

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 “sun of freedom has risen over Syria today,” declared Bishop Hanna Jallouf, head of Syria’s Latin Church, when recently asked about the country’s new ruler, the Islamist terror group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham or HTS. He said guarantees were received that “our churches and properties would remain untouched.” The bishop, along with other Syrian church leaders, are whistling past the graveyard.

All of Syria’s churches, whether of the larger Orthodox community or Catholic, are facing an imminent existential threat both from the new authorities and general political chaos following the Assad regime’s collapse. In a December 9 email, Archimandrite Emanuel Youkhana, a priest of the ancient Assyrian Church of the East, who administers aid in Kurdistan with the help of the New York-based pontifical CNEWA, frankly stated: Syrian Christians’ fears are “pronounced and serious.”

Over the last 13 years, this Christian community saw jihadists systematically burn and desecrate their ancient churches, kill two beloved bishops and other clerics, subjugate and enslave women, take hostage entire Khabour Valley villages, and slaughter those who didn’t conform. Such brutality stemmed from the fanatical religious hatred nurtured by these same jihadist militants, whether called al-Qaeda, ISIS, or HTS. Christians are acutely aware that the militia now running their country is a terrorist group (designated as such by the United States, United Kingdom, and United Nations).

That commander Al-Jolani has now changed into a Western suit and talks of moderation, they undoubtedly see, is purely tactical. When before has a holy warrior, at the very moment of triumph, pulled down his keffiyeh to reveal underneath a champion of religious pluralism and freedom? These militants are no more credible than the Taliban, who promised to respect women's rights but who, three years after taking control of Afghanistan, have "erased" women from public life, as the UN reports.

Church leaders are ideologically committed to keeping their flocks in the land where the New Testament first applied the term "Christian," and yet, without militias of their own, they are utterly vulnerable, and so church leaders remained silent or even publicly praised the tyrannical regime. A short while ago, Syrian Church leaders had insisted that Bashar Assad was not the reputed monster of vast dungeons and chemical weapon attacks, but was the "protector" of religious minorities. But Assad proved less than helpful to them during the violent "Arab Spring," Civil War, or the period of ISIS' caliphate, with its infamous female slave markets, in Raqqa, Syria. Since 2010, Syria's Christian community has plunged by 90 per cent, from two million, to 250,000 today, with most fleeing to the West.

Furthermore, Fr. Jihad Youssef, superior of Syria's 6th century Mar Musa monastery, recently told Catholic media that Christians all along have, as a matter of Syrian law, been denied equal rights. He explained: "The traditional attitude of Muslims towards Eastern Christians has oscillated between cruel and humiliating closure and persecution and moderate or even welcoming openness, sometimes for a short time, but always within the framework of the concept of Ahl al-Dhimmah. According to Syrian laws currently in force (before freedom), Christians are second class citizens in crucial areas. This is the reality."

We should remember that Syria's Christians are now hostages of a new repressive regime and should not take at face value their leadership's optimistic statements. Fr. Benedict Kiely, founder of Nasarean.org, which aids Christian micro businesses in the region, describes the current situation as a "dangerous moment" for the Syrian Church. John Pontifex with the pontifical Aid to the Church in Need warns that religious freedom violations often "worsen after the fall of a long-standing regime."

Archimandrite Youkhana elaborated: "The militias now in control are predominantly radical Islamic jihadist groups ... who are diverse in ideologies and organizations. There is no guarantee they will remain unified... On the contrary, they are likely to engage in conflicts and fights over influence and control." Noting that Turkish "management of recent events are evident and well-known," he raises another concern: "In which direction will Turkey push the situation?" Turkey's Christian genocide survivors had found refuge in Syria and the community generally fears Istanbul's intentions.

Another reason for skepticism about HTS' hopeful promises comes from MEMRI, the American non-profit research and translation group. While HTS publicly claims to be focused on Syria's pressing national issues, it privately reasserts jihadist goals of greater conquest. On December 8, MEMRI taped HTS militants in Damascus proclaiming: "We will enter the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, the Prophet's Mosque in Medina, and the Kaaba in Mecca. Just like we entered the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus." The Israel Defense Forces and US Central Command aren't taking any chances. They directed airstrikes against Syrian ISIS encampments, chemical and other weapon sites, and military infrastructure.

After two millennia, Syria's ancient but dwindling Christian community (recently about 10% of Syria's population) is facing dire peril. Desperate to continue the church's presence in this cradle of Christianity, Syria's Christians plead for our prayers and help.

Theological Excerpt

"Moses' vision of God began with light; afterwards God spoke to him in a cloud. But when Moses rose higher and became more perfect, he saw God in the darkness."

