

THE EPISTLE

Saint James' Episcopal Church
Livingston, Alabama



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March 2020

This Month's Cover

Our cover this month, in honor of the Feast of Saint Joseph (March 19), is a detail from *The Dream of Saint Joseph* by the Flemish artist Gerard Seghers. It is oil on canvas, and was completed sometime between 1625-1630. This detail is about half the full painting, which is large, measuring about 5'6"x7'10". It is displayed in the *Kunsthistorischesmuseum* in Vienna, Austria. On the left of this painting, not shown in this detail, is the Blessed Virgin holding the infant Jesus, with two women looking on. In this detail we see the angel coming to Saint Joseph in a dream, telling him that Mary's child is of the Holy Spirit, and that he is not to reject her (Matt. 1:18ff). In the lower right we see a small dog. Throughout the Middle Ages and well into modern times, a dog in a painting has been used as a symbol of loyalty and steadfastness. Seghers did two paintings of the same subject at about the same time, working on both between 1625-1633. This is the first of the two. The image of St. Joseph is almost identical in both; in the other the angel is higher in the air and more Flemish in style, and the Virgin and Child are almost next to him with the dog between them. The second is almost twice as large and in portrait form.



Seghers' Second Painting

We know almost nothing about Saint Joseph other than what the Bible tells us in just 18 verses. There is only one verse that in a 14th century English translation calls Joseph a carpenter. The Greek indicates that he and Jesus were more likely stonemasons (*tekton* [τεκτον], worker in hard material). Tradition is powerful, however, and that early translation as carpenter has

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stuck. Because the last mention of Joseph is when he and Mary took the 12-year-old Jesus to Jerusalem, it is assumed that he had died before the Crucifixion of Jesus. This would be why Jesus on the Cross commended the care of his mother to Saint John. Traditions have varied as to whether Joseph was a young man or an older widower when he married Mary. What matters, however, and what he is most venerated for, is that he was obviously a just and loving husband and father. He is honored as the epitome of the good father, and rightly so, since God chose him to marry Mary and raise Jesus.

Gerard Seghers (1591-1651) was a Flemish artist, collector and art dealer. He received his early training in Antwerp where he was born, but in 1612 at the age of 21 went to Rome to study. There he met and allied himself with a group of followers of Caravaggio, who had died two years before Seghers arrived in Rome. His work during that period was strongly in the style of the Caravaggist school, but later, after returning to Antwerp in 1620, he moved more toward the Flemish tradition. This painting falls into that transitional period. The angel shows a strong influence of Caravaggio, although the full painting has a clearly Flemish overtone. In Antwerp he married, and developed a fine reputation as both a painter and an art dealer. He prospered, moved into one of the best sections of Antwerp, and earned commissions from a number of well-born patrons. He executed many famous altarpieces in the Netherlands, and was particularly noted for his religious and allegorical paintings. Most of his works were in landscape form (wider than they are high), as is this detail's full painting. He died in Antwerp on March 18, 1661, the day before the Feast of Saint Joseph.

Richard R. Losch+

A Word from the Editor

I am not fond of the word "tolerance." It's not that there is anything wrong with the word, and certainly not with the concept. What I don't like is the all too frequent misuse of the word. Tolerance is the willingness to allow the existence or

practice of something, particularly an opinion or behavior, that we don't necessarily like or agree with. All too often, though, it is used with a distinctly condescending overtone of "Look how virtuous I am that I'll put up with you even though you are inferior or wrong." When I hear someone say, "I am a very tolerant person," I usually expect him to follow up with something to the effect of, "Some of my best friends are [fill-in-the-blank]." When I hear that I am tempted to say, "Really? Who?"

Using the word properly, tolerance is a powerful virtue. Among other things, it allows one to live up to the adage, "Hate the sin, but love the sinner," because it enables us to look beyond the things of which we disapprove or disagree and still maintain a warm relationship with the people who believe or do them. Tolerance does not require either approval or a hypocritical feigning of approval. It simply requires not allowing the disapproval to degenerate to anger, antipathy or hatred.

