

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

Last month marked the 10th anniversary of ISIS driving all the Christian population from the Nineveh Plain in Iraq to the shelter of Iraqi Kurdistan. Some 120,000 Christians, who had lived on the Nineveh Plain since the time of Christ’s disciples, were forced to flee with little more than their clothing, under the threat of death. They lived as internally displaced persons, first in abandoned buildings, on the streets, and later in containers.

After ISIS had been driven out in July 2017, nearly three years later, from the city of Mosul, the city once called Nineveh, where the Prophet Jonah had preached, there were many damaged churches, as ISIS had used most of the churches in the old city either as torture centers, prisons, or places for target practice. A common sight was that of all Christian symbols, either crosses or statues, had been defaced, shot at, or, in many instances, burned.

Where were the city’s once numerous Christians? There were none in the city; no bishops and no priests. It was not ISIS who had begun the mass exodus of Christians from the city in 2014, they merely completed something that was well under way. Following the invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the subsequent chaos, murders and kidnappings, life became increasingly more dangerous for the Christians in Mosul, with both clergy and laity being targeted for death.

In fact, by 2014, there were only a small number of Christians in the city—possibly a few thousand. Most moved to the most populous Christian town on the Nineveh Plain, the town of Qaraqosh. However, on the fateful night of August 6, 2014—the feast of Our Lord’s Transfiguration—ISIS fighters swept across the Nineveh Plain, attacking Qaraqosh and other villages, forcing some 120,000 Christians, who had lived on the plain since the time of the apostles, to flee with barely the clothes they were wearing, to the relative safety of Iraqi Kurdistan.

Fr. Benedict Kiety writes, in “The European Conservative,” of his visit in 2017: “*Seeing the altars of these churches used for target practice, and a noose hanging from the bell tower of another, was a very powerful riposte to those who said at the time, and still do, that this had nothing to do with religion, or was a corruption of faith. It was raw, visceral hatred for the doctrine of Christianity, and in particular for the image of the cross. An early issue of one of the glossy magazines that the PR department of ISIS produced (yes, they had one) had several chapters on “Why we hate you,” and most of the reasons were theological. The caliphate was destroyed, but the ideology and persecution has continued unabated across the Middle East, Africa, and even in Europe.*”

In the town of Karamles, which had also just been liberated from ISIS occupation, Fr. Benedict tells of “*many buildings still booby trapped, including the priest’s rectory. Entering the Church, burned out and also used for target practice, the priest took us out to the graveyard where ISIS had dug up the bodies of the Christians and thrown them away. This was not just mindless hatred—it had a purpose—the eradication of memory. The Islamic State wanted to pretend that Christians had never been there, despite their presence since the time of Christ’s apostles.*”

Now it’s ten years later, and the Christian community in Iraq, although not being persecuted to the point of death at the moment, has been decimated. From more than 1.5 million Christians before the invasion in 2003, there are probably fewer than 100,000 Christians left in Iraq today. There is an ongoing a “silent persecution” of Christians, with their status as second-class citizens undermining all aspects of their lives. Added to that, demographic pressure in Nineveh Province by Shi’ite militia groups controlled by Iran buying property, affecting local government and, in many instances, trying to close Christian businesses, which has made life after ISIS, at least on the ancient Nineveh Plain, a great struggle. The current instability and fear caused by the current war in Israel, and Iran’s powerful influence in Iraq, makes those who were hoping for a better future, increasingly fearful.

However, there are small seeds of hope. The majority of those Christians who felt the need to leave have already left. Some are even returning, if there are economic incentives. Charities, such as Nasarean.org, which micro-finances small family businesses, are helping Christians stay, start small family businesses, and build a future for their children. It is the answer to migration and to the lie of ISIS that Christians were never there. Rather than encourage migration, although Christians were never among the large numbers of those allowed to migrate to either the U.S. or the U.K., governments ought to be supporting organizations which help the communities stay in their own lands.

Theological Excerpt

“Without temptations, it is not possible to learn the wisdom of the Spirit. It is not possible that Divine love be strengthened in your soul. Before temptations, a man prays to God as a stranger. When temptations are allowed to come by the love of God, and he does not give in to them, then he stands before God as a sincere friend.”

