

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

Belief in the concord of faith and reason, carefully safeguarding the nature and rights of each, has been the hallmark of correct philosophy since ancient times—for example, Aristotle called “first philosophy” (metaphysics) by the alternate name of “theology.” For him, metaphysics is the “divine science” because tracing causes to their origin brings us to the reality which is permanent, unchanging, and eternal—God Himself. This view was confirmed by St. Paul in his sermon at the Areopagus in Athens (Acts 17:16-34), in which he by emphasizes the need to know God, rather than worshiping the unknown, even quoting certain Greek philosophers and poets in the process.

But this view hasn’t gone unchallenged—ranging from denial of reason in favor of revealed faith (fideism) to the deification of reason and denial of the very possibility of revealed faith (naturalism). Take, for example, Tertullian’s famous rhetorical question “What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?” The modern day form in which this imbalanced view manifests itself is a similar alleged opposition between religion and science. Often people on both sides, believers and non-believers, assume this supposed dichotomy between belief in God and natural science is true. Recently, I found an interesting article on Microsoft Start which provides three compelling reasons to think that concord between religious faith and science is not only possible, but also necessary in order to do justice to both.

Three Scientific Discoveries That Suggest God Created The Universe

Three major scientific discoveries during the last century contradict the expectations of scientific atheists and suggest that God created the universe. These findings include the beginning of the universe, the fine-tuning of the universe for life, and the presence of digital code in DNA. Each of these discoveries suggests a universe designed with purpose and intention, challenging the materialist view of a self-existing and purely material universe.

(1) The Beginning Of The Universe

Cosmologists have discovered that the physical universe had a beginning. This finding contradicts the long-held materialist belief in an eternal, self-existent universe. This theory is supported by red-shift evidence from distant galaxies, indicating a cosmic beginning. Georges Lemaître and Edwin Hubble demonstrated that galaxies are receding from us, suggesting an expanding universe from a singular starting point.

The discovery of the red-shift in light from distant galaxies was crucial. It indicated that galaxies are moving away, implying that the universe is expanding. This spherical expansion, like an inflating balloon, supports the idea that the universe had a first cause. Lemaître and Hubble's work showed that galaxies farther from Earth recede faster than those nearby.

Albert Einstein's equations initially depicted a static universe, but Lemaître's interpretation showed a dynamic one. While visiting Hubble in 1931, Einstein reviewed the red-shift evidence. He acknowledged the cosmic beginning, calling his initial resistance "the greatest blunder" of his career. This admission highlighted the significant shift in scientific understanding of the universe's origins.

This evidence of a cosmic beginning aligns more with theistic views than materialist expectations. Nobel Laureate Arno Penzias saw these findings as consistent with biblical descriptions. The acknowledgment of a universe with a starting point supports the idea of an external creator. Such discoveries reinforce the belief in a purposeful creation.

(2) Fine-Tuning Of The Universe

Physicists have discovered that our universe is finely tuned to support life. This "Goldilocks universe" has fundamental physical laws and parameters precisely set to make life possible. Small changes in factors like gravitational strength or particle masses would render life impossible. This improbability suggests deliberate fine-tuning from a Creator.

The exact values of many physical constants seem weirdly precise. These constants are crucial for the universe to host life. Fine-tuning by chance is so unlikely that many scientists would suggest a fine-tuner. Sir Fred Hoyle famously remarked that a "superintellect" has manipulated physics to enable life.

Some propose the multiverse theory to avoid the fine-tuner conclusion. This idea suggests countless other universes exist, each with different physical laws. Our life-supporting universe is seen as a lucky draw in this cosmic lottery. However, the multiverse theory itself requires fine-tuning to generate universes, pointing back to a designer.

The multiverse hypothesis doesn't eliminate the need for fine-tuning. The mechanisms proposed, whether inflationary cosmology or string theory, need their own precise settings. This requirement brings us back to the need for an ultimate fine-tuner. Thus, the multiverse theory fails to explain away the apparent design. Moreover, the multiverse theory lacks the simplicity and elegance of a single universe theory by needlessly postulating innumerable universes.

(3) Digital Code In DNA

Discoveries in molecular biology reveal digital code in DNA. James Watson and Francis Crick's work on DNA structure in 1953 led to the "sequence hypothesis." This hypothesis suggests DNA functions like a written language or computer code. The specific sequences of bases in DNA direct protein assembly, resembling software code. This is an observable phenomenon.

DNA's code-like properties imply a master programmer. Functional computer code relies on specific sequences, just as DNA does. Bill Gates compared DNA to highly advanced software, far beyond current human technology.

