

Quo Vadis

The monthly newsletter of Saints Peter & Paul Orthodox Catholic Church of Bayonne, N.J.
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“**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

We are now entering the penitential season of Great Lent. Often, we embark on the penances of this time simply out of obedience to the rules of the Church. Although obedience is a praiseworthy virtue, certainly to be encouraged as perhaps nothing else more effectively counters the sin of pride, nevertheless I think it worthwhile to reflect more deeply on the meaning of penitence. One aspect of penitence is that it is the practical expression of repentance. The essence of repentance is the resolve to “start again,” and penitence is the means to carry out that resolution.

If Great Lent is, indeed, about “starting again,” then first we must acknowledge our past faults. Three reasons occur to me as to why this is important. First, we cannot feel contrition unless we identify and abjure our sins. Second, we cannot receive forgiveness from God unless we confess our trespasses against His eternal and divine Law. Third, we cannot reform ourselves unless we admit our defects and resolve to better our lives. Therefore, the confession of our sins is an indispensable beginning to our attempt to start again. But there is another dimension to this as well, and it is forgiveness. It is the forgiveness of God that lifts the burden of our sin from us, and this is truly an experience of divine grace and mercy. However, Our Lord Jesus Christ made clear that if we expect to be forgiven, we must forgive each other as well. His teaching in this respect is expressed, among other places in Holy Scripture, in the prayer that He taught us: “and forgive us our trespasses *as we forgive those who trespass against us*” [emphasis added]. It is when we forgive others that we most strongly resemble God, and the capacity to forgive is perhaps the most noble of all human capacities. Furthermore, it is only after we have forgiven those who have offended us that we have all of the emotional burdens of the pain attending anger and resentment lifted from us. It is, therefore, truly right that in the Orthodox Church we start Great Lent with the Rite of Forgiveness at the first Vespers of Great Lent.

Once we have confessed our sins and forgiven one another, we are then psychologically and spiritually ready for the penitential works of the Lenten season, for then these works are situated within a context of meaningfulness. Penitence is a means of atonement, whereby we practice works of virtue in order to reform ourselves and our lives. Penitence also has the spiritual value of drawing us nearer to God by sacrificing ourselves for the sake of our love of God. Perhaps the specific sacrifices we resolve to accomplish, whether fasting or something else, matter less than our doing so for the sake of *doing something* as a symbolic expression of our love for God. Love is self-giving and self-diffusive; it is this dimension of love that is represented in the virtually synonymous term of “charity.” Therefore, let us not forget that to truly express love of God is, at the same time, to express love for our neighbor—and everyone is our “neighbor.” So, while we undertake the prayer and fasting of the Lenten season, so as to make ourselves better human beings, let us also remember the works of charity that are the necessary accompaniment of Lenten penitence. The works of charity not only make us better by making us more caring and gracious human beings, but make the world better by the good works accomplished, and that is perhaps the fittest way of giving glory to God.

I wish too all of you, as my spiritual family in Christ, the fullest benefit of the many graces of penitence this Great Lent. And I also hope that you will feel liberated from worldly cares, which comes with being able to “start again” when Great Lent begins ... truly is it a “second chance” to right your relationship with God that avails us, not once in a lifetime, but each and every year!

Excerpt from the Church Fathers

“Fasting is the soul of prayer, mercy is the lifeblood of fasting. So if you pray, fast; if you fast, show mercy; if you want your petition to be heard, hear the petition of others. If you do not close your ear to others, you open God’s ear to yourself.”

— St. Peter Chrysologus, Bishop of Ravenna (c. 380-450)

Lives of the Saints

St. Sophronius of Irkutsk, Bishop and Wonderworker – commemorated on March 30th

St. Sophronius was born as Stephen Kristalevsky in the Chernigov region in 1704. His father, Nazarius, was “a common man in his affairs,” and he had a sister, Pelagia, and two older brothers, the younger of whom was named Paul. The name of the other older brother is unknown, but it is said that he was head of the Krasnogorsk Transfiguration Monastery. His childhood years were spent in the settlement of Berezan in the Pereyaslavl district of the Poltava governate, where the family settled after the father was discharged from service. When he came of age, Stephen entered the Kiev Theological Academy, where two other future hierarchs were studying: Joasaph, future Bishop of Belgorod (commemorated on September 4 and December 10), and Paul, future Metropolitan of Tobolsk (commemorated June 10 and November 4).

