

Quo Vadis

The monthly newsletter of Ss. Peter & Paul Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church of Bayonne, N.J.
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Editor: V. Rev. W. Sophrony Royer, Ph.D.

98 W. 28th Street, Bayonne, N.J. 07002

“Quo Vadis?” is a Latin phrase meaning “Where are you going?” It refers to a Christian tradition regarding St. Peter. According to the apocryphal *Acts of Peter*, Peter is fleeing from likely crucifixion in Rome, and along the road outside the city, he encounters the risen Jesus. Peter asks Jesus “Quo vadis?” Jesus replies “Romam vado iterum crucifigi (“I am going to Rome to be crucified again”). St. Peter thereby gains the fortitude to return to the city, to eventually be martyred by being crucified upside-down. The phrase also occurs a few times in the Latin *Vulgate* translation of the *Holy Bible*, notably in John 13:36 when Peter asks Jesus the same question, to which He responds, “Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me.” The Church of Domine Quo Vadis in Rome is built where, according to tradition, the meeting between St. Peter and the risen Jesus Christ took place.

This parish newsletter is called *Quo Vadis* for a reason: to ask the question of where *you* are going in life. Is your life’s journey leading you towards Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? St. Peter, at a pivotal moment in his life, when he understandably felt like running away, found the courage to go where Jesus Christ would have him go. Where are *you* going? Will *you* follow Jesus Christ?

Rector’s Message

Glory to Jesus Christ! My sermon on Sunday, August 18th – my first Sunday at Ss. Peter & Paul -- focused on our parish’s need for a “fresh start.” With that end in mind, we undertook the Rite of Forgiveness, so that in a spirit of mutual forgiveness our spiritual and emotional burdens would be lifted from us, and we could experience that perhaps uniquely Christian phenomenon of regeneration. We are born again in water and the Spirit, but as the old saying goes “confession is good for the soul.” The point, I think, is that through repentance and forgiveness we can start over again, and that is an experience of regeneration. My hope is that with a fresh start, in which the wrongs of the past can be left in the past, our parish may once again become a loving family, in which we truly are brothers and sisters to one another, and the priest is “father” in the sense of being the head of the family, who cares for good estate of all of its members, who have been entrusted into his care by Our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us show kindness to one another. Let us be to each other the “Good Samaritan.” Let us pray that we may be one, as Jesus Christ willed us to be in His prayer of consecration in John, chapter 17. And may we be joined in the same mind and the same judgment, according to the counsel of St. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 1.

Quo Vadis also represents a small step in this regenerating “fresh start.” This parish newsletter has a dual mandate: the ordinary purpose of a newsletter, that of communicating parish news; but also the purpose of setting a direction for us to go where Jesus Christ leads us. “Rome,” in this sense, represents the field of our “ministry” in which we come to be spiritually “crucified,” putting off the “old man” so that in being regenerated we might come to Jesus Christ reborn. The newsletter’s function in this second purpose shall be one of theological, spiritual, and cultural education. It is my sincere hope that all of its readers will find a benefit in its dual mandate.

Your servant in Christ,
Fr. Sophrony

Parish Council President's Message

On behalf of the Parish Council, I would like to welcome our new rector, Fr. Sophrony Royer. I am looking forward to our parish family learning from him and being under his spiritual guidance. May God grant you many blessed years!

Hurricane Sandy took a toll on the area and also on our church. The cross on the south cupola was blown off and there was damage to our roof. I am happy to report that work has begun on this project. The roof has already been replaced and the contractor is working on making and installing a new cross. Once that is done, we shall fix the damaged plaster in the choir loft and around some of the windows. The steps leading up to the church are weathered and starting to crack. This project will be expensive and the council shall start looking into contractors and pricing in the upcoming months.

Christian life involves our being charitable towards our less fortunate neighbors. ShopRite of Bayonne is hosting their "Partners in Care" initiative on Wednesday, September 18th. The store is looking for volunteers to bag groceries from 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM. Proceeds from the store customers will be for the benefit of local food banks. Please contact me if you are interested in helping out.