— St. Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335-394), [The Life of Moses](#)

Lives of the Saints

St. Yaroslav the Wise, Grand Prince of Kiev – commemorated on February 20th

Yaroslav the Wise was Grand Prince of Kiev from 1019 until his death in 1054. He was also earlier Prince of Novgorod from 1010 to 1034 and Prince of Rostov from 987 to 1010, uniting the principalities for a time. Born c. 980, Yaroslav's baptismal name was George, after the Great-martyr George. Presumed to have been a son of Vladimir the Great by Rogneda of Polotsk, French historian Jean-Pierre Arrignon argues that he was actually Anna Porphyrogenita's son, as this would explain his interference in Byzantine affairs in 1043. William Humphreys also favors a reconstruction making Yaroslav the son, rather than the stepson, of Anna, by invoking onomastic arguments. It is curious that Yaroslav named his elder son Vladimir (after his own father) and one of his daughters Anna (as if after his own mother). There is a certain pattern in his sons having Slavic names, and his daughters having Greek names only. Furthermore, Yaroslav's maternity by Rogneda of Polotsk had been questioned as early as the 19th century by Mykola Kostomarov. Yaroslav figures prominently in the Norse sagas under the name Jarisleif the Lame; his legendary lameness (probably resulting from an arrow wound) was corroborated by the scientists who examined his remains. The early years of Yaroslav's life are mostly unknown.

In his youth, Yaroslav was sent by his father to rule the northern lands around Rostov. He was transferred to Veliky Novgorod, as befitted a senior heir to the throne, in 1010. While living there, he founded the town of Yaroslavl (literally, "Yaroslav's") on the Volga River. His relations with his father were apparently strained, and grew only worse on the news that Vladimir bequeathed the Kievan throne to his younger son, Boris. In 1014 Yaroslav refused to pay tribute to Kiev and only Vladimir's death, in July 1015, prevented a war. During the next four years Yaroslav waged a complicated and bloody war for Kiev against his half-brother Sviatopolk of Kiev, who was supported by his father-in-law, Duke Bolesław the Brave (King of Poland from 1025). During the course of this struggle, several other brothers (Boris, Gleb, and Svyatoslav) were brutally murdered. The *Primary Chronicle* accused Sviatopolk of planning those murders. Yaroslav defeated Sviatopolk in their first battle, in 1016, and Sviatopolk fled to Poland. Sviatopolk returned in 1018 with Polish troops furnished by his father-in-law, seized Kiev, and pushed Yaroslav back into Novgorod. Yaroslav prevailed over Sviatopolk, and in 1019 firmly established his rule over Kiev. One of his first actions as a grand prince was to confer on the loyal Novgorodians, who had helped him to gain the Kievan throne, numerous freedoms and privileges. Thus, the foundation of the Novgorod Republic was laid. For their part, the Novgorodians respected Yaroslav more than they did other Kievan princes; and the princely residence in their city, next to the marketplace (and where the *veche* often convened)

was named Yaroslav's Court after him. It probably was during this period that Yaroslav promulgated the first code of laws in the lands of the East Slavs, the Russkaya Pravda.

Nestor the Chronicler and later Russian historians often presented Yaroslav as a model of virtue, styling him "the Wise." However, a less appealing side of his personality is revealed by his having imprisoned his youngest brother Sudislav for life. In response, another brother, Mstislav of Chernigov, whose distant realm bordered the North Caucasus and the Black Sea, hastened to Kiev. Despite reinforcements led by Yaroslav's brother-in-law King Anund Jacob of Sweden, Mstislav inflicted a heavy defeat on Yaroslav in 1024. Yaroslav and Mstislav then divided Kievan Rus' between them: the area stretched east from the Dnieper River, with the capital at Chernigov, was ceded to Mstislav until his death in 1036.

In his foreign policy, Yaroslav relied on a Scandinavian alliance and attempted to weaken the Byzantine influence on Kiev. According to Heimskringla, Olaf the Swede made an alliance with Yaroslav, even though the alliance was not liked in Sweden, in order to declare war against Olaf II of Norway. This was sealed in 1019 when King Olof of Sweden married his daughter to Yaroslav instead of the Norwegian king. That led to protests in Sweden because the Swedes wanted to reestablish control over their lost eastern territories and bring in tribute from Kievan Rus', as his father Eric the Victorious had, but after years of war against Norway, Sweden no longer had the power to collect regular tributes from Kievan Rus', according to Heimskringla.