Ignorance is the root of intolerance. Alexander Solzhenitsyn wrote, "Intolerance is the first sign of an inadequate education. An ill-educated person behaves with arrogant impatience, whereas truly profound education breeds humility." If we are ignorant, we can accomplish little. How can we convert someone to Christianity if we are not willing to listen, and to learn and understand what he believes (and why) that stands in the way of his becoming a Christian? Nothing will be accomplished by rejection or contempt, other than to assure that he will never want to understand what we believe or why.

Tolerance does not come naturally to most people, but as Christians we are obligated to develop it in ourselves. To do so requires patience. Pray for it. It also requires the effort to listen and learn. Pray for the willingness to do so. And it requires learning to love. Pray fervently for that.

Father Rick Lorch

*Why do they lock gas station bathrooms?
Are they afraid someone will clean them?*

Anniversary Celebration

On Sunday, March 15th, the Reverend Richard R. Losch, Rector Emeritus and Priest-in-Charge of St. James' Episcopal Church, and Priest-in-Charge of St. Alban's Episcopal Church, will observe the 60th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. Fr. Losch will celebrate Holy Communion at St. Alban's at 8:30 a.m., and at St. James' at 11:00 a.m. using the Book of Common Prayer, 1928, the rite which he used at his first celebration of Holy Communion in 1960. That afternoon St. James' and St. Alban's will host a reception in St. James' parish house in honor of Fr. Losch from 3:30 until 5:00 p.m. You are cordially invited to join the parishioners of St. James' and St. Alban's in this celebration of Fr. Losch's ministry.

Hiram Patrenos

Easter Flowers

Each year St. James' Church offers the opportunity to remember loved ones through donations to the Altar Guild, which provides the lilies and altar flowers in the church for Easter services. If you wish to make a donation for this – In Memory of, In honor of, or In Thanksgiving for – envelopes with forms are available at the back of the church, or you may print this information clearly and mail it along with your contribution to Carolyn Patrenos, President, St. James' Altar Guild, Post Office Box 399, Livingston, Alabama 35470. Checks should be made payable to St. James' Altar Guild. Because of the increased costs for these flowers, we ask for a minimum donation of \$25 for memorials. Publication deadline for inclusion in the Easter bulletin is Wednesday, April 8th. Your donation is tax deductible.

Hiram Patrenos

*Women and cats will do as they please, so men and dogs
should just relax and get used to the idea.*

–Robert A. Heinlein

Be Wordly Wise

Paschal Language

There are several words used during Lent and Easter that are not in the everyday vocabulary of many people, so we thought it might be helpful to explain the meaning and origin of some.

Paschal (pronounced *páskal*). This is the adjective for both Easter and Passover. The reason that it applies to both observances is that Easter is directly related to Passover in that Jesus was crucified at the time of that Jewish feast. The date of Easter depends on the date of Passover, both of which depend on the moon. The word originates from the Hebrew *Pesach* (פסח), Passover. In Greek this became *Pascha* (Πάσχα), and it was the same in Latin. The Latin adjective was *Paschalis*, from which we get Paschal. Sometimes in literature we see Easter or Passover called Pasch or Pascha (pron. *pask* or *paska*), but this is not common. Usually only the adjective Paschal is used.

Lent. This word has nothing to do with lending. The Lenten season is always in the late winter well after the Winter Solstice, at a time when the days are noticeably lengthening, and it always ends in the first few days of Spring. The name comes from the Old English *lencten*, Spring, which derives from the Old German *lange*, long.

Shrove (as in Shrove Tuesday). This is the past tense of the verb to shrive, which means to hear a confession, assign a penance, and absolve. Traditionally Christians make their confession in preparation for Lent on Shrove Tuesday, the day before Lent begins on Ash Wednesday. The word comes from the Old English *scrīfan*, to impose a penance. That in turn derives from the Old German *schreiben*, to write (from which we also get the words scribe, script, scribble and Scripture).