Yours in Christ,
Stephen Wasilewski

Excerpt from the Church Fathers

"They were united in soul and heart" [Acts 4:32]. Did this unity come through faith in God? Certainly it did . . . If then all were a unity through the nature of one faith, how is it that you do not recognize a natural unity in those who are one through the nature of one faith? They were all reborn to innocence, to immortality, to the knowledge of God, to hopeful faith. There can be no diversity here, since the hope is one, and God is one, and the Lord is one, and the baptism of regeneration is one. If these are a 'unity of agreement' rather than a unity of nature, then you may attribute a 'unity of will' to those who are thus reborn. But if they are reborn to the nature of one life and one eternity, and it is in virtue of this that they are 'one in soul and heart,' 'unity of agreement' does not apply to those who are one in being reborn to the same nature.

St. Hilary of Poitiers, On the Trinity, 8.7

Lives of the Saints

St. Pulcheria, Eastern Roman Empress – Commemorated on September 10th

St. Pulcheria, daughter of the Eastern Roman Emperor Arcadius (395-408), was co-regent and advisor of her brother, Emperor Theodosius the Younger (408-450). Born on January 19, 399, she received a broad and well-rounded classical education, and distinguished herself by her wisdom and piety, firmly adhering to Orthodox teaching. Through her efforts the Church of the Virgin Mary was built at Blachernae [the imperial palace located in the northwestern section of Constantinople], and also other churches and monasteries.

Through the intrigues of enemies and of Eudoxia, the wife of Emperor Theodosius, St. Pulcheria was removed from power. She withdrew into seclusion and led a pious life. Without her beneficent influence, conditions in the capital deteriorated. She returned after a while, following the urgent request of her brother. Then the unrest provoked by emerging heresies was quelled.

After the death of Theodosius the Younger, St. Pulcheria again wanted to withdraw from public life and return to seclusion, but she was entreated not to refuse the throne and to marry the senator Marcian (b. 392), who was elected emperor (and co-regnant with Pulcheria). For the common good, she consented to the marriage, on the

condition that she would be allowed to preserve her virginity within the marriage (on July 4, 414 she had taken a vow of virginity, the same day she became *Augusta*). Thus they were married, but lived in purity, like brother and sister.

Through the efforts of St. Pulcheria, the Third Ecumenical Council was held at Ephesus in 431 to address the heresy of Nestorius; and also the Fourth Ecumenical Council which was convened at Chalcedon in 451 to deal with the heresy of Eutyches. During her joint rule with Marcian, her brother's policy of paying tribute to Attila the Hun was repudiated; aware that he could never capture Constantinople, Attila turned west and waged his infamous campaigns in Gaul (451) and Italy (452).

Throughout her life, St. Pulcheria vigorously defended the Orthodox faith, and after giving away her wealth to the poor and to the Church, she died peacefully at the age of fifty-four in the year 453. Her husband, the Emperor Marcian, died in 457.

Modern Theological Classics

"This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (Genesis 28:17)

Since the foundation of the Church, theological minds have tried to define her essence and essential qualities. The aim has not been to discern the innermost mystery of the Church, but to examine the divine origin and nature of the Body of Christ as revealed through Holy Scripture and Church Tradition. As Orthodox Christians, we believe that the Holy Scriptures are inspired by God Himself and that they reveal to us the way to salvation.

We also believe that the truth about God as the Orthodox Church teaches it and the truth about God as revealed in the Scriptures are one and the same; for the Source of truth, both in the Scriptures and in the Church, is the one Holy Spirit. Our knowledge of that truth, then, is provided both by the Scriptures and by the Church.

An individual who interprets the Holy Scriptures in light of his own subjective understanding can err, be deceived, or simply exercise wrong judgment. The one, holy, catholic, apostolic Orthodox Church, however, can never err, be deceived, or be wrong in her judgment, since the Church is infallible and forever the same in her nature as founded by God.

