

# 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

The saint’s life in this issue tells a story of penitence, and so I thought it fitting to reflect upon penitence and the holy sacrament of confession. Through the sacrament we are reconciled with God—our sins are forgiven, and our relationship with God and others is restored and strengthened. The Orthodox Church does not regard sin as a stain on the soul, or a transgression that must be set right by punishment, but rather as a mistake made by the person with the opportunity for spiritual growth and development. Through the Holy Mystery of Confession, God embraces us with his love. “Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained” (John 20:23). Reconciliation helps us deal with what burdens our conscience and deepens our self-awareness and spiritual growth.

For this to happen, we must have a sense of our unfaithfulness to God, contrition of heart, and determination to amend. The priest is the sacramental witness who represents both God and His people. The priest is not the judge but provides counsel and spiritual guidance. Although we can, of course, confess our sins in private prayer, nevertheless since the early days of Christianity it was believed that confessions need to be witnessed—in the first two centuries, by the congregation, but since at least the third century, that role has been assumed by the priest, who also acts as the penitent’s spiritual director.

The penitent and the priest stand before the book of the Holy Gospels and a crucifix. The penitent begins with the prayer before confession and then proceeds to the confession. As a caring, spiritual father the priest prays for the penitent and expresses the mercy and love of God. On hearing the confession, the priest may gently ask questions to better understand what is being confessed. The priest may then offer a penance. Finally, the priest will ask the penitent to kneel and placing his stole and hands on the penitent's head, pronounces the words of absolution, by which God's forgiveness is bestowed. For it is God who is the forgiver and the healer, not the priest. When the priest says the words of absolution, he is saying the words of God to assure the penitent that his or her sins are forgiven.

Therefore, the holy sacrament of confession ought not be regarded simply as an obligation, or still worse as an unpleasant burden, but as a "purgative" that rids us of the moral and spiritual toxins that alienate us from God and each other, restoring us to spiritual health and setting right our relationships with God and each other.

## Theological Excerpt

*"Unknowing, or agnosia, is not ignorance or absence of knowledge as ordinarily understood, but rather the realization that no finite knowledge can fully know the Infinite One, and that therefore He is only truly to be approached by agnosia, or by that which is beyond and above knowledge."*

— Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (c. 500)

## Lives of the Saints

*St. Pelagia the Penitent – commemorated on October 8th*

St. Pelagia, who went by the stage name Margarita, was one of Antioch's foremost actresses and, supposedly, a courtesan. During one of the city's church councils, she passed by on a donkey surrounded by her entourage and a "worldly crowd." Perfumed and "immodestly bareheaded," the outlines of her body were "clearly visible" beneath her gold cloth, pearls, and precious stones, which ran from her bare shoulders to her feet. Most of the fathers were shamed into looking away, but the Bishop of Heliopolis,<sup>1</sup> St. Nonnus, stared openly and confessed himself "delighted." Mocking his fellows, he condemned both them and himself for taking less care of their souls than she had of her body.

She appeared at his next Sunday sermon and Nonnus' sermon on hell and the goodness of paradise prompted her to repent. She had two of her slaves trail Nonnus to his residence and then wrote him on wax tablets, calling herself "sinful" and a "servant of the devil" but seeking mercy from God, who "came down to earth not for the sake of the righteous but to save sinners." St. Nonnus replied to the anonymous request that God knew her and her past and that he would receive her, but only in the presence of the other bishops. She went to the Basilica of Saint Julian to see them; when St. Nonnus demanded surety that she would not return to her former life, she fell to the ground

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<sup>1</sup> Although St. Nonnus was an Egyptian by birth, his see was not the city of Heliopolis in Egypt, but rather a city in Coele-Syria located east of the Libani River in Lebanon's Beqaa Valley. Today the city is called Baalbek, but in the Hellenistic and Roman periods it was called Heliopolis ("Sun City") in reference to the solar cult there. The city's ancient temple complex houses two of the largest and grandest Roman temples: the Temple of Bacchus and the Temple of Jupiter.

and threatened that if she were refused admission to the Church, all her future sins would be held against him at his judgment. The archbishop was informed and sent the deaconess Romana to clothe her in the baptismal gown. Nonnus took her confession and baptized "Margarita" under her birth name Pelagia, with Romana serving as her godmother.

The Devil shortly afterward arrived to complain, but was driven off when St. Pelagia made the sign of the Cross and breathed upon him. He returned the next night to renew his complaints and was driven off the same way. On the third day, Pelagia directed her steward to inventory her possessions. She then turned them over to Nonnus, who disbursed them to the widows, orphans, and poor of the city. She freed her slaves, male and female, "taking their golden collars off with her own hands." She then began living with the deaconess Romana.