Maundy (as in Maundy Thursday). Maundy Thursday is the Thursday before Easter, and on the night Jesus washed the feet of his disciples and then at the Last Supper instituted the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Maundy is a noun that generally refers to the traditional foot washing. It comes from the Old French *mandé*, command, which comes from the Latin

mandatum, from which we also get the words mandate and command (the Elizabethan spelling of command is *com-maund*). It refers not only to the command to wash one another's feet, but also to the command at the Last Supper, "Do this in remembrance of me." This day is also often called Holy Thursday, but in the Anglican tradition that phrase more commonly refers to Ascension Day.

Good Friday. Since this is the day of Jesus' crucifixion, one might ask, "What's good about it?" It is good because by his crucifixion we are saved, but that is not what the word means. There are two possible origins of the term, about which etymologists differ. One is that it originates in the Old English *God-des Frigedæg*, God's Friday. The other is that it came from the Middle English *goode*, meaning holy or blessed.

Triduum. This is a Latin word meaning three-day. In ecclesiastical terms, the Triduum is the three-day series of ceremonies that begin with the Maundy Thursday Mass and Vigil of Adoration, continue on Good Friday with the Good Friday Liturgy and Mass of the Pre-Sanctified, and end with the Easter Vigil and First Mass of Easter after sundown on Holy Saturday.

Easter. The name of this feast comes from the Old English *ēastre*, east, and is related to the German *Ostern*, Easter. That in turn derives from the Old German *Osten*, east. Both the Old English and the German are believed to be related to *Oestre*, the ancient pagan goddess of fertility and Spring (she is the European equivalent of the Middle Eastern goddess Astarte. The sun rising in the east was an ancient token of fertility and spring, so the words for east and the names of this goddess are related. From prehistoric times every religion has had a spring festival, and often the terminology of one has slipped into the usage of another.

Richard R. Losch+

The biggest lie we tell ourselves is, "I don't need to write that down. I'll remember it."

The Sin of Silence

It is said that silence is golden, and often that is true. There are times, however, when silence might be far from golden, but rather badly tarnished. Imagine someone about to step out on the ice, unaware that it is perilously thin. If by speaking you could save him, but you remain silent and let him fall into the water and drown, would that silence be golden? Of course not. Such silence would be considered a serious sin of omission. Consider a much more destructive sin of silence. Suppose that because of our silence someone's soul is lost for eternity. When we stand before the Throne of Judgment at the last day we will be held answerable for that loss.

In several places in the Bible we are commanded by Christ to go forth, teach all nations, and baptize. A basic mandate in Christianity is to bring others to the Faith. An implicit equal mandate, of course, is that this is to be done not by force or coercion, but by teaching with patience and charity. There have been many times in the history of Christianity, sad to say, when this latter mandate has been ignored, and that has usually been because the Church has forgotten the reason for spreading the Faith. If we seek to convert for the satisfaction of filling our ranks and thus our coffers, we have completely missed the point. People who do that are called M&M Christians—Membership and Money—and I am sure this does not please God.

Christianity and Islam are the only two major world religions that actively seek converts.¹ The major difference is that Christianity, despite its misdeeds throughout its history, condemns forced conversion, while Islam encourages it. Christians attempt to spread the Gospel by teaching, explaining to people the value of being a Christian, and by living our lives in such a manner that others will want to emulate us. The difference between this and coercion is subtle, but critical. Attitude is everything. Warning someone of sin and hell in a spirit of concern

¹ Judaism accepts converts, but it does not actively seek them. In fact, it makes conversion very difficult in order to ensure that the convert is serious about what he is doing.

for his soul is quite different from threatening him with hell if he doesn't shape up. Telling someone "I will pray for you" because you are concerned for him is quite different than saying, "I'll pray for you, because boy, do you need it!"

Often our attempts to present the Gospel, however lovingly they are made, will meet with indifference, ridicule, rejection, or open hostility. That goes with the program, but it is never pleasant. The fear of that, however, and the fear that we might offend, all too often leads us to say nothing. Remember, though, that by saying nothing we might miss the opportunity to plant the seed that just might grow into a vibrant faith. That failure to speak is a sin of silence.