In 1022 Olaf was deposed and forced to give power to his son Anund Jakob. In a successful military raid in 1030, Yaroslav captured Tartu, Estonia and renamed it Yuryev (named after Yury, Yaroslav's patron saint) and forced the surrounding Ugandi County to pay annual tribute. In 1031, he conquered Cherven cities from the Poles followed by the construction of Sutiejsk to guard the newly acquired lands. In 1034 Yaroslav concluded an alliance with Polish King Casimir the Restorer, sealed by the latter's marriage to Yaroslav's sister, Maria. Yaroslav's eldest son, Vladimir, ruled in Novgorod from 1034 and supervised relations in the north.

Later in Yaroslav's reign, around 1035, Ingvar the Far-Travelled, Anund Jakob's jarl, sent Swedish soldiers into Kievan Rus due to Olof's son wanting to assist his father's ally Yaroslav in his wars against the Pechenegs and Byzantines. Later, in c.1041 Anund Jakob tried to reestablish Swedish control over the Eastern trade routes and reopen them. The Georgian annals report 1,000 men coming into Georgia but the original force was likely much larger, around 3,000 men. Ingvar's fate is unknown, but he was likely captured in battle during the Byzantine campaigns or killed, supposedly in 1041. Only one ship returned to Sweden, according to the legend.

Yaroslav presented his second direct challenge to Constantinople in 1043, when a Rusyn flotilla headed by one of his sons appeared near Constantinople and demanded money, threatening to attack the city otherwise. Whatever the reason, the Greeks refused to pay and preferred to fight. The Rusyn flotilla defeated the Byzantine fleet but was almost destroyed by a storm and came back to Kiev empty-handed.

To defend his state from the Pechenegs and other nomadic tribes threatening it from the south, Yaroslav constructed a line of forts, composed of Yuryev, Bohuslav, Kaniv, Korsun, and Pereyaslavl. To celebrate his decisive victory over the Pechenegs in 1036, who thereafter were never a threat to Kiev, he sponsored the construction of the Saint Sophia Cathedral in 1037. In 1037 the monasteries of St. George and St. Irene were built, named after patron saints of Yaroslav and his wife. Some

mentioned and other celebrated monuments of his reign such as the Golden Gate of Kiev were destroyed during the Mongol invasion of Rus', but later restored.

Yaroslav was a notable patron of literary culture and learning. In 1051, he had a Slavic monk, Hilarion of Kiev, proclaimed the Metropolitan of Kiev, thus challenging the Byzantine tradition of placing Greeks on the episcopal sees. Hilarion's discourse on Yaroslav and his father Vladimir is frequently cited as the first work of Old East Slavic literature.

Family life and posterity:

In 1019, Yaroslav married Ingegerd Olofsdotter, daughter of Olof Skötkonung, the king of Sweden. He gave Ladoga to her as a marriage gift. St. Sophia's Cathedral in Kiev houses a fresco representing the whole family: Yaroslav, Irene (as Ingegerd was known in Rus'), their four daughters and six sons. Yaroslav had at least three of his daughters married to foreign princes who lived in exile at his court:

- Elisiv of Kiev to Harald Hardrada (who attained her hand by his military exploits in the Byzantine Empire)
- Anastasia of Kiev to the future Andrew I of Hungary
- Anne of Kiev to Henri I of France and was the regent of France during their son's minority (she was Yaroslav the Wise's most beloved daughter)
- Agatha to Edward the Exile, of the royal family of England, the mother of Edgar the Ætheling and St. Margaret of Scotland.

Yaroslav had one son from the first marriage, Ilya (?–1020), and six sons from the second marriage. Apprehending the danger that could ensue from divisions between brothers, he exhorted them to live in peace with each other. The eldest of these, Vladimir of Novgorod, best remembered for building the Cathedral of St. Sophia in Novgorod, predeceased his father. Vladimir succeeded Yaroslav as prince of Novgorod in 1034. Three other sons, Iziaslav I, Sviatoslav II, and Vsevolod I, reigned in Kiev one after another. The youngest children of Yaroslav were Igor Yaroslavich (1036–1060) of Volhynia and Vyacheslav Yaroslavich (1036–1057) of the Principality of Smolensk. There is almost no information about Vyacheslav. Some documents point out the fact of him having a son, Boris Vyacheslavich, who challenged Vsevolod I in 1077–1078.