No theory of undirected chemical evolution explains DNA's informational content. The origin of the complex information in DNA remains a mystery. Scientific reasoning shows that information systems arise from intelligent causes. This observation supports the idea of an intelligent designer behind life's origins.

Information, whether in hieroglyphics or digital code, originates with a creator. Henry Quastler said, "information habitually arises from conscious activity." The discovery of complex information systems in cells suggests intelligent design. This supports the idea that God created life.

Theological Excerpt

"The central idea of the Eastern Fathers was that of theosis, the divinization of all creatures, the transfiguration of the world, the idea of the cosmos and not the idea of personal salvation ... Only later Christian consciousness began to value the idea of hell more than the idea of the transfiguration and divinization of the world ... The Kingdom of God is the transfiguration of the world, the universal resurrection, a new heaven and a new earth."

— Nikolai Berdyaev (1874-1948)

Lives of the Saints

St. Patricia of Naples – commemorated on August 25th

St. Patricia was born in Constantinople about the year 330, and was a niece of Emperor Constantine the Great. Her father was a pagan, but her mother was a devout Christian who instilled in her daughter a strong faith in God. Brought up in the imperial court and trained in the Christian religion by a pious lady, the Blessed Aglaia, she took the vow of virginity at an early age. In order to remain faithful to her vow, she escaped a marriage arranged by Emperor Constans I and, intent on becoming a nun, went to Rome with the faithful Aglaia as her companion. There, Pope Liberius bestowed upon her the monastic veil of Christ's Bride.

Upon the death of her father, St. Patricia returned to Constantinople and, renouncing any claim to her imperial legacy, distributed her wealth to the poor. She became known for her selfless acts of kindness and compassion towards the poor and sick, and as a powerful intercessor capable of healing the sick and comforting those in need. There are many stories associated with St. Patricia. One legend tells of how she once prayed for rain during a severe drought, and a sudden downpour saved the crops and thereby saved the people from famine. Another legend tells of how she healed a young girl who had been bitten by a poisonous snake, and the girl went on to become a nun in gratitude for St. Patricia's intercession.

St. Patricia then embarked with Blessed Aglaia on a ship bound for the Holy Land in order to visit the places sanctified by Our Lord. During the voyage, they were overtaken by a violent storm that carried the vessel in the opposite direction, to Naples, Italy. There they landed and established a hermitage on a rock near the bay, afterward called Castel del'Ovo. After several months of penitential life in Naples, she died a saintly death, after a short illness, at the age of 21. Her funeral was held in a solemn manner, with the participation of the Bishop, the Duke of Naples, and many pious people. The funeral cart with its body, pulled by two bulls without a guide, stopped in front of the monastery of Caponapoli of the Basilian Fathers, dedicated to the Martyrs Nicandro and Marciano, where St. Patricia herself had some years ago prophesied that she would be buried.

Her companions and spiritual daughters, who accompanied her body to the monastery, became the order of the Patrician Sisters, who took over the monastery upon the transferal of the Basilian monks to San Sebastiano. In 1864 the sisters brought her remains to the Monastery of St. Gregorio Armeno when their convent was suppressed. Covered in wax, her relics were contained in an urn of gold, gems, and silver, and were placed in the chapel in the right aisle of the monastery's monumental church. Her veneration is carried on by the Crucified Sisters Adorers of the Blessed Sacrament, who took over the monastery after the extinction of the Patrician Sisters.

St. Patricia is today venerated by numerous devout pilgrims who reverently kneel before those sacred remains and frequently witness a wonderful miracle – the liquefying of her blood which flowed from her mouth. Legend has it that one of her teeth had been pulled by a zealous knight on September 13, 1214 and blood flowed from the empty socket. The miracle has been repeated ever since, not only every year on her feast day, August 25, but frequently in the presence of pious pilgrims who come to pray. Ecclesiastical authorities and scientists have investigated the phenomenon multiple times, and have concluded that the liquefaction cannot be explained by science and, therefore, is a real miracle.

In Naples, every Tuesday is dedicated to St. Patricia. St. Patricia's feast day is celebrated on August 25th, the day of her death, and she is widely venerated, together with St. Januarius, as the one of the patron saints of Naples.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Orthodox Church's position on the assumption of the Virgin Mary?

The assumption of the Virgin Mary is the doctrine that the Theotokos, the ever-Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into Heaven. The earliest tradition says that the Virgin Mary's life ended in Jerusalem, and one of the apostles, usually identified as Thomas, was not present at the death of Mary. His late arrival precipitates a reopening of Mary's tomb, which is found to be empty except for her grave clothes. In a later version of the story, the Virgin Mary drops her cincture down to the apostle from Heaven as testament to the event. St. John of Damascus (c. 675-749) records the following:

"St. Juvenal, Bishop of Jerusalem, at the Council of Chalcedon (451), made known to the Emperor Marcian and Empress Pulcheria, who wished to possess the body of the Mother of God, that Mary died in the presence of all the Apostles, but that her tomb, when opened upon the request of St. Thomas, was found empty; wherefrom the Apostles concluded that the body was taken up to heaven."