When Moses told God that he did not know what to say, God told him that when the time came he would put the words into his mouth. I cannot count the times that people have reminded me of something that I said that they say changed their whole way of thinking. Often I do not remember ever saying it, and often I remember, but that was not at all what I said—but nonetheless it was what they heard. If we are willing to speak up for God's sake, he will handle what we say and what people hear. If we fail to speak out for fear of offending, our sin of silence could cost someone the opportunity to find salvation.

For two thousand years the Church has used the word proselyte to mean a person who has converted from another (or no) religion. It comes from the Greek *prosēlythos* (προσηλυθος), coming forth, which in turn derives from the verb meaning to approach. The word has never had a negative connotation until very recently, when proselytizing seems to have become taboo. Lately it has become associated with either grabbing someone by the collar and demanding if he has been saved, or judgmentally condemning anyone who does not agree with you morally or theologically. That is not the meaning of the word, but in the past decade proselytizing has become so associated with that meaning that even the Pope has said that Christians should not proselytize. Unfortunately, many have taken that as if he said we should not evangelize. Proselytizing and evangelizing are synonymous, yet lately the former word has taken on a

negative connotation, while the latter simply means to do as Christ commanded and spread the Gospel. Sharing with others the gift of salvation is basic to being a Christian. Failure to do so is a sin of silence, and it is a sin for which we will have to answer on the last day.

Richard R. Losch+

Anti-Semitism On the Rise

Anti-Semitism is seeing a rapid increase around the world, and it is growing shockingly rapidly in America. According to FBI statistics, the number of violent anti-Semitic attacks in the United States increased 40% between 2014-2018, and 10% just in the one year of 2019. This is a moral cancer that can be incredibly destructive to our already divided society. Don't be too quick to point a finger and try to identify its cause, however. Despite a handful of openly anti-Semitic politicians, this is not a political issue, and it is a grievous wrong to politicize it and try to make it one. The outspoken anti-Semites in Congress are not the problem, because they are open about their hatred and thus are easy to combat—we know exactly where they stand. Neither is it a Liberal or Conservative problem, because it exists equally along the continuum from Left to Right.

If this disease is not political or ideological, what then is its root? Obviously, its primary root is ignorance, but it is too easy to blame it completely on that. Ignorance is a powerful source of evil, but for those who are willing to open their minds and learn, it can be easily overcome. It is natural to fear and distrust things we don't understand, and that is part of the problem. I have heard people say such things as, "They dress funny, and they talk funny, and they eat weird food..." There are few regions of this country or in the world where an outsider could not say the same thing about the locals, because local cultures vary. A New Yorker in rural Louisiana would be as out of place as a Cajun in Brooklyn. We accept these differences as charming or interesting, but for some strange reason when it comes to the Jewish culture many suddenly reject it out of hand.

A good deal of the problem, of course, is that we are the victims of centuries of propaganda. Christianity did not invent anti-Semitism, but to its shame it did hone it to a fine art. The lies and calumnies about Judaism that have thrived for centuries are hard to put away. If we claim to live in an enlightened age, however, then put them away we must, because we now know that they are nothing more than that—lies and calumnies.

There is an old joke that asks which is more dangerous, ignorance or apathy, to which the answer is, “I don’t know and I don’t care.” Apathy, the “Sin of Silence” of which we wrote above, is by far the deadlier of the two. Martin Niemöller, who survived seven years in Nazi concentration camps, wrote, “First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out, because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out, because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out, because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak for me.” The sin of the German people in that era was not Nazism. The majority did not overtly support that evil, but they did enable and abet it by their silence. Whether that silence came from fear or apathy—probably both—it nonetheless allowed the greatest evil in history to sweep over Europe.

