

# Quo Vadis

The monthly newsletter of Saints Peter & Paul Orthodox Catholic Church of Bayonne, N.J.  
Vol. 6, Number 4: December 2018

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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

“Christ is Born! Glorify Him!” With this traditional greeting, we implicitly acknowledge the truth that the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ is a transformative event in the salvation of the world. The glorious event is one in which, through the incarnation of the Word, the world is born anew.

The prologue of St. John’s Gospel (John 1:1-18) reminds us of the connection between the incarnation of God the Son and the creation of the world, starting, as does the Book of Genesis, with the words “In the beginning ...” In the beginning, the before the world was, the Word of God was with God, and was God, and everything that was created, was created through Him. And in the fullness of time, the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, like a light shining into the darkness.

In celebrating the Nativity of Christ, we have beheld the glory of the God-man, Who is adored by the shepherds and the angels, and we have been assured of the love of God, Whose love for the world was such that He gave His only-begotten Son, so that our sins might be forgiven and that we might become new men, clothed in a mantle of faith – a mantle that is the righteousness of Christ. God has given us a new beginning, wherein sin is abolished, and death overthrown, and our likeness to God is restored. Even more so, for in assuming our nature, like us in everything except for sin, Christ has established a new and greater bond between God and mankind, wherein through Him we are granted by the grace of Christ a share in His divine glory!

So, let us greet the glorious Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ with joyful faith, knowing that the Light come into the world is the power to enlighten our souls, so that the darkness of sin might be forever dispelled from us and from the world. To all of you – be merry on this Christmas Day, for it is indeed the “first day” of a new creation!

## Parish Council President’s Message

Dear parishioners and friends,

The Christmas season is upon us and we will soon be decorating the church with Christmas flowers and pine. In your packet of envelopes is the — Christmas Flowers envelope — I ask that you please donate generously. I

also encourage you to bring somebody to church on Christmas who might not have otherwise attended a worship service. Thank you for your continued support and I wish to you and your families a "Merry Christmas!"

Speaking of Christmas services, let's not forget about the Vigil Service on Christmas Eve. When the Three Wise Men came to adore the infant Jesus, they followed a star ... i.e. the adoration of the Wise Men, and the shepherds and angels, was at night, with the Star of Bethlehem seen above in the night sky. So, our adoration of the Child of Bethlehem also starts after dark with the Christmas Eve Vigil. Nothing we might do on Christmas Eve ought to take higher priority than being in church for the service. Surely we can find the time to attend!

Yours in Christ,  
Reader Stephen Wasilewski

## Excerpt from the Church Fathers

*"But so much is written for the sake of proving that Jesus the Christ is the Son of God and His Apostle, being of old the Word, and appearing sometimes in the form of fire, and sometimes in the likeness of angels; but now, by the will of God, having become man for the human race, He endured all the sufferings which the devils instigated the senseless Jews to inflict upon Him; who, though they have it expressly affirmed in the writings of Moses, "And the angel of God spoke to Moses in a flame of fire in a bush, and said, I am that I am, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," yet maintain that He who said this was the Father and Creator of the universe. Whence also the Spirit of prophecy rebukes them, and says, "Israel doth not know Me, my people have not understood Me."*

— St. Justin Martyr, First Apology, 63.

## Lives of the Saints

*St. Philothea of Thrace – commemorated on December 7th*

St. Philothea of Thrace was born in Trnovo, the old capital of Bulgaria, around 1206. Her father was a farmer, and her mother was from Wallachia. She died when Philothea was still a child, and her father remarried. The child was often punished by her stepmother, who accused her of being disobedient, and of giving their possessions away to the poor. Her father chastised her for this, but Philothea continued to attend church services and to do good to others, just as her mother had taught her. As she grew older, she was adorned with the virtues of prayer, virginity, and almsgiving.

St. Philothea used to bring food to her father, who was out working in the fields. Not all of the food reached him, however, because the girl would give some of it to the poor children begging in the street. When he complained to his wife that she did not prepare enough food for him, she replied, "I send you plenty of food. Ask your daughter what she does with it." Becoming angry with Philothea, her father decided to spy on her to see what happened to the food. From a place of concealment, he saw her giving food to the poor children who came to her. In a violent rage, he took the axe from his belt and threw it at the twelve-year-old girl, hitting her in the leg. The wound was mortal, and she soon gave her pure soul into God's hands.

The man was filled with fear and remorse, and tried to lift his daughter's body from the ground, but it became as heavy as a rock. Then the wretch ran to the Archbishop of Trnovo to confess his sin and explain what had happened. The Archbishop and his clergy went with candles and incense to take up the girl's body and bring it to the cathedral, but even they were unable to lift it. The Archbishop realized that St. Philothea did not wish to remain in her native land, so he began to name various monasteries, churches, and cathedrals to see where she wished to go. Not until he named the Monastery of Curtea de Argeş in Wallachia were they able to lift her holy relics and place them in a coffin. The Archbishop wrote to the Wallachian Voievode Radu Negru, asking him to accept the saint's relics. The Archbishop and his clergy carried the holy relics in procession as far as the Danube, where they were met by Romanian clergy, monastics, and the faithful. Then they were carried to the Curtea de Argeş Monastery.