— St. Isaac of Nineveh (c. 613-c. 700)

Lives of the Saints

St. Gerard of Csanád, Hieromartyr – commemorated on August 25th

St. Gerard of Csanád or Gerard Sagredo was the first bishop of Csanád in the Kingdom of Hungary from around 1030 until his death on September 24, 1046. Most information about St. Gerard was preserved in his hagiographies. *The Short Life of Saint Gerard*, which was composed around 1100, primarily presents Gerard as a bishop. The majority of scholars regard the *Short Life* the most reliable source of Gerard's life. The *Long Life of Saint Gerard* is a compilation of multiple sources, including the biography that the author of the shorter legend had also utilized. *The Long Life* was completed in the late 13th century or in the 14th

century. It was regarded as a source of absolute reliability for centuries, but this view radically changed in the 20th century, due in part to its containing of obviously anachronistic elements. However, historian Carlile Aylmer Macartney says that the *Long Life* preserved the original form of Gerard's earliest (now lost) biography. Gerard's own work, the *Deliberatio supra hymnum trium puerorum*, also contains references to his life. Simon of Kéza's chronicle and the *Illuminated Chronicle* preserved fragments from the common source of Gerard's two *Lives*.

St. Gerard was born of a noble family in Venice, Italy. An expanded version of Petrus de Natalibus' *Catalogue of Saints*, which was published in 1516, identified St. Gerard as a member of the Sagredo family, though historian László Szegfű says that St. Gerard was actually a Morosini. Gerard's father, who was also named Gerard, and mother, Catherine, had awaited his birth for three years. They baptized their son George because he was born on the feast of St. George (April 23). The year of his birth is unknown, but he was born between around 977 and 1000. He was renamed in the memory of his father who died during a pilgrimage or journey.

At the age of five, Gerard was taken seriously ill. His recovery was attributed to the prayers of the Benedictine monks of the San Giorgio Monastery in Venice. His family soon sent him to the monastery, offering him to spiritual life. Gerard took the "religious cloth" and was educated in the monastery. He could read and write and knew the basic elements of arithmetic. His *Long Life* emphasizes that Gerard strictly observed the rules of monastic life and wore coarse cloths to "mortify his body." He also studied the "words of the prophets and the speeches of the Orthodox apostles." The use of certain expressions (including *dux verbi*, or "leader of the Word") suggests that St. Gerard read Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite in Greek.

After the founding abbot of the monastery, John Morosini, died in 1012, Gerard was appointed prior to administer the monastery until the new abbot, Guglielmo, was elected. Guglielmo sent Gerard to "Bologna" to study grammar, music, philosophy and law. Gerard mentioned his stay in Gaul, where he read Plato, suggesting that the original version of the *Long Life* or its source referred to his studies in Burgundy instead of Bologna. Gerard returned to the San Giorgio Monastery five years later. His *Long Life* writes that Gerard was made abbot although he had been opposed to his election. No information about his activities as abbot was preserved in the sources, implying that he actually never held that office.

St. Gerard left for a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. According to his *Long Life*, he wanted to follow the example of St. Jerome. Modern historians say that internal strife in Venice (armed conflicts between the Orseolos and their opponents) compelled him to leave the city around 1018 or 1021. A storm forced him to seek refuge in a Benedictine monastery on an island near Istria. In the monastery, he met one Rasina. Historian György Györffy associates Rasina with Radla, a close companion of Adalbert of Prague; but László Mezey writes that Rasina was the abbot of the St. Martin Monastery in Lussino. Rasina persuaded Gerard to accompany him to Hungary, saying that "nowhere else in the world could one find today a more suitable place to win souls for the Lord." The conversion of the Hungarians had started in the 970s, but it accelerated only around 1000. The systematic organization of the Church began during the reign of the first King of Hungary, Stephen I, who was crowned on the first day the new millennium.

Gerard and Rasina visited Zara, Knin and Senj before reaching Pécs in Hungary. Gerard met Maurus, bishop of Pécs, and Anastasius, Abbot of Pécsvárad, in Pécs. The two prelates wanted to persuade Gerard to stay in Hungary, stating that "God's will" had brought him to the country. After Gerard gave sermons in their presence, Maurus and Anastasius stated that he was a "master of the word", declaring that such a cleric had never visited Hungary. Maurus and Anastasius convinced Gerard, who wanted to continue his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, to meet King Stephen I in Székesfehérvár. During their meeting, the king emphasized that his realm was the most suitable place for Gerard "to serve God", promising that he would authorize Gerard to preach anywhere in Hungary. Stephen I even threatened Gerard that he would not allow him to continue his journey to Jerusalem, but also alluding that he would make Gerard bishop. Finally,

Gerard accepted Stephen's proposal and decided to stay in Hungary. Before long, on the Feast of the Assumption (August 15), Gerard gave a sermon in honor of the "Woman clothed with the Sun", which was the first recorded sign of the cult of Virgin Mary in Hungary. According to Macartney, the description of Gerard's journey to Hungary and his meetings with the two prelates and the king were incorporated into the *Long Life* based on a nearly contemporaneous report, but they contain evidently imaginary details, such as the conversations between Gerard and Stephen I.