The first and most significant dogma of the Orthodox Church concerns the Holy Trinity. Two unique qualities distinguish this dogma – its absolute necessity for the existence of the Church and the absolute incomprehensibility of its essence.

The quality of "absolute necessity" lies in the fact that the dogma of the Holy Trinity contains within itself the whole essence of Christian faith, as well as the foundation for all teaching of and about Jesus Christ. As such the whole of Christian faith, as well as particular doctrinal teachings, depends upon and derives from the dogma of the Holy Trinity. This fact has special significance for Orthodox ecclesiology.

The quality of "absolute incomprehensibility" lies in the fact that the dogma of the Holy Trinity insists that the essence of the Holy Trinity – God's self-knowledge – is revealed to us neither in the Old nor the New Testament. We know that God exists and that He is the Creator (Gen. 1:31); but what God is in His essence is not, and indeed, cannot be explained. We also know the Holy Trinity to be the divine life of one divine being (Mt. 28:19), but the full mystery of the Trinity is inexplicable. Nevertheless, the human intellect tries constantly to fathom the dogma, in order to understand and eventually explain these mysteries as far as the human mind is capable.

Thus, just as we cannot speak of the essence of the Holy Trinity, which is the foundation of the Church, so we cannot speak of our knowledge of the essence of the Church – its deepest inner meaning. Although, we can never know the true essence of the Church, we can perceive much about its nature through the revealed qualities of the

Holy Trinity. These qualities are reflected as qualities of the Church itself and are made known to us through the Holy Scriptures, Holy Tradition, and in the teachings of the Church Fathers.

The doctrine of the Church is not the same as the “self-consciousness” or “self-expression” of the Church. Rather, it explains and describes the origin, nature, and life of the Church – her goal, purpose, and the means by which her purpose is fulfilled. The dogma also reveals how the Church differs from all that is *not* the Church, since the Church is not of natural, earthly origin. According to the clear teaching of our Savior Jesus Christ, the deep and mysterious life of the Church is permanently and unalterably animated by the divine life of Christ Himself and of the Holy Spirit. This divine, mysterious life of the Church cannot be logically defined. To understand the reality of the Church and her life, one must actually *participate* in that life as a member of the living organism, which is the Body of Christ.

In the Church’s early history, various heresies tried to pervert and distort a true understanding of the inner reality of the Church. Similarly, in our own day, schismatic or heretical groups are trying to present false understandings of the Church. Secularism, relativism, and neo-Donatism bring confusion and falsehoods to the minds even of Orthodox Christians. Neo-Donatists go so far as to speak of the Church as deprived of grace or as being “impure.” The Church is being replaced by notions of a “Christian society” or “Christianity-in-general,” which subvert the image of the Church as the source of the written Word of God. It is as though the gates of hell were rising up against the Church, seeking to separate her from Jesus Christ and impeding her task of promoting salvation, a task entrusted to her by her Father.

Alexis Khomiakov wrote, “The Church cannot teach against her own dogma; she cannot teach against her own faith.” We firmly believe that our Orthodox Church of today is the very same Church that was founded by Jesus Christ and His apostles. In the Church we preserve and proclaim basic beliefs and truths of God’s revelation that must never be replaced or deformed, despite whatever pressures contemporary history may bring to bear.

The dogma of the Church is remembered and beautifully expressed in a morning prayer:

First of all, remember, O Lord, your Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, which you have purchased with your own blood. Protect and strengthen her, and grant her to grow upon the earth. Preserve your Church in purity, in peace, and in safety, from the gates of hell, by the divine grace and power of the Holy Spirit.

Archbishop Gregory Afonsky, Christ and the Church, pp. 1-4. To be continued.