Ignorance is also a major culprit, however. Because of centuries of lies and propaganda, anti-Semitism has pervaded almost all of Western society. Even Niemöller in his later years said that he did not realize it at the time, but in retrospect he saw it in his own early thinking.¹ At times anti-Semitism has flourished and at others it has faded into the background, but it has always been there. Only if we confront it actively and openly can it be destroyed. The worst aspect of it is not so much the ignorance of bigots about who and what Jews really are, but ignorance about the history of anti-Semitism itself, particularly regarding the Holocaust. I recently saw a video of an

¹ This is not really surprising, considering that he was a Lutheran pastor, and Martin Luther was vehemently anti-Semitic. He was responsible for a strong resurgence of Anti-Semitism in eastern Europe in the 16th century.

interview with college students, taken on Holocaust Remembrance Day. One young lady was a senior at a prestigious northeastern university, so she certainly was not just a vapid “beach-bunny.” When asked what she knew about the Holocaust she replied that it was “when the Germans were mean to the Jews a couple hundred years ago.” Seriously? “Mean to the Jews?” As Edmund Burke observed, “Those who do not know history are doomed to relive it.”¹

When the horrors of the Nazi death camps were revealed in 1944, the cry went up, “Never again!” This became the motto of Holocaust remembrance, but with the current resurgence of anti-Semitism around the world it is becoming increasingly evident that if we are not vigilant it could indeed happen again. We as Christians bear a significant part of the responsibility for this evil, and if we are going to be true to our faith it is our obligation to help stamp it out. Do not forget that the Lord we worship, Jesus Christ, lived and died a faithful Jew. We can fight this evil by consciously purging it from our own thinking, by prayer, and by having the courage to speak out against it whenever we encounter it. We can and must play an important role in seeing to it that “Never again!” is not just a motto, but a reality. It is our Christian duty to do so.

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+

“There are only two races, the decent and the indecent.”

–Viktor Frankl, Man’s Search for Meaning

¹ George Santayana is often credited with this statement, but Edmund Burke said it 150 years earlier.

The Economics of Love

Love and hate are two emotions of which it can be said that the more you give, the more you still have. This may be a trite old saw, but like many trite old saws it is unquestionably true. Love, like hate, is never limited as to the amount that can be given. It is not like a jar of honey, where when one spoonful is given out there is that much less available to be given elsewhere. To the contrary, every time some is given not only is the jar not diminished, it actually increases in its volume.

Sad to say, there are those who treat love as if it were a “zero-sum” affair, believing that if some is spread in one place, there is then that much less available to be spread elsewhere. In a truly happy marriage, however, a man and woman put no limit to the love they give to each other. When a child comes into the picture and they pour their love on him as well, the love in the family is not spread thinner, but rather it is abundantly increased. This is true not only in the context of the family, but in every relationship we engage in, human or spiritual, and even in our relationships with animals. The family, however, which is the earthly reflection of our relationship with God, is the core of our understanding of how to give and receive love. When that family structure is broken or corrupted, everything that emanates from it becomes equally broken or corrupted. Hate is the exact opposite of love, and as such has the same economics. The more of it we spread, the more of it there is to spread, and the more of it comes back to us.

One of Jesus' teachings that troubles many people, especially those who are happily married, is “When they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven” (Mark 12:25).¹ Here on earth there are different types and degrees of love. We love our pets in a

¹ He says, “*Like* the angels in heaven. This may be the source of the common misconception that we become angels when we die and go to Heaven. Angels are a separate level of creation, and humans do not become angels. Those who are purified and enter Heaven become saints, not angels, and there are no wings to be gained.

different way than we love our children, yet it is still love. In a healthy relationship a man loves his spouse more than he loves his friend, and he has friends that he loves more than other people. Similarly, while a man may love children in general, he loves his own more. The reason for these degrees of love is that none of us in this life is capable of perfect, unlimited love, so it is always restricted to some degree. In heaven, on the other hand, we will have reached the stage that we are capable of perfect divine love, which is infinite. Since something cannot be greater than infinity, it is not that we would love our “loved ones” any less, but that we would love them and all others to the same degree—infinity.¹ The old hymn calls it “Love divine, all loves excelling.” It, like infinity itself, is something so far beyond human and worldly experience that while we can discuss it and grasp some concept of it, we cannot really comprehend it in this life. This is what faith is all about.