Following his death on February 20, 1054, the body of Yaroslav the Wise was entombed in a white marble sarcophagus within St. Sophia's Cathedral. In 1936, the sarcophagus was opened and found to contain the skeletal remains of two individuals, one male and one female. The male was determined to be Yaroslav. The identity of the female was never established, though some believe them to be those of Yaroslav's spouse Ingegerd. The sarcophagus was again opened in 1939 and the remains removed for research, not being documented as returned until 1964. In 2009, the sarcophagus was opened and surprisingly found to contain only one skeleton, that of a female. It seems the documents detailing the 1964 reinterment of the remains were falsified to hide the fact that Yaroslav's remains had been lost. Subsequent questioning of individuals involved in the research and reinterment of the remains seems to point to the idea that Yaroslav's remains were purposely hidden prior to the German occupation of Ukraine and then either lost completely or stolen and transported to the United States, where many ancient religious artifacts were placed to avoid "mistreatment" by the Communists.

Four towns in four countries were named after Yaroslav the Wise, three of which he also founded: Yaroslavl (in today's Russia), Jarosław in Poland, Yuryev (now Bila Tserkva, Ukraine), and another Yuryev in place of conquered Tarbatu (now Tartu) between 1030 and 1061 in Estonia. Following the Russian custom of naming military objects such as tanks and planes after historical figures, the helmet worn by many Russian soldiers during the Crimean War was called the "Helmet of Yaroslav the Wise." It was the first pointed helmet to be used by a modern army, even before German troops wore pointed helmets. In 2008 Yaroslav was placed first (with 40% of the votes) in their ranking of "our greatest compatriots" by the viewers of the TV show Velyki Ukraintsi. In 2003, a monument to Yaroslav the Wise was erected in Kyiv, Ukraine. The creators of the monument are Boris Krylov and Oles Sydoruk. There is also a Yaroslavska Street in Kiev, and there are various streets named after him in cities throughout Ukraine. The Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University in Kharkiv is named after him.

Yaroslav the Wise was at the earliest named a saint by Adam of Bremen in his "Deeds of Bishops of the Hamburg Church" in 1075, but he was not formally canonized. In 2004, on the 950th anniversary of his repose, he was included in the calendar of saints of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate). On December 8, 2005, Patriarch Alexey II of Moscow and All Russia added his name to the *Menologium* as a local saint. On February 3, 2016, the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church held in Moscow established church-wide veneration of Yaroslav as a local saint.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the proper name for the Orthodox Church? One sees so many, and of such different variety!

It must be understood first of all that names like Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Antiochian Orthodox, Serbian Orthodox, Romanian Orthodox, etc. are all names for one and the same Church with one and the same faith and practice. Of course, between these churches there are cultural differences which do not touch the essence of the faith as such. Sometimes the Orthodox Church is also called the Eastern Orthodox Church, or the Eastern Church, or the Orthodox Catholic Church, or the Greek Orthodox Church (regardless of ethnicity). But once more, these are all different names for the same Church.

Care must be exercised not to confuse the Orthodox Church with the Eastern Christian Churches in union with the See of Rome: the Byzantine or Greek Catholics, and other Eastern Catholics. And also there is the distinction to be made between the Orthodox and the so-called Oriental Orthodox Churches such as the Coptic, Ethiopian, Eritrean, Syriac, Armenian, Indian, and other churches (such as the Assyrian Church of the East) which are similar to the Orthodox Church, but not part of it. Since 1970, the autocephalous (self-headed) Church in America formerly known as the Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church of America is simply called the Orthodox Church in America.

Recipe of the Month

Vegan Spaghetii alla Puttanesca

Spaghetti alla puttanesca is a pasta dish invented in the Italian city of Naples in the mid-20th century and made typically with tomatoes, olives, capers, anchovies, garlic, hot chili peppers, extra virgin olive oil, and salt. It is essentially the Italian equivalent of chop suey—the throwing of a bunch of ingredients

together in a pan. By omitting anchovies (an ingredient that's off-putting to many Americans), this dish can easily be made vegan as follows, thus making it a good choice for a Lenten meal.

INGREDIENTS

- 8 oz. of uncooked pasta (spaghetti, linguini, or fettucine)
- 28 oz. can of crushed tomatoes
- ½ cup pitted black olives
- 2 tbsp. of capers
- 1 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp. olive brine
- 3 garlic cloves
- 1 tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
- Salt and pepper to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Bring a large pot of water to boil and cook the pasta al dente according to package instructions. Once cooked, reserve at least ½ of pasta water and drain the rest.
2. As pasta cooks, make the puttanesca sauce in a large pan over low-medium heat and add crushed tomatoes, olives, olive brine, olive oil, capers, garlic, crushed red pepper flakes, salt, and pepper.
3. Let sauce simmer 15-20 minutes, stirring often. Once the sauce has cooked down, add the cooked and drained pasta to the pan. Toss the pasta in the sauce to fully coat.
4. Optionally, ladle the reserved pasta water a tablespoon at a time to help thicken the sauce, making it cling to the pasta. It also helps prevent the pasta from drying out.