After completing his religious education, Stephen entered the Krasnogorsk Transfiguration Monastery [later renamed the Holy Virgin Protection Monastery; in 1789, it was changed into a women’s monastery], where his elder brother already labored in asceticism. On April 23, 1730 he received monastic tonsure with the name of Sophronius, in honor of St. Sophronius of Jerusalem (commemorated on March 11). On the night after his monastic tonsure, St. Sophronius heard a voice in the Holy Virgin Protection church predicting his future service: “When you become bishop, build a church dedicated to All Saints.”

In 1732, he was summoned to Kiev. There he was ordained hierodeacon, and then hieromonk in the St. Sophia Cathedral. After St. Sophronius had been a monk for two years, he became treasurer of the Krasnogorsk Transfiguration Monastery for two years, and then Bishop Arsenius (Berlov) of Pereyaslavl sent him into the house of his archbishop, where he was steward for eight years. During his obedience

under the presiding hierarch at Pereyaslavl, he often visited his monastery, spending the day in quiet contemplation and work, serving as an example to the brethren. When Hieromonk Sophronius traveled to the Holy Synod on behalf of his bishop, they paid close attention to him. In January 1742, the future saint was transferred to St. Alexander Nevsky Lavra in Saint Peterburg, the foremost monastery of the capital city. A year later he was appointed treasurer of the monastery, and in 1746 he was appointed as Superior of the monastery.

He summoned his fellow countryman, Hieromonk Synesius (Ivanoff), a native of the city of Priluki, and made him abbot of the St. Sergius Hermitage, a dependency of St. Alexander Nevsky Lavra. From this time the friendship of the two ascetics, Hieromonk Sophronius and Hieromonk Synesius, was strengthened by their joint pastoral effort, and they were inseparable until they died in Siberia. During these years St. Sophronius worked hard at managing the monastery and improvement of teaching at the seminary located nearby. He and Archbishop Theodosius made it their task to acquire more books for the monastic library. St. Sophronius built a two-story church: the upper church was dedicated to St. Theodore, the older brother of St. Alexander Nevsky; and the lower to St. John Chrysostom.

In 1747, Bishop Innocent II (Nerunovich) of Irkutsk died, and for six years thereafter, the Irkutsk diocese remained without a spiritual head. Finally, on February 23, 1753, the Empress Elizabeth (1741-1761) recommended the pious Hegumen Sophronius of St. Alexander Nevsky Lavra to the Holy Synod as “a person, not only worthy of episcopal rank, but also someone completely able to fulfill the wishes and the hopes of the state and the Synod, and take up the burden of episcopal service on the far frontier and satisfy the needs of his flock in that harsh land, among wild primitives and lawless people.” On April 18, 1753, Thomas Sunday, St. Sophronius was consecrated Bishop of Irkutsk and Nerchinsk in the Holy Dormition Cathedral.

Foreseeing difficult service on the distant Siberian frontier, the new bishop did not immediately travel to the Irkutsk diocese, but rather began to gather educated and spiritually experienced co-workers. During this period St. Sophronius visited at his original Krasnogorsk monastery. At the holy places of Kiev, he also sought the blessings of the Kiev-Caves Saints for his service. The constant companion of the saint, as had been before, was Hieromonk Synesius, sharing in his friend’s work. At Moscow, Archbishop Platon of Moscow provided him with further assistance. He gave him fatherly advice for his task, since he was quite familiar with the peculiarities of the Siberian religious life. He forewarned him about the self-willed local authorities, and advised him to surround himself with trustworthy helpers.

On March 20, 1754 the saint arrived at Irkutsk. He went first to Holy Ascension Monastery, his predecessor’s residence, and prayed at the grave of Bishop Innocent (Kulchitz), asking his blessing as he took up his assignment. Familiarizing himself with the state of affairs in the diocese, the saint began the reorganization of the Spiritual consistory, monasteries and parishes, and appealed to the Holy Synod to send worthy men to the Irkutsk eparchy for priestly service. Before the arrival of St. Sophronius, the Irkutsk monasteries had already a century-old history. The founders of these monasteries were motivated by a fervent desire for monastic life. The wise hierarch appointed people of piety, wisdom, virtue, and with great experience both of life and spiritual matters as heads of the monastic communities. In 1754, Bishop Sophronius elevated his friend and companion, Hieromonk Synesius, as Archimandrite of Holy Ascension Monastery. He served the monastery for thirty-three years until his blessed repose.

In September 1754, the bishop issued a decree in which he expressed concern for the education and upbringing of the children of the clergy. He wanted them to learn the Horologion, the Psalter, singing and letters, and this instruction “ought to be conducted with all industriousness and the utmost diligence, so that the children might be able to fulfill the responsibilities of sacristan and deacon.” Studying both people and circumstances, the bishop in his sermons and conversations exhorted all to a higher moral ideal. He devoted particular attention to the reverent and correct performance of the divine services and the Holy

Mysteries, and he also looked after the moral purity of laymen. He was concerned about the position of women in the family, and defended them against their unjust inequality. The bishop attempted to set straight the Rule of divine services, and so he summoned priests, deacons, subdeacons and sacristans, and those who sang in the choir during services.