In Scripture, Revelation 12:1-2 is cited as the primary proof text of the assumption: "And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; and she was with child ..." The symbolism of this verse is based on the Old Testament, where the sun, moon, and eleven stars represent the patriarch Jacob, his wife, and eleven of the twelve tribes of Israel, who bow down before the twelfth star and tribe, Joseph, and verses 2-6 reveal that the woman is an image of the faithful community. Other texts cited are:

- Psalm 132:8, greeting the return of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem ("Arise, O Lord, into your resting place, you and the ark which you have sanctified!"), where the ark is taken as the prophetic "type" of Mary.
- Revelation 11:19, in which St. John sees the Ark of the Covenant in Heaven (this verse immediately precedes the vision of the woman clothed with the sun).
- Luke 1:28, in which the Archangel Gabriel greets Mary with the words, "Hail Mary, full of grace," since Mary's bodily assumption is a natural consequence of being full of grace.

- 1 Corinthians 15:23 and Matthew 27:52–53, concerning the certainty of bodily resurrection for all who have faith in Jesus.

As can be seen in the aforesaid quote from St. John of Damascus, the Orthodox Church accepts the doctrine of the Virgin Mary’s bodily assumption into Heaven, and has celebrated the feast on August 15th since at least the sixth century. The acceptance of the dogma is also clearly shown in the feast’s liturgical texts. Take, for example, the festal troparion:

In giving birth you preserved your virginity; in falling asleep you did not forsake the world, O Theotokos. You were translated to life, O Mother of Life, and by your prayers you deliver our souls from death! [emphasis added].

However, two points must be added here. First, the vocabulary used in the Orthodox Church more commonly refers to the Dormition or “Falling Asleep” of the Virgin Mary rather than the Assumption,¹ though there is nothing wrong with the latter term. More importantly, the Orthodox Church rejects what is known as the “immortalistic interpretation,” a now rarely found theologoumenon² held by some Roman Catholics that the Virgin Mary was assumed bodily into Heaven without first dying.

Recipe of the Month

FRESH CORN AND TOMATO FETTUCCINE

This recipe by “Taste of Home” contest winner Angela Spengler of Tampa, Florida combines delicious whole wheat pasta with fresh garden produce. It’s tossed with heart-healthy olive oil, and a sprinkling of feta cheese gives it bite.

INGREDIENTS

- 8 ounces uncooked whole wheat fettuccine
- 2 medium ears sweet corn, husked
- 2 teaspoons plus 2 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 1/2 cup chopped sweet red pepper
- 4 green onions, chopped
- 2 medium tomatoes, chopped
- 8 ounces uncooked whole wheat fettuccine
- 2 medium ears sweet corn, husked
- 2 teaspoons + 2 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 1/2 cup chopped sweet red pepper
- 4 green onions, chopped

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a Dutch oven, cook fettuccine according to package directions, adding corn during the last 8 minutes of cooking time.
2. Meanwhile, in a small skillet, heat 2 teaspoons oil over medium-high heat. Add red pepper and green onions; cook and stir until tender.

¹ The word 'assumption' derives from the Latin word *assumptiō*, meaning 'taking up'.

² A *theologoumenon* is an acceptably orthodox “theological opinion” without direct confirmation in Sacred Scripture or official endorsement by the divinely inspired teaching authority of the Church; i.e., it is neither authorized nor condemned by the Church. With regard to interpreting the Assumption, there is much more evidence for the mortalistic position (that of the “falling asleep” of the Virgin Mary first) in Catholic traditions (liturgy, apocrypha, material culture), and it is worth noting that Pope John Paul II expressed the mortalistic position in his general audience of June 25, 1997.

3. Drain pasta and corn; transfer pasta to a large bowl. Cool corn slightly; cut corn from cobs and add to pasta. Add tomatoes, salt, pepper, remaining 2 tablespoons oil and the pepper mixture; toss to combine. Sprinkle with cheese and parsley.

