

# THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church  
Livingston, Alabama



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January 2017

## *This Month's Cover*

Our cover painting this month is *The Adoration of the Magi* by Domenico Ghirlandaio. It is tempera on a wood panel, measuring 8'x9'4". It was completed in 1488, and is displayed in the Ospedale degli Innocenti (the Hospital of the Innocents), an early Renaissance orphanage in Florence that was dedicated to the Holy Innocents of Bethlehem who were murdered by King Herod. In 1485 Ghirlandaio received a commission to paint an altarpiece for Chiesa di Santa Maria degli Innocenti, a church attached to the orphanage. The contract required that he do the entire painting himself—it was common at the time for a master to paint the main images, then let his students fill in the background and minor images. The work is noted for its colors, which are generally brighter and more vibrant than those in most paintings of the time. On first sight it appears to be a bit cluttered, but when we study it, it displays a remarkable relationship between the main figures.

At the center of the painting is the Blessed Virgin holding the infant Jesus, with an elderly Saint Joseph on her left; two Magi are kneeling in front of her, and one is standing on her right. Traditionally in Renaissance paintings the Magi represent either the three main races (white, black and oriental) or youth, maturity and old age. This one uses the latter. The oldest Magus is kneeling and kissing the Infant's foot. Kneeling in the foreground are Saint John the Baptist and Saint John the Evangelist, the patron saints of orphans. Each is presenting a wounded child (one has a wound on the face, and the other on the arm). The children have halos, denoting the Holy Innocents, whose murder is depicted in the left background. On the right are three richly dressed Florentines. These were the leaders of the Silk Workers' Guild, and were patrons of

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the orphanage. It was common in the Renaissance to include prominent contemporary figures in paintings of religious or classical scenes. On the left, behind the young Magus, are four men. The two on the far left, dressed as Judeans, were prominent Florentine merchants. The one in black is the donor of the painting, and the one looking directly at the viewer is a self-portrait of the artist. Behind the Holy Family is a four-pillared baldacchino containing an unfinished brick wall, which represents the demise of paganism with the advent of Christ. Behind it are a layman and a priest, representing the two institutions that sponsored the orphanage. On the right are several members of the Magi's procession passing under an arch bearing the Roman numeral 1488, the year the painting was completed. Their faces probably represent important Florentine citizens. On the top of the baldacchino are the Holy Spirit as a dove and four angels holding a scroll with the Gregorian musical notation of the *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*, the hymn the angels sang on the night of Christ's birth.

Domenico Ghirlandaio (1449-1494) was of the "third generation" of Florentine artists, which included such great masters as Andrea del Verrocchio and Sandro Botticelli. He ran a prominent workshop there along with two brothers, a brother-in-law, and later his son. Perhaps his most famous apprentices were Michelangelo Buonaroti and Francesco Granacci. They both left his studio when Lorenzo de' Medici asked him to send him his two best students. The opportunity to study at the Medici Academy was not to be refused.

Ghirlandaio's primary medium was fresco and tempera. His greatest talent was the ability to include prominent contemporary patrons in religious paintings without making them look at all out of place. Needless to say, this greatly pleased the wealthy and often narcissistic leaders of the city, and it brought him many very lucrative commissions. He was a genius at chiaroscuro, and while he was famous for his vibrant colors, he was also criticized by his contemporaries for being "bawdy and crudely bright." He died in 1494 of "pestilent fever" (possibly the plague) at the age of 45, and is buried in

Chiesa di Santa Maria Novella in Florence. Although he left a large number of descendants, the family died out in the 17th century when its last members joined monasteries.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***A Word From the Editor***

Well, we did it again. Christmas is almost over, and we've put another year behind us. I say that Christmas is almost over because even if you have taken down your tree and packed away the decorations, the Christmas Festival isn't over until January 6, and the Christmas Season ends with the Feast of the Purification ("Candlemas") on February 2. It's too bad that most people celebrate Christmas all through Advent, and by the time the feast actually gets here they are sick of it. If they would prepare during Advent and celebrate during Christmas, the worst of the winter would be almost over by the time the festivities ended. Anticipation can be great!