St. Gerard was made the tutor of Stephen's son and heir, Emeric. Gerard's role as the crown prince's tutor was only mentioned in the *Long Life*, implying that this was only an invention by the hagiographer who wanted to create a strong connection between the three most important saints of the early Kingdom of Hungary, but the story is not surely invented. Szegfű writes that Gerard may have influenced Stephen's *Admonitions* to Emeric. László Mezey proposes that Gerard was only responsible for the spiritual education of Emeric. After Emeric's education was completed, Gerard settled in the Bakony Hills to live as a hermit near Bakonybél, at a place where the saintly Gunther of Bohemia had lived. Szegfű says that Gerard's withdrawal from the royal court was the consequence of the arrival of the family of the Doge Otto Orseolo to Hungary around 1024. During the following years, St. Gerard built a chapel at the foot of a hill, and wrote theological studies and homilies (which were later lost). He referred to the commentaries that he had written to the Epistle to the Hebrews and to the Prologue to the Gospel of John. St. Gerard lived as a hermit for seven years, which suggests that he must have spent several years in the Bakony Hills even if the author of his legend only invented the symbolic number seven.

A powerful chieftain, Ajtony, ruled the region near the rivers Tisza, Danube and Mureş in the early 11th century. He was baptized according to the "Greek rite" and settled "Greek" (or Byzantine) monks in his seat on the Mureş. After Ajtony began taxing the salt carried on the Mureş, Stephen I of Hungary sent the royal army against him under the command of Csanád, who had previously been Ajtony's commander. Csanád defeated and killed Ajtony whose domain was transformed into a county. Ajtony's seat was renamed for Csanád. After the conquest of Ajtony's territory, Stephen I summoned Gerard from his hermitage and made him bishop of the newly established Diocese of Csanád. László Mezey says that the king appointed Gerard to administer the diocese because Gerard's knowledge of the Greek language and the Byzantine theological ideas enabled him to preach in a territory where Greek priests had up to that time proselytized. The *Annales Posonienses* recorded that "Gerard was consecrated bishop" in 1030, but the reliability of this date was not accepted by all historians. The king appointed twelve monks from the Benedictine monasteries in Hungary to accompany Gerard to his see. Seven of the twelve monks who could speak Hungarian were tasked with interpreting for Gerard among Ajtony's former subjects. The Greek monks who had arrived during Ajtony's rule were transferred from Csanád to a monastery newly established at Oroszlámos (present-day Banatsko Aranđelovo in Serbia), and their former monastery was granted to the Benedictines.

St. Gerard and the Benedictine monks shared a house and he forbade them to leave it without his authorization. The monks were required to be present for the morning service and to wear monastic costume. St. Gerard continued to wear the habits of a hermit (cilice or goat skins) and spent days in solitude in the forests near his see. His legend also writes that he often "took the axe" to cut woods to "mortify his flesh" and to help to "those who had to do this work." St. Gerard was a missionary bishop, tasked with the conversion of the pagan inhabitants of his diocese. His *Long Life* writes that people came to St. Gerard, "noblemen and commoners, rich and poor", asking him to baptize them "in the name of the Holy Trinity." They brought horses, cattle, sheep, carpets, rings and necklaces to give them to the bishop. The *Long Life* credits Gerard with the building of churches "for every city" in his diocese to serve the growing number of believers. Although the *Long Life* attributes the establishment of the archdeaconries of Gerard's diocese to him, most scholars regard this statement as a clear anachronism. St. Gerard regularly visited King Stephen. During a travel from Csanád to the royal court in Székesfehérvár or Esztergom, he and one of his clerics, Walther, stayed in a manor where a slave woman was singing while making flour on a grinder. St. Gerard

referred to the music as the "symphonia Ungarorum" (or "drum of the Hungarians"), associating the sound of the grinder with a drum roll. Being touched by her cheerfulness while making a hard work, St. Gerard gave the woman precious gifts.

Stephen I died on August 15, 1038. His nephew, the Venetian Peter Orseolo, mounted the throne, but he was dethroned in 1041. Peter's successor, Samuel Aba, had many lords executed. He visited Csanád, asking St. Gerard to put a crown on his head during the mass on Resurrection Sunday. He courageously refused Aba, but the bishops who accompanied the king to Csanád, performed the coronation. St. Gerard went to the pulpit, declaring that the "sword of vengeance will descend" upon Aba's head in three years, because he had gained the kingdom by deceit. The Holy Roman Emperor, Henry III, invaded Hungary and defeated Aba in the Battle of Ménfő in 1044. Peter Orseolo was restored, but his rule was unpopular, because he favored his German and Italian retainers.