Richard R. Losch+

Forty Days and Forty Nights

The number forty appears many times in the Bible, in both the Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New.² It is tempting just to take it literally as a specific number (although in some cases it is meant to be taken literally), but its meaning runs much deeper than that. In ancient Hebrew, forty can mean just forty, but it frequently is idiomatic for many, just as we use a hundred or a thousand today, as in, “I have told you a hundred times.” When in Hebrew forty was used in terms of time, forty days meant a long time, and forty days and forty nights meant a very, very long time (again, as we would say “a hundred times” or “a thousand times”). In the story of Noah, the writer did not mean that it rained literally forty days and

¹ I imagine that the opposite is also true: in Hell the hatred for God, oneself and all others would become infinite and all-consuming, destroying all ability to love. It is not by chance that we refer to a “burning hatred.”

² Hebrew *arba'im* (ארבעים), and Greek *tesserákonta* (τεσσαράκοντα).

nights by the calendar, but that it rained for a very long time, enough to flood the whole world. When we read that Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah (Gen. 25:20), it means that he was a fully mature adult.

The occasions of this expression that come to mind immediately for most people are Noah's forty days and nights of rain (Gen. 7:4), Moses' forty days and nights of fasting on Mount Sinai (Ex. 24:18), the forty years of the Israelites' wandering in the wilderness (Num. 14:33), and the forty days and nights of Jesus' fast and temptation after his baptism (Matt. 4:2).¹

The number forty to the Israelites, however, had a deeper significance than just the idiomatic expression meaning many. The New Testament also, although it was written in Greek, was written by Aramaic speaking Jews who had the same cultural and linguistic background as the writers of the Old Testament.² To all these writers the number forty had an implication of testing and judgment that had nothing to do with calendar time. Noah's faith was tested and the world's evil was judged by the forty days and nights of rain; likewise, Moses was tested and the Israelites judged by his fast on Mount Sinai, and Jesus by his fast in the wilderness. Symbolically, the Church observes forty days of abstinence during Lent in order to prepare us for the celebration of our salvation on Easter. This Lenten "fast" is not to test the limits of our bodies, but to enable us to focus better on the theological testing and judgment that we must all face as Christians. The number forty points us to that.

Richard R. Losch+

¹ If Jesus' fast actually mean going without food and water, he could not have lived forty days by the calendar. If it meant limited food and water, then he could have lasted that long. A healthy human can survive about three weeks with no food at all, and about three days with no water at all. A simple Internet search will show many cases of people dying from trying what they call a "Jesus Fast," abstaining from all food for forty days.

² The only exception is Saint Luke, who was Greek. Although not a Jew, before following Jesus he was probably a "God-fearer," a Gentile who followed the Jewish moral and ethical law, but not the ceremonial law.

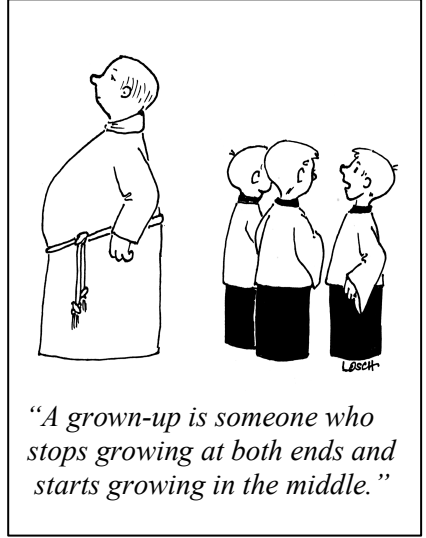
A Touch of Trivia

In the original cast of *The Wizard of Oz*, Burt Lahr was cast as the Cowardly Lion, Buddy (“Jed Clampett”) Ebsen as the Scarecrow, and the rubber-limbed dancer Ray Bolger as the Tin Man. Bolger, probably rightly so, thought he was better suited for the role of the Scarecrow. He convinced Ebsen to switch with him. On the first take Ebsen had a severe allergic reaction to the silver paint on his face and almost died, so he was replaced by Jack Haley.

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JAMIE

by Richard R. Losch



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