Traveling about the diocese, the saint noticed that censuring and the ringing of bells were not being done properly in all places, and therefore he issued a decree restoring the proper way of censuring and bell-ringing. Called to apostolic service in this frontier region, St. Sophronius realized that his duty was to enlighten the Christians of the area, and also to convert heathens, who were very numerous in Siberia. It was difficult to bring pagans to the Church of Christ, especially because sometimes there was no one to serve in the churches, and to borrow priests for missionary activity only made matters worse. Knowing that the Church services would have a salutary effect on non-Russians, the saint not only served with reverence himself, but also required it of all his clergy.

St. Sophronius also contributed to the development of a stable culture among the local people. He offered them monastic lands for settlements and in every way, he endeavored to isolate them from the influence of paganism. A constant throng of visitors came from faraway places for his blessing. Even with his many cares, he did not forget his own spiritual life and eternity. He also led an ascetical life. His cell-attendant said that the saint "used simple food in small quantities. He served often, spent the greater part of the night at prayer, sleeping on the floor under a sheepskin or a fur, a deerskin or bear hide, and a small simple pillow." The uncovering of the incorrupt of St. Innocent of Irkutsk (commemorated on February 9), his predecessor, inspired St. Sophronius to greater efforts and encouraged him to ask for the help of St. Innocent in his task of building up the diocese. Until the end of his days St. Sophronius kept his love for the Krasnogorsk Transfiguration Monastery, which had nurtured him in the days of his youth. He constantly contributed support for its upkeep.

Noticing a deterioration in his health, St. Sophronius petitioned the Holy Synod to let him retire. The answer from Saint Peterburg did not come right away, since it was difficult to choose a worthy successor. The final days of St. Sophronius' life were spent in asceticism and prayer until he reposed on March 30, 1771. The light, which shone on the good deeds of St. Sophronius, continues to the present time to testify to the glory of the Heavenly Father, "Who mercifully strengthens His saints." St. Sophronius was glorified by the Russian Orthodox Church on June 30, 1918, with his feast day on March 30, the day of his repose.

Modern Theological Classics

The "Shepherd of Hermas"

"The Shepherd" of Hermas is counted among the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, but in fact it belongs to the Apocryphal visions. It is a book of visions (Apocalypse) given to Hermas through two heavenly symbols: the first, of an old lady who revealed to him the first four visions, and the second was of the angel of penitence who appeared in the form of a Shepherd. In the fifth vision, he was given the commands and similitudes. The Shepherd of Hermas is the longest and most remarkable of the Apostolic writings.

HERMAS

The "Muratorian Fragment," which dated back to the second century, stated that Hermas, author of the "Shepherd" was the brother of Pius I, bishop of Rome (AD 140-150). Origen was of the opinion that the author of this book was Hermas, the one mentioned in Romans (16:14). It is hard to differentiate between allegory and what the author of the Shepherd said about himself. He stated that he was a slave, sold in Rome to a Roman lady called Rhoda. At the beginning he had sibling feelings for her, then he looked at her beauty and desired her as a woman for himself (vision 1:1). She freed him; and he worked in agriculture

and commerce and became wealthy. He married a talkative wife and neglected his family affairs, his children got immersed in evil (vision 1:3) and he was impoverished because of them (vision 1:2; 2:3; 3:6). On some occasions he depicts himself as a virtuous man, abstinent from all lustful desires and avoiding evil (vision 1:2), on other occasions, he depicts himself as a liar and a hypocrite (vision 3). When persecution took place, he and his wife were steadfast in their faith, while his children denied their faith. He was zealous about repentance, hence he wrote his book "The Shepherd" to exhort the sinners to repent, showing the purity of the church being in danger as a result of the prevalence of sin and to remind them that the end was near. The loss of his children did not destroy him; rather it kindled in him the desire for evangelism and eagerness to see them, and every other human soul, repentant.

THE PERIODS OF HIS WRITINGS

In the second vision (4:3) it was mentioned that the church instructed him to prepare two copies of his visions, one of them to be given to Clement for forwarding to the outer cities. Here there is some controversy: How could Hermas be a brother of Pius, bishop of Rome, who did not occupy the See of Rome before 140 A.D., while Clement, the writer of the epistle to Corinth, was a bishop from 90 A.D. to 100 A.D. Some argue regarding this controversy by saying that this work began during the time of Clement and ended during the time of Pius.