St. Gerard's martyrdom took place on September 24, 1046, during the Vata pagan uprising. His co-martyrs were Bystrik and Buldus. There are various accounts of his death. According to one, he was stoned, pierced with a lance, and his body thrown from the Blocksberg cliff into the Danube. An alternate account claims that he was placed on a two-wheel cart, hauled to the hilltop and rolled down a hill of Buda, now named Gellert Hill, then still being alive at the bottom, was beaten to death. Other unverified tales report him as being put into a spiked barrel and rolled down the hill during a mass revolt of pagans. Canonized by Pope Gregory VII in 1083, along with St. Stephen and St. Emeric, St. Gerard is currently one of the patron saints of Hungary. His feast day is September 24 in the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why do Orthodox pray to saints?

To be accurate, we pray with the saints, not to them. Much the same as you would ask your friends, family or other Christians to pray for you, we ask the saints to intercede on our behalf. We don't pray to the saints "instead" of to God, just as any Christian does not ask his fellow Christians to pray for him instead of going directly to God with his concerns. Rather, we enlist Saints, along with the rest of the Church, to pray to God to hear us and have mercy on us. No saint would ever get between anyone and God. Rather, they always pray for us to God so that we can become one with Him just as they did.

Recipe of the Month

Hungarian Stuffed Peppers (Töltöttpaprika)

In Hungary, stuffed peppers are a traditional dish that has been enjoyed for generations. Hungarian stuffed peppers are filled with a savory mixture of ground meat (usually beef and pork) and rice seasoned with spices such as paprika and black pepper and cooked in a rich tomato sauce for a hearty and flavorful dish. You can easily customize the recipe to suit your taste by using different types of ground meat or adding other vegetables to the mix, and any kind of bell pepper may be used according to your preference. You can also adjust the level of spiciness by using more or less paprika.

INGREDIENTS

- 8 Red Peppers (medium)
- ½ pound Ground Beef
- ½ pound Ground Pork
- 1 Medium Onion (finely chopped)
- 1 clove Garlic (minced)
- ½ cup Long Grain Parboiled Rice (rinsed)

- 2 tbsp. Parsley (chopped extra for garnishing)
- 1 tsp. Hungarian Sweet Paprika
- 1 tsp. Salt
- 1 tsp. Black Pepper
- 680 ml. Strained Tomatoes (or jar pureed tomato juice)
- 1 tsp. Sugar
- 1 cup Water
- add Salt And Black Pepper (to taste)
- 2 tbsp. Unsalted Butter
- 2 tbsp. Flour

INSTRUCTIONS

Hungarian Stuffed Peppers:

1. Cut the tops off the peppers, remove the seeds and set aside.
2. In a large bowl, combine the ground beef and pork with chopped onion, minced garlic, rice, parsley, paprika, salt and pepper. Mix the meat mixture together until ingredients are combined. Take each pepper and stuff with the meat mixture until they are filled. If you have extra meat then make some meatballs to add to the pot.

Tomato Sauce:

3. Blend together tomato juice, water, sugar, salt and pepper.
4. Place the stuffed peppers into the large pot and pour in the tomato sauce mixture making sure the juice covers the peppers.
5. Bring to a slow boil and turn down temperature to simmer. Allow to cook at a low simmer for about 50 minutes to an hour or until the peppers and meat are fully cooked. Slow and low cooking is the secret.

Roux (thickener):

6. To make a roux, melt 2 tablespoons of butter in a skillet over medium heat, stir in 2 tablespoons of flour and once the roux is thickened, remove from stove. Increase temperature of the stuffed peppers, once the sauce is at slow boil, whisk in the roux mixture until the sauce is smooth without any lumps. Remove from stove.

Serve with crusty bread, roasted potatoes, or noodles. Garnish with parsley and optional sour cream.

Parish News

Congratulations

Stephen Lee Daniels, who had been a catechumen in our parish prior to his relocation to Wilmington, North Carolina, became an Orthodox Christian on August 18, 2024. Congratulations and Many Years!

Parish Council Meeting

Parish Council is meeting in the church hall on Wednesday, September 18, 2024 at 5:00 PM.