Schedule of Services

August 3-4, 2024

5:00 PM (Saturday) – Great Vespers

9:30 AM (Sunday) – Divine Liturgy

August 5-6, 2024 [Holy Transfiguration]

6:00 PM (Monday) – Great Vespers w. Lity

9:30 AM (Tuesday) – Divine Liturgy

August 10-11, 2024

5:00 PM (Saturday) – Great Vespers

9:30 AM (Sunday) – Divine Liturgy

August 14-15, 2024 [Dormition of Virgin Mary]

6:00 PM (Wednesday) – Great Vespers w. Lity

9:30 AM (Thursday) – Divine Liturgy

August 17-18, 2024

5:00 PM (Saturday) – Great Vespers

9:30 AM (Sunday) – Divine Liturgy

August 24-25, 2024

5:00 PM (Saturday) – Great Vespers

9:30 AM (Sunday) – Divine Liturgy

August 29, 2024 [Beheading of St. John the Baptist]

9:30 AM (Thursday) – Divine Liturgy

Parish News

Rector's Vacation

Fr. Sophrony will return from Puerto Rico on the morning of August 2, 2024. In the event of an emergency before he returns, please call Fr. John Fencik at 201-436-6604 or the nearest Orthodox priest.

Parish Confessions

All parishioners ought to go to confession during the Virgin Mary's Fast. Confessions may be heard after any Vespers during the month of August or call the Rectory for an appointment.

Daily Bible Readings

1. 1 Corinthians 3:18-23; Matthew 13:36-43
2. 1 Corinthians 4:5-8; Matthew 13:44-54
3. Romans 9:1-5; Matthew 9:18-26
4. Romans 12:6-14; Matthew 9:1-8
5. 1 Corinthians 5:9-6:11; Matthew 13:54-58
6. 2 Peter 1:10-19; Matthew 17:1-9
7. 1 Corinthians 7:12-24; Matthew 14:35-15:11
8. 1 Corinthians 7:24-35; Matthew 15:12-21
9. 1 Corinthians 7:35-8:7; Matthew 15:29-31
10. Romans 12:1-3; Matthew 10:37-11:1
11. Romans 15:1-7; Matthew 9:27-35
12. 1 Corinthians 9:13-18; Matthew 16:1-6
13. 1 Corinthians 10:5-12; Matthew 16:6-12
14. 1 Corinthians 10:12-22; Matthew 16:20-24
15. Philippians 2:5-11; Luke 10:38-42; 11:27-28
16. 1 Corinthians 11:8-22; Matthew 17:10-18
17. Romans 13:1-10; Matthew 12:30-37
18. 1 Corinthians 1:10-18; Matthew 14:14-22
19. 1 Corinthians 11:31-12:6; Matthew 18:1-11
20. 1 Cor. 12:12-26; Matt. 18:18-22, 19:1-2, 13-15
21. 1 Corinthians 13:4-14:5; Matthew 20:1-16
22. 1 Corinthians 14:6-19; Matthew 20:17-28
23. 1 Corinthians 14:26-40; Matt. 21:12-14, 17-20
24. Romans 14:6-9; Matthew 15:32-39
25. 1 Corinthians 3:9-17; Matthew 14:22-34
26. 1 Corinthians 15:12-19; Matthew 21:18-22
27. 1 Corinthians 15:29-38; Matthew 21:23-27
28. 1 Corinthians 16:4-12; Matthew 21:28-32
29. Acts 13:25-33; Mark 6:14-30
30. 2 Corinthians 1:12-20; Matthew 22:23-33
31. Romans 15:30-33; Matthew 17:24-18:4

Parish Council Meeting

Parish Council is meeting in the church hall on Wednesday, August 7, 2023 at 5:00 PM.

Blessing of Grapes and Fragrant Herbage

The blessing of grapes and other fruits (with edible skins) will be done at the conclusion of Divine Liturgy on the feast of Holy Transfiguration (August 6th). The blessing of flowers and herbs will be done at the conclusion of Divine Liturgy on the feast of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary (August 15th).

Diocesan Youth Day

2024 Youth Day, sponsored by the Diocese of New York & New Jersey Department of Youth Ministry, is Saturday, August 24, 2024, 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM, at Christ the Savior Orthodox Church, 365 Paramus Rd., Paramus, New Jersey. Open to all youth and their families. For information, see flyer in church vestibule. Register by 8/15/2024 at <https://form.jotform.com/241866071522152>

Fall Teen Retreat

The Diocese's Fall Teen Retreat, for middle and high school students, is October 4-6, 2024 at Frost Valley YMCA, 2000 Frost Valley Rd., Claryville, New York. Registration opens in August – further information TBA.

Special Donations

Special Donations may be offered at \$15 for the Altar Vigils, \$10 for the Sanctuary Lamp, and \$5 for any one of the following: 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. For acknowledgement of Special Donations in the September issue, the donation must be recorded in the Special Donations register in the church vestibule by August 18, 2024.

August 11, 2024

Triple Candelabra offered by Fr. W. Sophrony Royer in honor of Acadian National Day (August 15).

Remember to support the parish every time you shop!



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