AD 70 in retribution for a rebellion. It was then that the Temple was destroyed and never rebuilt.

² By that time the majority of the Roman army no longer consisted of just Romans. It was made up of soldiers from all the provinces, including Germans, Gauls, Celts, Hispanics, Egyptians, Numidians and Syrians.

³ In AD 380 the emperor Theodosius decreed Nicene Christianity to be the official religion of the Roman Empire. Within a very few decades almost the entire population of the Empire was Christian.

thereafter. In AD 1299 the Turkish Ottoman Empire arose, and soon gained control of the entire region of Palestine. They were not interested in it, however, and eventually most of it except Jerusalem and a few coastal cities had been abandoned and reverted to desert. It became for all practical purposes a “no-man’s land” that no one wanted and where almost no one lived.

By the end of the 19th century in Russia and eastern Europe, pogroms and persecution of Jews had reached a fever pitch. Many emigrated to Palestine, which the Jews had always believed to be their God-given homeland.¹ A few went to the cities, but most went to the inland deserted wastelands that no one wanted, so no one cared that they were there. They planted trees and built irrigation systems, and soon the deserts bloomed and the people prospered. Still few paid any attention to what the Jews were doing, because that region had been ignored for so long. When the Ottoman Empire fell to the British in 1918 at the end of World War I, Britain declared Palestine a refuge for displaced Jews (the Balfour Declarations), but did nothing to expedite the plan. From the late 19th century to second World War the Jewish settlements not only flourished, but they also invited their Arab neighbors in to share in their prosperity. The relationship between the Jews and Arabs was stable and almost warm until the United Nations partitioned the land in 1948, establishing the State of Israel as an independent nation and as a refuge for displaced Holocaust survivors. At that point several surrounding Arab nations declared war on Israel on the grounds that the land was stolen from Palestine. The only problem with that is that there was not, and never had been a State of Palestine. The majority of the Muslim population in the then State of Israel had moved in at the invitation of the Jews after the Jews had reclaimed and rebuilt the previously abandoned and worthless land. Few had lived there before the Jews arrived in the 19th century, and those Muslims who were there in 1948 were welcomed to stay and were given Israeli citizenship.

Much of the hatred for Israel is because when the coalition

¹ This is well portrayed in the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*.

of several huge and powerful Muslim nations attacked the new nation (which represented less than 2% of their total land mass), tiny Israel soundly defeated them and captured massive regions of their land. Soon thereafter they returned almost all the captured land except the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, which they retained for security reasons. Without them they would have been virtually defenseless in the event of an air or missile attack. The Arabic nations never forgave Israel for the humiliation of that defeat. They are also opposed to Israel's democratic form of government, which is inconsistent with the basic political tenets of Qur'anic Islam. Also, they are embarrassed that Israel in seven decades has accomplished more in science, technology, medicine, the arts, and industry than the surrounding nations have accomplished in centuries. Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia are the only ones today that even acknowledge Israel's right to exist, and that only grudgingly.

The names Palestine and Palestinian were co-opted in 1964 by Yasser Arafat, the founder of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (the PLO). He used them as if they were the names of a historic nation and its people. For 2000 years the name Palestine has never implied defined borders or a specific population. It has been nothing more than a designation of the portion of the Levant between the eastern Mediterranean and the western border of the kingdom of Jordan. The people who live there, with the exception of the Jews, have no historic claim on the land other than that they are descendants of the diverse peoples planted there in the 1st century AD Roman repopulation initiative, and of the 7th and 8th century Muslim invaders.

Richard R. Losch+

The Epistle is Online

The last seven years of *The Epistle* are now online. Go to <http://rlosch.com> and click on the "Epistle" tab at the top. 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+