Some people love winter. I am not one of them, but it is nonetheless a good time to turn our attention to all those things we need to do without the distractions that warm weather and vacations bring. When I speak of all the things we need to do I don't mean cleaning the closets and dropping five pounds. I mean strengthening our prayer life, learning more about the Faith, and preparing ourselves to face the increasing attacks on religion in general and Christianity in particular. You don't have to wait for Lent to set up for yourself a program of daily or weekly Bible study, to start praying regularly if you don't already, or in some cases even to learn to pray—never underestimate the power of prayer to strengthen, encourage and unify. It's pleasant on a long winter evening to nestle down in a comfortable chair with a good book. Why not the "Good Book" once in a while?

Lent will be on us before we know it (March 1 this year). Why not prepare for it now by starting a "Lent lite" regimen of prayer, study and meditation?

*Father Rick Losch+*

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## ***Be Wordly Wise***

### ***Orthodoxy and Heresy***

Orthodoxy, literally “straight teaching,” is defined as theory, doctrine or practice that is generally accepted to be true. Ecclesiastically it refers to the formal and official doctrines of the Church. Orthodoxy is the antonym of heresy. It derives from the Greek *orthos* (ὀρθός), straight or correct, and *doxa* (δοξα), teaching or opinion. The word is often used subjectively—when two people hold opposite opinions, each often considers his own to be the orthodox view. When capitalized, the term Orthodox usually refers to any of the several Eastern Catholic Churches,<sup>1</sup> or to the most traditional of the three main groups of Jews.<sup>2</sup>

Heresy is defined as a belief that is inconsistent with the orthodox beliefs of the Church. A person who espouses such a belief is called a heretic. Like orthodoxy, the word is often used subjectively—the Roman Catholic Church considered the teachings of Martin Luther to be heretical, while Luther accused the Church of being heretical. The word comes to us via the Old French *heresie*, which derives from the Latin *haeresis*. This in turn came from the Greek *hairesis* (ἁίρεσις), choice, implying a conscious selection of an option. That in turn came from *hairein* (ἁίρειν), to choose, take or capture. From the earliest times Christianity has used *hairesis* to mean a false or incorrect choice or a heretical sect.

Some people look on the teachings of the Church as a buffet of beliefs—“I like this and this, but I don’t want any of that”—and thus they take an incomplete meal and starve. Some then add to their plate beliefs from a different table, thus creating an incompatible or indigestible meal. These people are heretics—choosers—and they compound their sin if they try to get others to eat the same indigestible meal.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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<sup>1</sup> There are a great many of them, but their beliefs are basically the same. The two most prominent are the Greek and Russian Orthodox Churches.

<sup>2</sup> The other two being Conservative and Reform (not Reformed).

## ***Community Fifth Sunday Service***

Livingston First Presbyterian Church will be hosting the Community Fifth Sunday Service on Sunday, January 29th, and all are invited to stay for a fellowship lunch following the service. Please make your plans to attend and invite your friends and neighbors and help us to continue this Livingston tradition.

*Hiram Patrenos*

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## ***Annual Parish Meeting***

At the Annual Parish Meeting held on Sunday, December 4th, Mary Helen Jones and Joe Moore were elected to the Vestry for terms expiring on December 31, 2019, replacing Roy Underwood and Ethel Scott whose terms expired December 31st, 2016. Other members of the Vestry are Madelyn Mack and Hiram Patrenos, whose terms expire on December 31, 2017, and Rosalie Dew and Jim Rankin whose terms expire on December 31, 2018. The Vestry met following the Annual Meeting and elected the following officers for 2016: Hiram Patrenos, Senior Warden; Jim Rankin, Junior Warden; Raiford Noland, Treasurer; and Fr. Losch, Clerk. Thank you to Mrs. Scott and Dr. Underwood for their dedicated service to the Vestry and St. James'.

*Hiram Patrenos*

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## ***Every Member Canvass***

Thank you to all who have returned their pledge cards. If you have not yet completed your pledge card, it is not too late. Pledge cards are available on the table at the rear of the church. Please prayerfully consider your commitment to St. James'. Cards may be placed in the alms aasins or mailed to St. James' Church, Post Office Box 446, Livingston, Alabama 35470.