Pasta & Meatball Dinner

A Pasta & Meatball Dinner is scheduled for Sunday, October 20, 2024 at 11:30 AM. The menu consists of salad, Italian bread, pasta and meatballs, wine, coffee or tea, and dessert. Tickets are \$35 per person (half-price for children up to 12); for information and tickets, contact the Rectory at (201-436-3244) or Marge Kovach at (732) 815-9765. See flyer on bulletin board in church vestibule.

Schedule of Services

Aug. 31-Sept. 1, 2024

5:00 PM (Saturday) – Great Vespers

9:30 AM (Sunday) – Divine Liturgy

September 7-8, 2024 [Nativity of Virgin Mary]

5:00 PM (Saturday) – Great Vespers w. Lity

9:30 AM (Sunday) – Divine Liturgy

September 13-14, 2024 [Elevation of Holy Cross]

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

9:30 AM (Saturday) – Divine Liturgy

September 14-15, 2024

5:00 PM (Saturday) – Great Vespers

9:30 AM (Sunday) – Divine Liturgy

September 21-22, 2024

5:00 PM (Saturday) – Great Vespers

9:30 AM (Sunday) – Divine Liturgy

September 28-29, 2024

5:00 PM (Saturday) – Great Vespers

9:30 AM (Sunday) – Divine Liturgy

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 October issue, the donation must be recorded in the Special Donations register in the church vestibule by September 22, 2024.

September 1, 2024

Sanctuary Lamp offered by Fr. W. Sophrony Royer in memory of Protopresbyter Vladimir Shishkoff (15th anniversary of repose).

September 15, 2024

Altar Vigils offered by Helen Wanko in memory of Andrew Wanko (anniversary of repose). **Sanctuary Lamp** offered by Fr. W. Sophrony Royer in memory of Wilfred J. Royer (10th anniversary of repose). **St. John's Cross** offered by Fr. W. Sophrony Royer in memory of Anastasia Sahonchik. **St. Nicholas' Cross** offered by Fr. W. Sophrony Royer in memory of Donald G. Royer.

Daily Bible Readings

1. 1 Corinthians 4:9-16; Matthew 17:14-23
2. 2 Corinthians 2:4-15; Matthew 23:13-22
3. 2 Corinthians 2:14-3:3; Matthew 23:23-28
4. 2 Corinthians 3:4-11; Matthew 23:29-39
5. 2 Corinthians 4:1-6; Matthew 24:13-28
6. 2 Corinthians 4:13-18; Matt. 24:27-33, 42-51
7. 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Matthew 19:3-12
8. Philippians 2:5-11; Luke 10:38-42, 11:27-28
9. 2 Corinthians 5:10-15; Mark 1:9-15
10. 2 Corinthians 5:15-21; Mark 1:16-22
11. 2 Corinthians 6:11-16; Mark 1:23-28
12. 2 Corinthians 7:1-10; Mark 1:29-35
13. 2 Corinthians 7:10-16; Mark 2:18-22
14. 1 Cor. 1:18-24; Jn. 19:6-11,13-20,25-28,30-35
15. 1 Corinthians 15:1-11; Matthew 19:16-26
16. 2 Corinthians 8:7-15; Luke 3:19-22
17. 2 Corinthians 8:16-9:5; Luke 3:23-4:1
18. 2 Corinthians 9:12-10:7; Luke 4:1-15
19. 2 Corinthians 10:7-18; Luke 4:16-22
20. 2 Corinthians 11:5-21; Luke 4:22-30
21. 1 Corinthians 2:6-9; Luke 4:31-36
22. 1 Corinthians 16:13-24; Luke 5:1-11
23. 2 Corinthians 12:10-19; Luke 4:37-44
24. 2 Corinthians 12:20-13:2; Luke 5:12-16
25. 2 Corinthians 13:3-14; Luke 5:33-39
26. Galatians 1:1-10, 20-2:5; Luke 6:12-19
27. Galatians 2:6-10; Luke 6:17-23
28. 1 Corinthians 4:1-5; Luke 5:17-26
29. 2 Corinthians 1:21-2:4; Luke 6:31-36
30. Galatians 2:11-16; Luke 6:24-30

September 22, 2024

Altar Vigils offered by Helen Wanko in memory of Mary Grudinoff (anniversary of repose). **Sanctuary Lamp** offered by Helen Wanko in memory of Mary Grudinoff (anniversary of birth).

September 29, 2024

Altar Vigils and **Sacramental Bread** offered in honor of Tatiana Julia Wasilewski's eighth birthday by her Uncle Stephen. **Triple Candelabra** offered by Fr. W. Sophrony Royer in memory of Omer J. Royer.

Remember to support the parish every time you shop!



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