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 March issue, the donation must be recorded in the Special Donations register in the church vestibule by February 23, 2025.

February 2, 2025

Altar Vigils offered by Helen Wanko in memory of John Wanko (anniversary of repose). **St. John's Cross** offered by Tais Fedetz in memory of John Wanko. **St. Nicholas' Cross** offered by Tais Fedetz in memory of Eva Benda.

February 9, 2025

St. John's Cross offered by Fr. W. Sophrony Royer in memory of Archpriest John Udics. **St. Nicholas' Cross** offered by Fr. W. Sophrony Royer in memory of Archimandrite Athanasy Mastalski.

February 16, 2025

St. John's Cross offered by Fr. W. Sophrony Royer in memory of Rev. Thomas Sheridan, S.J. (5th anniversary). **St. Nicholas' Cross** offered by Fr. W. Sophrony Royer in memory of Ernest A. Royer.

February 23, 2025

Altar Vigils offered by Reader Stephen Wasilewski in memory of Julia Wasilewski (22nd anniversary of repose). **Triple Candelabra** offered by Fr. W. Sophrony Royer in memory of Rita Richards. **Sacramental Bread** offered by Reader Stephen Wasilewski in memory of Julia Wasilewski (22nd anniversary of repose).

Schedule of Services

February 1-2, 2025 [*Presentation of Christ*]

5:00 PM (Saturday) – Great Vespers w. Lity
9:30 AM (Sunday) – Divine Liturgy

February 8-9, 2025

5:00 PM (Saturday) – Great Vespers
9:30 AM (Sunday) – Divine Liturgy

February 15=16, 2025

5:00 PM (Saturday) – Great Vespers
9:30 AM (Sunday) – Divine Liturgy

February 22-23, 2025

9:30 AM (Saturday) – General Panichida
5:00 PM (Saturday) – Great Vespers
9:30 AM (Sunday) – Divine Liturgy

Remember to support the parish every time you shop!



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

Daily Bible Readings

1. 1 Thessalonians 5:14-23; Luke 17:3-10
2. Hebrews 7:7-17; Luke 2:22-40
3. 1 Peter 2:21-3:9; Mark 12:13-17
4. 1 Peter 3:10-22; Mark 12:18-27
5. 1 Peter 4:1-11; Mark 12:28-37
6. 1 Peter 4:12-5:5; Mark 12:38-44
7. 2 Peter 1:1-10; Mark 13:1-8
8. 2 Timothy 2:11-19; Luke 18:2-8
9. 2 Timothy 3:10-15; Luke 18:10-14
10. 2 Peter 1:20-2:9; Mark 13:9-13
11. 2 Peter 2:9-22; Mark 13:14-23
12. 2 Peter 3:1-18; Mark 13:24-31
13. 1 John 1:8-2:6; Mark 13:31-14:2
14. 1 John 2:7-17; Mark 14:3-9
15. 2 Timothy 3:1-9; Luke 20:46-21:4
16. 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; Luke 15:11-32
17. 1 John 2:18-3:10; Mark 11:1-11
18. 1 John 3:11-20; Mark 14:10-42
19. 1 John 3:21-4:6; Mark 14:43-15:1
20. 1 John 4:20-5:21; Mark 15:1-15
21. 2 John 1:1-13; Mark 15:22-25, 33-41
22. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; John 5:24-30
23. 1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2; Matthew 25:31-46
24. 3 John 1:1-15; Luke 19:29-40, 22:7-39
25. Jude 1:1-10; Luke 22:39-42, 45-23:1
26. Joel 2:12-26; Joel 3:12-21*
27. Hebrews 13:17-21; John 10:9-16
28. Zechariah 8:7-17; Zechariah 8:19-23*

* Note: there are only Old Testament readings on these dates.

Parish News

“Souper Bowl” Project

Our parish’s collection of cans of soup and other non-perishable foods for donation to a local food pantry concludes on February 9, 2025. A bin for placing the donated food items is in the church hall. Thank You for your donations to this charitable project.

Parish Council Meeting

Parish Council is meeting in the church hall on Sunday, February 16, 2024 after Divine Liturgy.

Parish Flea Market

As a fundraising event, our parish is having a flea market on two consecutive Saturdays—March 22 and March 29, 2025. Rather than throwing out items in good condition for which you no longer have any use, consider donating them for the parish flea market. Please bring donated items to church—only assist those who are physically unable to come themselves will be given assistance bringing in donated items.