THE EARLY CHURCH'S VIEW OF THE "SHEPHERD"

Evidences for it existed since the second century. St. Irenaeus, St. Clement of Alexandria, and the scholar Origen made references to it; perhaps they regarded it as a canonical book. It was found in the Alexandrine manuscript of the Holy Bible together with the epistle of Barnabas, after the holy books (perhaps as significant as an ecclesiastic book). Origen admitted that during his time, some undermined this book. Eusebius considered it as one of the non-biblical publications. As to St. Athanasius, although he considered it a useful book, yet, he made it one of the non-canonical books. In respect to the West, Tertullian considered it a book which encouraged adulterers. St. Jerome stated that this book was forgotten in the West during the fourth century.

ITS CHARACTERISTICS

1. It is fair to say that Hermas was a pious man, steadfast in his faith and stood firm during the persecution.
2. Hermas was not trained in dogma though he was of goodwill. We see that he was confused between the Son of God and the Holy Spirit (Compare similitude 9:1 with similitude 6:5).
3. The writer was not a man of literature; his language was simple and in the vernacular. However, when we look at his prophetic style, we find it difficult, if not, impossible to understand some matters. It is also noted that there is cramming and repetition of some facts.
4. In all the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, there were none which dealt with the instructive aspect of teaching more than "The Shepherd", and none of them was more difficult to explain in respect to history, content, feature and teaching. All these are aspects still under research. Truly, it reveals the simplicity of Christian life, and its deep spirituality. Nevertheless, his thoughts are incomplete and vague – he raises an issue, gives an opinion, but before reaching a conclusion, he comes up with another opinion. The early Church Fathers admired him, not for his theological thought, but for his moral behavioral teaching and understanding of the Christian life.
5. "The Shepherd" is rich in substance. It was of great benefit to church historians during the first half of the second century. In it we encounter all the Christian ranks: the good and the bad. There are honest and righteous bishops, priests, deacons, negligent and greedy priests, as well as deacons who plunder the money of the orphans and widows. Dazzling light is awaiting the steadfast martyrs, and darkness for blasphemers and apostates. The devout Christian is contrasted with the hypocrite, there is the rich who is indifferent to the poor, and the true believer who gives generously. It also refers to the apathy of some of the Christians, their greed, and their clinging to the illusions of the world.

(Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty, "The Apostolic Fathers," pp. 139-142)

Recipe of the Month

Falafel

Though falafel takes a little planning ahead to soak the chickpeas, it still couldn't be simpler. The fritters come out of the fryer super crisp and perfectly seasoned. Stuffed in a warm pita with lots of vegetables or a Greek salad, with a drizzle of tahini and a dash of hot sauce, they make for a wonderful Lenten dinner.

Ingredients:

- Vegetable oil, for frying
- 8 ounces dried chickpeas, soaked overnight, drained and rinsed
- 3/4 cup fresh parsley leaves
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder dissolved in 3 tablespoons water
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 clove garlic, chopped
- 1 small onion, chopped
- Salt
- Serving suggestions: pita bread, lettuce, tomato, tahini, hot sauce and lemon wedges

Directions:

1. Heat 3 inches of oil in large heavy pot to 365 degrees F.
2. Add the drained chickpeas to a food processor. Pulse until the chickpeas begin to break down, about 30 seconds. Add the parsley, baking powder and water, cumin, coriander, cayenne, garlic, onion and 2 teaspoons salt. Process continuously, stopping to scrape down the bowl once halfway through, until a homogenous paste forms, about 2 minutes.
3. Using a 1-ounce cookie scoop or 2 tablespoons, scoop the falafel mixture into balls and carefully drop one at a time into the hot oil in batches of nine. Fry until very deep golden brown all over, 1 1/2 to 2 minutes. Use a spider or slotted spoon to transfer the falafel to a paper towel-lined plate or wire rack-lined baking sheet to drain. Repeat the process with the remaining mixture.
4. Serve the warm falafel with pita bread, lettuce, tomato, tahini, hot sauce and lemon wedges.

Special Donations

Special Donations may be offered at \$10/week for the Altar Vigils, and \$5/week for any one of the following: Sanctuary Lamp, St. John's Cross, St. Nicholas' Cross, and Triple Candelabra, and may be offered in memory of the departed or in honor of the living. Please note that for Special Donations in April to be acknowledged in "Quo Vadis," the donation must be recorded in the Special Donations register in the church vestibule by March 19, 2023.