Our Carpatho-Rusyn Heritage

Origins: the Rusyns of Pannonia

It is believed that the first Rusyns came to the territory of Pannonia [the Roman name for Hungary] as early as the third century before Christ. At that time they were named the “Horbaty,” meaning “mountaineers.” At this time, the Rusyns occupied the pastures and fields that stretched from Munkacs to the Beszkid mountains. The first Apostolic attempt to bring Christianity to these people can be traced to their German neighbors to the west; around AD 880 the German bishop of Laureak, Ulroch, preached to the Slavs. These Slavs would have been the Czechs and Moravians. But an impediment to the conversion of the Slavs was the inability of these early German missionaries to speak their language. To correct this deficiency, the Moravian ruler Ratislav, on hearing that the Bulgarians were being evangelized in the Slavonic tongue, set out for Constantinople and inquired about obtaining such missionaries for his people. So, in AD 863, the brothers Ss. Cyril and Methodius came to Moravia and set out preaching the Gospel of Christ in the Slavonic language. Their efforts at evangelization spread over a wide area, including Pannonia. Besides preaching, Ss. Cyril and Methodius devised an alphabet for the Slavonic language, so that divine services and certain basic books of religion might be translated into Slavonic, making the Christian faith more comprehensible to the Slavs of the region.

Therefore, it can be inferred that the Rusyns of Pannonia received Christianity, at least indirectly, from Ss. Cyril and Methodius, and that of the Byzantine Rite. According to the Hungarian historian Andras Balugyanszky, there may have been an episcopal see for the Rusyns during the lifetime of St. Methodius. In fact, there exists documentary evidence that there were seven episcopal sees of the Byzantine Rite in Pannonia prior to the arrival of the Magyars (c. AD 900), and Byzantine Rite Christianity held sway throughout Pannonia and Transylvania. It is doubtless that there was considerable pressure from the Roman Rite neighbors (i.e., the Germans) on the peoples of Pannonia to adopt the Roman Rite. Historically, Gisela, the Bavarian consort of the Hungarian king, St. Stephen (997-1038), was largely responsible for bringing the Roman Rite to Hungary. Though Pannonia was the homeland of the Rusyns before the Magyars arrived, in time Pannonia became "Magyarország" (Hungary), and the Rusyns were left with only the region in the Carpathian Mountains as their own. Nevertheless, as the Rusyns lived under Hungarian rule for a thousand years, the history of the Rusyns and the Magyars is intertwined.

Despite the increasing Latinization among the Magyars, the Rusyns remained faithful to the Byzantine Rite and had their own bishop in the see of Munkacs (Mukacevo), who was subject to the jurisdiction of the [Roman Rite] archbishop of Esztergom. Monasteries were being established as well; for example, the famous monastery of Pannonhegyi was occupied by monks of the Byzantine Rite, and in fact, in a letter of 1204, written by King Imre to Pope Innocent III, mention is made that the monastery at Egyed was the only monastery, in the entire kingdom of Hungary, occupied by monks of the Roman Rite. We also know that King St. Stephen established a convent at Veszpremvölgyi for nuns of the Byzantine Rite. So, there would certainly have been priests of the Byzantine Rite well beyond the boundaries of the see of Munkacs at that time.

*Paraphrased from: John Slivka, The History of the Greek Rite Catholics in Pannonia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Podkarpatska Rus' 863-1949, pp. 1-14. **To be continued.***

Parish News

Our New Rector

Effective August 14, 2013, Archpriest W. Sophrony Royer became the new rector of Saints Peter and Paul Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church of Bayonne, New Jersey. The following is a short biography.

Born Wilfred Royer, Jr. on October 9, 1964 in Summit, New Jersey, he lived in Millburn, New Jersey until September 1966, when his family moved to Clifton, New Jersey. He was baptized on November 29, 1964 in the Roman Catholic Church, and received Confirmation on April 26, 1978. His primary and secondary education was in Clifton public schools, and he graduated from Clifton High School in 1982. He received his school's Social Studies award at graduation.