The night before it came time to remove her baptismal gown, she stole out in the dark wearing one of Nonnus' chitons,<sup>2</sup> and headed for Jerusalem, where she built a cell on the Mount of Olives.<sup>3</sup> She lived there for three or four years, disguising herself as a male recluse and eunuch under the name "Pelagius." She then died, apparently as a result of extreme asceticism, which had emaciated her to the point she could no longer be recognized. According to Orthodox tradition, St. Pelagia was buried in her cell. Upon the discovery that the renowned monk had been a woman, the "holy fathers" tried to keep it a secret, but the gossip spread and her relics drew pilgrims from as far off as Jericho and the Jordan Valley.

St. Pelagia's story is attributed to James, a deacon of the church of Heliopolis (modern Baalbek, Lebanon). As it's preserved in the Greek *Menaion*, the story omits dates and, on eight occasions, the name of the archbishop under whom St. Nonnus served. St. John Chrysostom, himself an Antiochene, makes an apparent reference to St. Pelagia the Penitent in one of his sermons (circa 390), of a an anonymous but apparently famous actress and prostitute "from a wicked city in Phoenicia" (possibly Heliopolis) who seduced "the empress' brother,"<sup>4</sup> but converted "in our own day." In his account, attempts were made to lure her back to her former life by the Roman prefect and some of his soldiers, a role played by Satan in the official hagiography.

A similar account is found in the story of St. Marina the Monk (the name "Marina" is Latin equivalent of "Pelagia" and, significantly, was often rendered as "Margarita") was another bride who disguised herself as a monk, in her case to escape an unwanted marriage. Aspects of their stories were apparently combined with apocryphal accounts of St. Mary Magdalene, Biblical accounts of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, and of Jesus and various women in the New Testament. St. Pelagia the Penitent is venerated in the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Armenian Apostolic, and Syriac Orthodox Churches on October 8th.

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<sup>2</sup> A chiton is a form of tunic that fastens at the shoulder, worn by men and women of ancient Greece and Rome.

<sup>3</sup> The Chapel of the Ascension, a chapel and shrine located on the Mount of Olives, in the At-Tur district of Jerusalem is part of a larger complex consisting first of a Christian church and monastery, then an Islamic mosque, Zawayat al-Adawiya. It is located on a site traditionally believed to be the earthly spot where Jesus ascended into Heaven forty days after His Resurrection. It houses a slab of stone believed to contain one of his footprints. The aforesaid mosque is built on top of a Byzantine burial crypt, which is held to be the location of the cell, and burial site, of St. Pelagia the Penitent.

<sup>4</sup> Constantius II's wife Eusebia had two brothers, Eusebius and Hypatius, joint consuls in 359, who both lived for many years in Antioch, so the brother allegedly seduced by Pelagia could have been either one of them.

## Frequently Asked Questions

*The Nicene Creed says that we believe in “one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church? So why do we call the Church “Orthodox”?*

The word “Orthodox” literally means “straight teaching” or “straight worship,” being derived from two Greek words: *orthos*, meaning “straight,” and *doxa*, meaning “teaching” or “worship.” As the encroachments of false teaching and division multiplied in early Christian times, threatening to obscure the identity and purity of the Church, the term “Orthodox” quite logically came to be applied to it. Of course, as we confess in the Creed, the Church—meaning by it, the Orthodox Church—is the “one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church,” and possesses in fullness and purity all the qualities of unity, holiness, catholicity (i.e., universality), and apostolicity, which in turn are what makes it “Orthodox.”

## Recipe of the Month

### Halušky (Cabbage and Noodles)

*Halušky are a traditional variety of thick, soft noodles or dumplings found in many Central and Eastern European cuisines under various local names. In Hungary it is very popular to put it in paprikash. It is also eaten with cheese, sour cream, cottage cheese, egg custard, semolina and butter all throughout the country, while in Slovakia it is eaten with sheep's cheese or spinach. The term halušky can refer to the dumplings themselves, or to a complete dish containing other ingredients. Typically the dish described is noodles with sauteed cabbage and onions. Bryndzové halušky, which combines the noodles with a soft sheep's cheese, is one of the national dishes of Slovakia. In certain regions of the Antalya Province in Turkey, holuška is made with larger dumplings than its counterparts in Central and Eastern Europe.*

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 (16 ounce) package medium-wide egg noodles
- 1 cup butter, divided
- 2 large onions, chopped
- 2 small heads cabbage, cored and cut into 1-inch pieces
- salt and ground black pepper to taste

### INSTRUCTIONS

- (1) Gather all ingredients. Preheat the oven to 300 degrees Fahrenheit.
- (2) Fill a large pot with lightly salted water and bring to a rolling boil. Stir in egg noodles and return to a boil.
- (3) Cook noodles uncovered, stirring occasionally, until tender but slightly firm, about 5 minutes. Drain well and set aside.
- (4) Melt 1/2 cup butter in a large skillet over medium-low heat. Add onions; cook and stir until translucent, 5 to 10 minutes.
- (5) Add cabbage and remaining 1/2 cup butter to onions; cook and stir until cabbage is softened but not browned, 5 to 8 minutes. Season with salt and black pepper.