*Hiram Patrenos*

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## ***Wilmer Hall Christmas Contribution***

Thank you to everyone who contributed towards our special gift to Wilmer Hall for its Christmas needs this year. Through your generosity St. James' contributed \$1,000.00 for the Christmas needs of the children.

*Hiram Patrenos*

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## ***Parish Directory Update***

We will be updating the Parish Directory during January. Please review it 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](mailto:patrenoj@bellsouth.net). The updated directory will be available on the first Sunday of February.

*Hiram Patrenos*

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## ***“The Epistle” Is Online***

The last three years' issues of *The Epistle* are online. Go to <http://rlosch.com> and click on the “Epistle” tab at the top, then click on the issue you want to see. You can read it online or download it as a *.pdf* file.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***Men's Breakfast***

Saint James' will host the Interfaith Men's Breakfast on Sunday, January 8 at 7:45 a.m. It will be on the second Sunday this time because the first is New Year's Day.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***Perhaps a Bit Too Much Service***

From an advertisement of San Francisco's posh Drisco Hotel: “Nestled in your opulent guest room with luxurious bedding and special amenities, the Drisco's thoughtful staff will be there to anticipate your needs and carry out your wishes.”

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## *The Number of the Beast*

A very important element of ancient mysticism that is still used by many today is what in Jewish tradition is called Gamatria. This is the assigning of a numerical value to a word and then analyzing it to discern some secret meaning. In many cases the interpretation is quite a stretch, but in some it is either obvious or reasonable and sometimes surprising. In Hebrew and Greek the first 9 letters of the alphabet represent the numerals 1-9,<sup>1</sup> and higher values are represented by either other letters or the arrangement of letters. In the Latin alphabet certain letters represent certain numerals (the so-called Roman Numerals). Although this system made arithmetic calculation difficult, it is perfect for Gamatria.

In Hebrew the name David is דוד, which is 4+6+4=14. This is why Saint Matthew, who emphasizes Jesus' Davidic lineage, claims 14 generations from Abram to David, 14 from David to the Exile, and 14 from the Exile to Jesus (Matt. 1:17). In the Book of Revelation (13:18) John identifies "the number of the beast," the Antichrist, to be 666.<sup>2</sup> In both Hebrew and Greek the Gamatrian number of the Roman emperor Nero Caesar is 666.<sup>3</sup> Nero launched the first major persecution of Christians in A.D. 64, and the following year, in that persecution, Saints Peter and Paul were executed. To the early Christians, Nero represented Satan's attempt to undo the work of God. In later centuries anyone who represented massive satanic evil has been considered an Antichrist and has been associated with the number 666, even though it may not be his Gamatrian number. There is not just one Antichrist. In recent years Hitler and Stalin have been considered Antichrists.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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<sup>1</sup> α=α=1, β=β=2, γ=λ=3 etc.

<sup>2</sup> In most hotels around the world there is no 13th floor (or if there is it is simply a storage area), no room 13, and no room 666 because so few people are willing to stay in them.

<sup>3</sup> In some early corrupted texts of Revelation the number of the beast is identified as 616 because that is Nero's Gamatrian number in Latin.



## ***Work and Worship***

From ancient times the distinction between work and worship has been blurred at best. The Greek word *leitourgia* (λειτουργία) meant either public service or public worship of the gods, because the Greeks believed that the two were essentially the same thing. They saw little distinction between service to the people and service to the gods. The word derived from *leitōs* (λείτος), the people, and *ergos* (ἔργος), work, and of course we get our word liturgy from it.<sup>1</sup> The liturgy, which is the body of the Church's ritual acts of worship, is literally the work of the people. An ancient slogan of the Christian monastic communities was *Ora est labora et labora est ora*, "Prayer is work and work is prayer." There have been many variations of that concept through the ages.<sup>2</sup>