Constantine's Labarum

No one knows the origin of the word labarum, but it first appeared in Late Latin, and is still used today. A labarum is a banner or flag bearing a symbol that has a specific meaning. Historically, the Labarum refers to the banner of the Roman emperor Constantine the Great (AD 272-337). Constantine was a raised a pagan, although his mother, Saint Helena, was Christian. She was the consort of Constantius Chlorus, the Caesar of the Western Empire. At that time Rome was divided in two, the Eastern and the Western Empires, with each having an Augustus (chief emperor) and a Caesar (vice-emperor). Although Augustus and Caesar had once been proper names, they were now used as titles of office. Upon Constantius' death the army proclaimed Constantine Caesar of the Western Empire. Maxentius, the Augustus, fomented a civil war, trying to take control of both parts of the empire. Constantine rose up against him, and in AD 312 they faced off at the Milvian Bridge that crossed the Tiber Rive at Rome. Constantine was badly outnumbered. The night before the battle he had a vision of a major Christian symbol, the Chi-Rho. This is a monogram made up of the first two letters of Christ in Greek (XP). He heard a voice saying, "In this sign you conquer" (*"In hoc signo vinces"*). He immediately ordered a labarum to be made bearing the Chi-Rho, and ordered that every one of his soldiers, using paint, charcoal, or whatever was at hand, mark the Chi-Rho boldly on his shield. As they attacked, they were to shout, "*In Nomine Christi!*" ("In the Name of Christ!"). There were probably some Christians in his ranks, but most of the soldiers undoubtedly had no idea what this was all about. Nevertheless, Maxentius' troops panicked when they saw that Constantine's troops were apparently being helped by this "new" God. As they were on the bridge they broke ranks and started to flee. The bridge collapsed, and Maxentius and much of his army drowned in the Tiber. That battle established Constantine as the sole emperor of the Western Empire, and eventually led to his becoming the



sole ruler of the entire Roman Empire. He was the first sole emperor since Diocletian had divided the empire in AD 285. He was not baptized until he was on his deathbed (a common practice in those days), but he staunchly supported Christianity, legalized it throughout the empire, and banned any persecution of Christians. The Chi-Rho labarum became his official banner. In AD 380 the emperor Theodosius established Nicene Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire.

Richard R. Losch+

Christmas or Xmas?

I was recently asked if the term Xmas is irreverent, and in light of the Chi-Rho article above an answer seems appropriate here. The Greek letter *Chi* (X) is the first letter of the word *Christos* (Χριστός), Christ or Messiah (literally “Anointed”). Writing materials were very expensive in ancient times, so scribes frequently used abbreviations. Usually these were a single letter or the first two or three letters of the word. To show that it was an abbreviation they would put a line over it, much as we use a period today. The common abbreviation for Christ was $\bar{\chi}$ (*Chi*) or $\bar{\chi\rho}$ (*Chi Rho*). The use of X in Xmas, then, is just an abbreviation for Christ. Using it is generally considered to be not in the best of taste, but it is not actually irreverent.

Along the same lines, Jesus in Greek is *Iesous* (Ἰησους). Since the ancient Greeks wrote only in capitals, this would be ΙΗΣΟΥΣ. Frequently in the ancient script they would use C instead of Σ, so it would look like IHCOYC. The scribes' abbreviation of this was \overline{IHC} ,¹ but in the common (Koine) Greek of late New Testament times this would often come out \overline{IHS} . Because the Greek letters look like Roman letters, many people think this stands for “In His Spirit,” but it is actually nothing more than IES, a Greek abbreviation for the name of Jesus.

Richard R. Losch+

¹ The letter I was often written with a flourish called a swash, making it look like J, so it then looks like \overline{JHC} . Although these are actually the Greek letters IES, this is the source of the vulgar exclamation “Jesus H. Christ.”

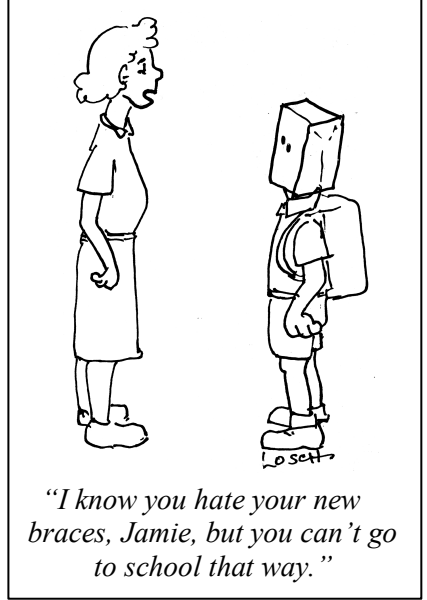
A Touch of Trivia

In 1953, someone at Swanson over-ordered turkey for Thanksgiving by 260 tons. Swanson was stuck with 10 refrigerated trains of turkey that they couldn't sell. A salesman, Gerry Thomas, had an idea. He ordered 5,000 partitioned aluminum trays, hired an assembly line of workers, and created a frozen meal of turkey, gravy, cornbread dressing, green peas and sweet potatoes, all for 98¢. He called it a "TV Dinner." In the first year, 1954, Swanson sold 10 million TV Dinners.

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JAMIE

by Richard R. Losch



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