March 5, 2023

Altar Vigils offered by Fr. W. Sophrony Royer in memory of Albert & Vera Royer. **Sanctuary Lamp** offered by John & Helen Wanko in memory of Mary Macinsky (anniversary of repose). **St. John's Cross** offered by Fr. W. Sophrony Royer in memory of Right Rev. Bishop John Legky. **St. Nicholas' Cross** offered by Fr. W. Sophrony Royer in memory of Angela DiGiovanni. **Triple Candelabra** offered by Fr. W. Sophrony Royer in memory of Concetta Gloria Royer (anniversary of birth).

March 19, 2023

Sanctuary Lamp offered by Fr. W. Sophrony Royer in memory of Rena Robichaud.

March 26, 2023

St. Nicholas' Cross offered by Olga DeMay in memory of Stephen Pirniak (anniversary of birth).

Schedule of Services

March 1-2, 2023

6:00 PM (Wed.) – Great Canon of Repentance
6:00 PM (Thu.) – Great Canon of Repentance

March 4-5, 2023

9:30 AM (Sat.) – Divine Liturgy
5:00 PM (Sat.) – Great Vespers
9:30 AM (Sun.) – Divine Liturgy

March 10-12, 2023

6:00 PM (Fri.) – Presanctified Liturgy w.
Litany of the Departed & General Parastas
5:00 PM (Sat.) – Great Vespers
9:30 AM (Sun.) – Divine Liturgy

March 17-19, 2023

6:00 PM (Fri.) – Presanctified Liturgy w.
Litany of the Departed & General Parastas
5:00 PM (Sat.) – Great Vespers
9:30 AM (Sun.) – Divine Liturgy

March 24-26, 2023

6:00 PM (Fri.) – Vigil w. Lity
9:30 AM (Sat.) – Vespers
5:00 PM (Sat.) – Great Vespers
9:30 AM (Sun.) – Divine Liturgy

Orthodoxy Sunday Vespers will be at Ss. Peter & Paul Church in South River, N.J., on March 5, 2023 at 4:00 PM. Archbishop Michael will officiate.

Daily Bible Readings

Note: there are no weekday Liturgy readings during Great Lent, on account of there being no Liturgies (other than the Presanctified Liturgy) on weekdays during Great Lent in the liturgical tradition of the Byzantine Rite. Liturgy readings are appointed only for Saturdays and Sundays.

4. Hebrews 1:1-12; Mark 2:23-3:5
5. Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-12:2; John 1:43-51
11. Hebrews 3:12-16; Mark 1:35-44
12. Hebrews 1:10-2:3; Mark 2:1-12

18. Hebrews 10:32-38; Mark 2:14-17
19. Hebrews 4:14-5:6; Mark 8:34-9:1
25. Hebrews 2:11-18; Luke 1:24-38
26. Hebrews 6:13-20; Mark 9:17-31

Parish News

Parish Confessions

All parishioners ought to go to confession during Great Lent. Confessions may be heard after any Friday or Saturday evening service. Those who legitimately cannot attend services on Friday or Saturday evenings may call the Rectory to make arrangements for confession at another time.

Parish Council Meeting

Parish Council is meeting in the church hall on Sunday, March 19, 2023 after Divine Liturgy.

New Jersey Deanery Lenten Vespers

March 12, 2023 at St. Gregory the Theologian Church in Wappingers Falls, N.Y. (at 5 PM). March 19, 2023 at St. Vladimir Church in Trenton, N.J. (at 4 PM). March 26, 2023 at Holy Virgin Assumption Church in Clifton, N.J. (at 5 PM). April 2, 2023 at Annunciation Church in Brick, N.J. (at 4 PM).

On Holy Communion

Now that public officials have determined that we are no longer in a “crisis stage” with COVID, our parish will return to normal administration of Holy Communion with a single spoon on Memorial Day weekend. This advance notice is being given so that parishioners who have not yet received the bivalent booster shot, which is the best way to protect yourself and those around you, may do so before then. Be assured that in the event there should be a major COVID surge in our area, we are prepared to temporarily reinstate the use of multiple spoons.

In Memoriam

Mrs. Nancy Sokol (nee Nalesnik), age 101, of Linden, New Jersey—and a former parishioner of Ss. Peter & Paul’s—passed into blessed repose on February 20, 2023. Obituary can be viewed at www.wersonfh.com.
Вічна Память! Memory Eternal!

Welcome to the Orthodox Church

Mikaela Cordero Hromy and Gabriel Cordero Hromy, the children of Joseph Hromy and Cynthia Cordero, were baptized and chrismated at Ss. Peter & Paul’s on February 26, 2023. Многая літа! Many Years!

Remember to support the parish every time you shop!

ShopRite, Stop & Shop, and Acme gifts cards available for purchase in the church vestibule.