The association of work with worship goes back to the earliest times, and allegorically back to creation itself. The Book of Genesis tells us that God created the man from the dust of the earth and charged him with the care of the garden. Although most translations of the Bible call him Adam, he is not actually called that as a name until much later in the Bible. Genesis simply calls him "the man," and in Hebrew that word has a particular significance. The Hebrew for man is *adam* (אדם). Its significance is that the Hebrew for ground or soil is *adamah* (אדמה), clearly reminding us that we came from the soil. Similarly Eve is simply called "the woman" (*ashah*, אשה)<sup>3</sup> until Gen. 3:20, when the man names her Eve (*Chaivah*, חַיִּיה) from *chai* (חַי) "life." To follow through with this allegory, *eden* (עֵדֶן) means a state of innocence. Thus when Adam embraced Eve in the Garden of Eden, man embraced life in a state of innocence. Sad to say, that innocence did not last long because of their disobedience to God.

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<sup>1</sup> We also get the words laity from *leitōs* and energy from *ergos*.

<sup>2</sup> One of the cruelest was the mocking epigram over the entrance to the Auschwitz death camp: *Arbeit macht frei*, Work makes [you] free.

<sup>3</sup> This derives from *asher* (אשר), happiness.

The duty of Adam and Eve was to tend the garden. Even in the Garden of Eden this involved physical work, but this work was not laborious toil, but rather a joyful activity. Consider the difference between the chore of mowing and edging the lawn, as opposed to the pleasure of tending a flowerbed or vegetable garden when you love doing that sort of thing. Allegorically, tending the Garden of Eden meant accepting the discipline of obedience to God's commands. Before the fall this was a joyful labor, and was equivalent to worship.

The Hebrew word *avodah* (עבודה), first used in Gen. 2:15,<sup>1</sup> appears several times in the Old Testament and is common in Jewish liturgy today. In every use the word means both to work and to worship. When Adam was cast out of the garden, however, he was told, "Cursed is the ground because of you; in painful toil will you eat from it" (Gen. 3.17). Here the word for work is not *avodah*, but *itsabon* (עצבון), which is translated "painful toil"—the King James Version translates it "the sweat of thy face." While *avodah* is joyful work, *itsabon* is onerous drudgery. A friend of mine recently posted on Facebook, "Woo! I love my job!" His work is clearly *avodah*. The fact that his post gave me a pleasant feeling and brought a smile to my face shows the communicable power of joy.

As we have often pointed out, it is not easy to be a Christian. It is frequently hard work, and sometimes it can be just plain dangerous. Even so, if we love God the work of serving him is purely *avodah*—joyful labor. In *Fiddler On the Roof*, Tevye's dream is to be able to spend all day every day studying Torah. This is in fact the dream of many faithful Jews, who see that work as an act of joyful worship. Would that all Christians could find equal joy in studying their Bibles. The worship of God is not just the pious saying of phrases of praise and the singing of hymns, it is the work of living as if he were the most important thing in our lives. He is!

*Richard R. Losch*

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<sup>1</sup> "And the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it (*l'avodah*) and take care of it." (NIV)

## *Sola Fide and Sola Scriptura*

Two of the most fundamental doctrines of the Protestant Reformation are known as *Sola Fide* (Faith Alone) and *Sola Scriptura* (the Bible Alone). *Sola Fide* teaches that salvation is attained by faith alone, and that good works have nothing to do with it, being nothing more than evidence of one's faith. *Sola Scriptura* teaches that the Bible is the only acceptable source of doctrine, and that no religious belief has any authority unless it is clearly stated in the Bible. We will consider each of these doctrines separately.

When Martin Luther translated the Bible into German, the first thing he did was to reject 7 books of the Old Testament that had been accepted by the Church for 12 centuries. He based this on the texts accepted by a Jerusalem based Jewish sect called the Masoretes ("Traditionalists"), whose scriptures were essentially what form the Jewish Bible of today (the *Tanakh*). This produced what is often called the "Protestant Bible," which contains 66 books instead of the original 73. He also disagreed with James 2:24, "Do you see that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only?" At first he refused to translate the Epistle of James or to include it in the Bible, although under pressure from his followers he finally relented and did so. He interpreted Genesis 15:6,<sup>1</sup> Romans 4:1-5<sup>2</sup> and Galatians 3:5-7<sup>3</sup> to imply that we are justified by faith alone (*sola fide*), regardless of our works. It was Luther

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<sup>1</sup> "Abraham believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness" (Gen. 15:6).