- (6) Place cooked noodles and cabbage mixture in a large roasting pan; stir gently to combine. Sprinkle with more salt and black pepper, if desired.
- (7) Bake in the preheated oven until golden brown on top, 30-40 minutes.

## Parish News

### Parish Council Meeting

Parish Council is meeting in the church hall on Sunday, October 13, 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.

### St. John and St. Nicholas Crosses

The two cruciform candle racks in front of the shrines of St. John the Baptist and St. Nicholas in our church are in urgent need to repair and refurbishing. We have a quote of \$1,650 for each cross. The work wasn't done because we can't afford the cost. Unless we find a couple of donors, we will have to permanently retire the St. John's and St. Nicholas' Crosses and replace them with hanging votive lamps. If anyone is interested in donating, please contact Stephen Wasilewski or call the Rectory.

## 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 November issue, the donation must be recorded in the Special Donations register in the church vestibule by November 17, 2024.*

### October 6, 2024

**Sanctuary Lamp** offered by the Carpathian Club in memory of Vasil Pavuk. **Triple Candelabra** offered by Fr. W. Sophrony Royer in memory of Right Rev. Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) of Washington and Florida.

### October 13, 2024

**Sanctuary Lamp** offered by the Wasilewski Family in memory of Anna Wasilewski (anniversary of repose). **St. Nicholas' Cross** offered by Helen Wanko in memory of Helen Grudinoff (anniversary of birth).

### October 20, 2024

**St. John's Cross** offered by Fr. W. Sophrony Royer in memory of Omer J. Royer (anniversary of birth). **St. Nicholas' Cross** offered by Helen Wanko in memory of Stephen Brelinsky (anniversary of repose).

October 27, 2024

**St. Nicholas' Cross** offered by Helen Wanko in memory of Helen Grudinoff (anniversary of repose).

## Schedule of Services

October 1, 2024 [*Protection of Virgin Mary*]

9:30 AM (Sunday) – Divine Liturgy

October 5-6, 2024

5:00 PM (Saturday) – Great Vespers

9:30 AM (Sunday) – Divine Liturgy

October 12-13, 2024

5:00 PM (Saturday) – Great Vespers

9:30 AM (Sunday) – Divine Liturgy

October 19-20, 2024

5:00 PM (Saturday) – Great Vespers

9:30 AM (Sunday) – Divine Liturgy

October 26-27, 2024

5:00 PM (Saturday) – Great Vespers

## Daily Bible Readings

1. Heb. 9:1-7; Luke 10:38-42; 11:27-28
2. Galatians 3:15-22; Luke 6:46-7:1
3. Galatians 3:23-4:5; Luke 7:17-30
4. Galatians 4:8-21; Luke 7:31-35
5. 1 Corinthians 4:17-5:5; Luke 5:27-32
6. 2 Corinthians 4:6-15; Luke 7:11-16
7. Galatians 4:28-5:10; Luke 7:36-50
8. Galatians 5:11-21; Luke 8:1-3
9. Galatians 6:2-10; Luke 8:22-25
10. Ephesians 1:1-9; Luke 9:7-11
11. Ephesians 1:7-17; Luke 9:12-18.
12. 1 Corinthians 10:23-28; Luke 6:1-10
13. 2 Corinthians 6:1-10; Luke 8:5-15
14. Ephesians 1:22-2:3; Luke 9:18-22
15. Ephesians 2:19-3:7; Luke 9:23-27
16. Ephesians 3:8-21; Luke 9:44-50
17. Ephesians 4:14-19; Luke 9:49-56
18. Ephesians 4:17-25; Luke 10:1-15
19. 1 Corinthians 14:20-25; Luke 7:1-10
20. 2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1; Luke 16:19-31
21. Ephesians 4:25-32; Luke 10:22-24
22. Ephesians 5:20-26; Luke 11:1-10
23. Ephesians 5:25-33; Luke 11:9-13
24. Ephesians 5:33-6:9; Luke 11:14-23
25. Ephesians 6:18-24; Luke 11:23-26
26. 1 Corinthians 15:39-45; Luke 8:16-21
27. 2 Corinthians 9:6-11; Luke 8:26-39
28. Philippians 1:1-7; Luke 11:29-33
29. Philippians 1:8-14; Luke 11:34-41
30. Philippians 1:12-20; Luke 11:42-46
31. Philippians 1:20-27; John 10:9-16

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parish every time you shop!**



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available for purchase in the church*