On December 12, 1981 he was received into the Orthodox Catholic faith by the sacrament of Chrismation at Assumption of the Holy Virgin Russian Orthodox Church in Clifton, New Jersey. After graduating high school, he attended St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary in South Canaan, Pennsylvania and Marywood University in Scranton, Pennsylvania. After transferring to St. Peter's University in Jersey City, New Jersey, he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in 1985. He undertook graduate studies at Fordham University in New York City, and graduated with a Master of Arts in 1986 and a Doctor of Philosophy in 1994. Ten years later, after additional postgraduate study, in 2004 he graduated with a second Doctor of Philosophy from Warnborough University in Canterbury, England.

Fr. Sophrony was ordained to the holy diaconate by Metropolitan Paisios of Tyana, on behalf of Bishop Gregory of Washington and Florida, in Queens, New York on November 2, 1986 and was attached to Our Lady of Kazan Russian Orthodox Church in Newark, New Jersey. It was at his ordination to the holy diaconate that he was given the name "Sophrony." On June 4, 1990 he was ordained to the holy priesthood by Bishop Daniel of Erie, on behalf of Metropolitan Vitaly of New York, in Newark, New Jersey and was assigned rector of St. Spiridon Russian Orthodox Church in Perth Amboy, New Jersey. On November 1, 1994 he was transferred and assigned rector of St.

Michael Russian Orthodox Church in Newark, New Jersey. On June 15, 1997 he was canonically received into the Orthodox Church in America from the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, and awaited assignment in the Diocese of New York and New Jersey. On November 1, 1997 he was assigned rector of St. John the Baptist Russian Orthodox Church in Spring Valley, New York. On August 1, 2003 he was transferred and assigned rector of St. John the Baptist Russian Orthodox Church in Passaic, New Jersey. And now, on August 14, 2013, he becomes the new rector here in Bayonne, New Jersey. Fr. Sophrony was elevated to the rank of archpriest in 2005, and his last clergy award was the right to wear the jeweled cross.

In addition to his priestly ministry, Fr. Sophrony has pursued an academic career teaching at colleges and universities for the last twenty-five years, having taught theology and philosophy at St. Francis College in Brooklyn, New York, St. Peter's University in Jersey City, New Jersey, St. Tikhon's Theological Seminary in South Canaan, Pennsylvania, and Fordham University in New York City. He still teaches at St. Peter's University, and will soon begin his twenty-fourth year of teaching there. He has been a member of several professional associations in the fields of philosophy and theology. He has also practiced the Korean martial art of Tae Kwon Do, and earned a black belt on May 14, 2003.

Fr. Sophrony comes from an old French-Canadian family. His direct paternal ancestor, Jean Royer, left the ancestral village of Saint-Cosme-en-Vairais in France's province of Maine, set sail from the port of La Rochelle, and arrived in Quebec City in 1659. Jean Royer married Marie Targer, a *Fille du Roi*, on November 22, 1663 and settled in the nearby village of Saint-Jean-de-L'Isle-d'Orleans. Fr. Sophrony's grandfather, Omer Joseph Royer, emigrated from Canada to the United States in 1917, crossing the U.S. border in Vermont. Fr. Sophrony is a current member of the American-Canadian Genealogical Society, the American-French Genealogical Society, and was a member of the now defunct Acadian Cultural Society. His Franco-American heritage is an important part of his self-identity, as are his Orthodox Catholic faith and American nationality. His father, Wilfred Royer, age 89, lives with him, and his sister, Marie Antoinette DeNaples, age 55, lives with her family in Rockaway, New Jersey. His mother, Concetta Gloria Royer, passed into blessed repose on May 31, 2003. His "spiritual father" was Bishop John of Buenos Aires, of blessed memory (reposed on March 5, 1995).

In Memoriam

Elizabeth Morley (nee Korin), of South Carolina, passed into blessed repose on August 14, 2013. Memory Eternal!