<sup>2</sup> "Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. What does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed in God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.' Now to the one who works, wages are not created as a gift but as an obligation. However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness" (Rom. 4:1-5).

<sup>3</sup> "Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard? So also Abraham 'believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.' Understand then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham" (Gal. 3:5-7).

who inserted the adjective *sola*, which is contrary to the traditional teaching of the Church. From the earliest days the Church has taught that salvation is a free and unmerited gift of God to man (this is essentially the definition of grace), and that this gift is obtained through the Church and through the Sacraments, which are God's gifts to man through the Church. Luther rejected that teaching, saying that one's belief alone (*sola fide*) is the only means of justification. He rejected the primary spiritual gift of Holy Baptism—being cleansed of the taint of original sin—arguing that baptism is simply the start of the ongoing forgiveness that comes through our faith.

The Church teaches that while faith is essential to salvation, works are also essential. Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 7:21). For that reason the Catholic Churches (Roman, Orthodox, Anglican and some Lutheran) reject the concept of *Sola Fide*.<sup>1</sup> Recall again James 2:24, "Do you see that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only?" And James 2:26, "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead."

*Sola Scriptura* teaches that no doctrine bears any authority unless it is clearly stated in Scripture. This is also rejected by the Catholic Churches, which teach that Christ gave us the Church, not the Bible, as the source and authority of our faith. Having been given the Faith, the Church then canonized the Bible by selecting 73 of the hundreds of available writings on the grounds that they teach the Faith that was given to the Church by the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. This is not to say that the Church cannot be in error—it is subject to sin and corruption and has often sunk deeply into it—but we believe that the Holy Spirit will protect the Church and us from any teaching or act that could imperil the salvation of our souls as long as we are faithful to God and trust in his protection.

The primary challenge to *Sola Scriptura* is that it contains a

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<sup>1</sup> John Wesley also rejected it, as do many Methodists today.

circular argument. It teaches that no religious doctrine has authority unless it is clearly stated in the Bible, but nowhere does the Bible say this. It is easy to forget that the Church produced the Bible, the Bible did not produce the Church.<sup>1</sup> The Church had existed and functioned for almost 300 years before it canonized 73 Jewish and Christian writings into the Holy Bible at the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325. The reason the Church selected those particular books is that they teach what the Church already believed—the Faith deposited once and for all time with the Apostles on Pentecost. The Church did not believe because of what is in the books. The Bible contains everything necessary to salvation, including the accounts of the foundation of the Church and the institution of the Sacraments. Since the Church defined the Bible, however, she also bears the right to interpret it. To sum it up, therefore, *Sola Scriptura* says essentially that if it is not clearly stated in the Bible then you do not have to believe it—but *Sola Scriptura* is not stated in the Bible, so by its own argument you do not have to believe it. If the Bible does not declare its own sole authority, which it does not, then the proponents of *Sola Scriptura* find themselves in a serious Catch-22.

Richard R. Losch+

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## ***A Touch of Trivia***

According to Mattel, manufacturer of the Barbie doll, Barbie has a full name. She is Barbara Millicent Roberts. She is the daughter of George and Margaret Roberts of the fictional town of Willows, Wisconsin. She was created by Wisconsin businesswoman Ruth Handler for her daughter. Over a billion Barbies have been sold. Her boyfriend, by the way, is Kenneth Carson. You can find a list of her friends and family at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_B Barbie%27s\\_friends\\_and\\_family](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_B Barbie%27s_friends_and_family).

Richard R. Losch+

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<sup>1</sup> Some people act as if the Church came into being when someone found a Bible, read it, and said, “Neat. Let’s start a religion based on this.”

## Joseph's Coat of Many Colors

There were many reasons that Joseph's older brothers despised him, and some of them were justified. Although he grew up to be a wise and just ruler, Joseph as an adolescent was an arrogant spoiled brat who often tattled on his brothers. Nonetheless he was Jacob's favorite because he was the firstborn son of his favorite wife, Rachel (Gen. 37:3), and the child of his old age. The symbol of Jacob's favoritism that set his brothers' blood boiling was what the King James Version translated a "coat of many colors." This is a mistranslation, but it has become so thoroughly ingrained into the tradition of the story of Jacob and Joseph that it is undoubtedly here to stay. Andrew Lloyd Webber even wrote a musical about it called *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*.

In ancient times Jews generally wore only two garments. In fact, all but the rich owned no clothes other than these two garments—a sign of wealth and status was owning more than one cloak or tunic. The basic clothing was a light undergarment called a *kutonet* (כְּתוֹנֶת). This was similar to the Roman tunic except that it was long-sleeved and ankle-length.<sup>1</sup> Children usually wore a sleeveless or short-sleeved *kutonet* that was only knee-length. When a boy was granted adult status (usually around age 13) he could wear an ankle-length *kutonet* (if he could afford one). Except for men of high status this was the only garment worn in warm weather or while working.<sup>2</sup> The *kutonet* was usually plain unbleached white with no decoration. Full flowing sleeves and a stripe or two on the *kutonet* were signs of status. This was usually a sign of

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<sup>1</sup> Romans generally wore a short-sleeved knee-length tunic, although old men often wore long tunics. Long sleeves and ankle-length tunics were signs of status. The Senatorial class wore a purple stripe on the tunic.

<sup>2</sup> Men often wore a loincloth underneath the *kutonet*. If they were doing hard work in hot weather they would strip to this loincloth. When the Bible says that someone was naked it means that he was wearing only a loincloth (Mark 14:52, John 21:7). Total nudity was abhorrent to the Jews and was extremely rare, even when bathing in private.

a man of wealth and power. The second garment was the multipurpose *mitpachat* (מתפחת). It was a large heavy cloak that might have sleeves, or might simply have arm slits. It served as a covering in cold weather, as a raincoat, and as bedding at night. It could be folded into a pad for sleeping (only the very rich owned beds), or as a sleeping bag in cold weather. It also served as a bag for carrying things (Ruth 3:15).

What Jacob gave Joseph was not a coat of many colors, but a very special undergarment. Joseph at the time was a boy—at the most a young teen—and possibly not yet recognized as an adult. Notwithstanding, Jacob gave him a *kutonet pasim* (כתונה פסים) (Gen. 37:3). This was a full-length tunic with long flowing sleeves and a stripe. Such a garment would normally be worn only by a wealthy and powerful man such as Jacob himself, and certainly not by a boy. Joseph did not labor in the fields with his older brothers, he had told them that he was destined to rule over them, he tattled on them to Jacob, and now Jacob had added the final insult with this gift. There is little wonder that they hated Joseph to the point that they even considered murdering him.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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## ***A Touch of Trivia***

At the height of the Civil War, 68 forts surrounded Washington, D.C. to defend it from Confederate attack. On July 10, 1864 President Lincoln, despite being warned to leave the White House and seek a safer place, decided to visit the troops at one of these forts, Fort Stevens, while it was under attack. As the Confederate troops advanced Lincoln was walking about in imminent danger of being shot. A young colonel yelled at him, “Get down, you damn fool!” He was reprimanded, but Lincoln intervened and said that he was right, thanking him for his concern. Thirty-eight years later President Theodore Roosevelt appointed that colonel, Oliver Wendell Holmes, to the Supreme Court.

*Richard R. Losch+*

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Don't Forget  
INTERFAITH  
MEN'S  
BREAKFAST  
JANUARY 8\*  
7:45 A.M.  
Mark your Calendar

**SAINT JAMES'**  
**EPISCOPAL CHURCH**  
\*SECOND SUNDAY BECAUSE OF  
NEW YEAR'S DAY

JAMIE

by Richard R. Losch



*"Did it ever occur to you that  
Christmas is the only time of the year  
that we sit around a dead tree and  
eat candy out of our socks?"*



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