Special Donations

*The following special donations were received for Sundays during the month of September. Please note that for special donations in October to be acknowledged in **Quo Vadis**, it will be necessary for the donation to be recorded in the Special Donations register in the church vestibule by September 22, 2013.*

September 8th

7-Day Vigils on the Altar offered by John & Helen Wanko in memory of Andrew Wanko (anniversary of repose)

September 15th

Sanctuary Lamp offered by John & Helen Wanko in memory of Mary Grudinoff (anniversary of birth)

September 22nd

7-Day Vigils on the Altar offered by John & Helen Wanko in memory of Mary Grudinoff (anniversary of repose)

Schedule of Services and Events

Sunday: September 1, 2013

6:00 PM (Saturday) – Great Vespers
9:00 AM (Sunday) – Divine Liturgy

Sunday: September 8, 2013

6:00 PM (Saturday) – Great Vespers with Lity
9:30 AM (Sunday) – Divine Liturgy

Holy Day: September 14, 2013

6:00 PM (Friday) – Great Vespers with Lity
9:30 AM (Saturday) – Divine Liturgy

Sunday: September 15, 2013

6:00 PM (Saturday) – Great Vespers
9:30 AM (Sunday) – Divine Liturgy

Monday: September 16, 2013

7:00 PM (Monday) – Parish Council Meeting

Wednesday: September 18, 2013

7:30 PM (Wednesday) – Carpathian Club Meeting

Sunday: September 22, 2013

6:00 PM (Saturday) – Great Vespers
9:30 AM (Sunday) – Divine Liturgy
11:00 AM-3:00 PM (Sunday) – Carpathian Club Picnic
Contact Steve Wasilewski for picnic tickets. \$15 for advance purchase; \$17 at the door.

Saturday: September 28, 2013

Bayonne “R” Club flea market. *Donated items are accepted and welcome. If necessary, contact any club member to arrange for pick up.*

Sunday: September 29, 2013

6:00 PM (Saturday) – Great Vespers
9:30 AM (Sunday) – Divine Liturgy

September Bible Readings

1st. **1 Cor. 4:9-16 & Matt. 17:14-23**
2nd. 2 Cor. 2:4-15 & Matt. 23:13-22
3rd. 2 Cor. 2:14-3:3 & Matt. 23:23-28
4th. 2 Cor. 3:4-11 & Matt. 23:29-39
5th. 2 Cor. 4:1-6 & Matt. 24:13-28
6th. 2 Cor. 4:13-18 & Matt. 24:27-33, 42-51
7th. 1 Cor. 1:3-9 & Matt. 19:3-12
8th. **Phil. 2:5-11 & Luke 10:38-42, 11:27-28**
9th. 2 Cor. 5:10-15 & Mark 1:9-15
10th. 2 Cor. 5:15-21 & Mark 1:16-22
11th. 2 Cor. 6:11-16 & Mark 1:23-28
12th. 2 Cor. 7:1-10 & Mark 1:29-35
13th. 2 Cor. 7:10-16 & Mark 2:18-22
14th. **1 Cor. 1:18-24 & John 19:6-35**
15th. **1 Cor. 15:1-11 & Matt. 19:16-26**
16th. 2 Cor. 8:7-15 & Luke 3:19-22
17th. 2 Cor. 8:16-9:5 & Luke 3:23-4:1
18th. 2 Cor. 9:12-10:7 & Luke 4:1-15
19th. 2 Cor. 10:7-18 & Luke 4:16-22
20th. 2 Cor. 11:5-21 & Luke 4:22-30
21st. 1 Cor. 2:6-9 & Luke 4:31-36
22nd. **1 Cor. 16:13-24 & Luke 5:1-11**
23rd. 2 Cor. 12:10-19 & Luke 4:37-44
24th. 2 Cor. 12:20-13:2 & Luke 5:12-19
25th. 2 Cor. 13:3-13 & Luke 5:33-39
26th. Gal. 1:1-10, 20-2:5 & Luke 6:12-19
27th. Gal. 2:6-10 & Luke 6:17-23
28th. 1 Cor. 4:1-5 & Luke 5:17-26
29th. **2 Cor. 1:21-2:4 & Luke 6:31-36**
30th. Gal. 2:11-16 & Luke 6:24-30

** Readings for Sundays and Holy Days are printed in boldface.*