Many people have been healed at the tomb of St. Philothea in a small chapel in the belltower behind the monastery church, and those who entreat her intercession receive help from her. Each year, on December 7th,

there is a festal pilgrimage to the Monastery, and people come from all over Romania. The relics of St. Philothea are carried around the courtyard in procession, and there are prayers for the sick.

## Modern Theological Classics

### Liturgy of the Word

Now the climax of the “synaxis” has been reached. God will speak to us. His eternal Word will be given to us again and we will receive it. The “Liturgy of the Word,” which follows the entrance, includes:

1. The “Peace.”
2. The singing of the *Prokeimenon*, verses from a Psalm, announcing the general theme of the scriptural readings.
3. The reading of the *Epistle*.
4. The singing of the *Alleluia* and censing.
5. The reading of the Gospel lesson by the deacon.
6. The *Sermon* by the priest.

All orders of the Church thus take part in the Liturgy of the Word (layman, deacon, priest). The *text* of the Scriptures is given to the whole Church, but its interpretation is the special “gift of teaching,” which belongs to the priest. The liturgical sermon, which was considered by the Fathers to be an essential and integral part of the Eucharist, is the main expression of the *teaching ministry* in the Church. It must be neither neglected (for, once more, it is an organic preparation for the sacramental part of the Eucharist) nor deviated from its unique purpose: that of conveying to the people the Word of God, by which the Church *lives* and grows. It is also wrong to preach the Word *after* the Eucharist – it belongs organically to the first, the *teaching* part of the service, and fulfills the reading of the Scriptures.

The Liturgy of the Catechumens is brought to its end with the Augmented Litany, the Prayer of Fervent Supplication, the prayers for the Catechumens and their dismissal.

### Augmented Litany

The Augmented Litany and its concluding Prayer (“Fervent Supplication”) is different from the Great Litany, its purpose being to pray for the actual and immediate needs of the congregation. In the Great Litany the individual was requested to prayer with the Church, to conform his needs to those of the Church. Here, the Church prays with each individual, mentioning particular needs and offering her maternal care. Any human need can find its expression here: at the end of the Sermon, the priest would announce those special needs (sickness of a member of the parish, or a “silver wedding,” or the graduation of the parish youngsters from school, etc.) and ask the congregation to join in prayers. This litany must express the unity, the solidarity and the mutual care of all the members of the parish.

### Prayers for the Catechumens

The *Prayers for the Catechumens* remind us of the golden age of the Church when *mission*, the conversion to Christ of non-believers was considered the *essential* task of the Church “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations ...” (Matt. 28:19). They are an indictment of our parishes as static, closed and self-centered communities, indifferent not only to the mission of the Church in the world, but even to the general interests of the Church, in everything which is not of immediate interest to the parish. Orthodox Christians think too much in terms of “business” (building, investing, etc.) and not enough in those of “mission” (each community participating in the general purpose of the Church).

The dismissal of the Catechumens, the final act of the “Synaxis,” is a solemn reminder of the high calling, the tremendous privilege of being a member of the faithful – those who by the grace of Baptism and Confirmation are fully pledged members of the Body of Christ, admitted as such to participation in the awesome Mystery of His Body and Blood.

## LITURGY OF THE FAITHFUL

*The Liturgy of the Faithful*, which begins immediately after the dismissal of the catechumens (followed in the past by the dismissal of all those temporarily “excommunicated,” i.e. not admitted to Holy Communion) has an introductory part consisting of two Prayers of the Faithful, in which the priest asks God to make the community worthy to offer the Holy Sacrifice. Meanwhile, the *Antimension* is unfolded on the Altar, signifying the preparation of the Lord’s Table for the Divine Banquet. The *Antimension* (“instead of the table”) is the sign of the unity of each community with its bishop. It bears the signature of the bishop and is given to the priest and the parish as “authorization” to perform the Sacrament. The Church is not a loosely “federated” network of parishes, but an organic unity of life, faith and love. Of the unity the bishop is the foundation and the guardian. Therefore, according to St. Ignatius of Antioch, nothing in the Church is to be done without the bishop, without his permission and blessing. “Let no one do anything that pertains to the Church apart from the bishop. You should regard that Eucharist as valid which is celebrated either by the bishop or by someone he authorizes. Where the bishop is present, there let the congregation gather, just as where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church” (to the Smyrneans). In addition to his priesthood, the priest is the *delegate* of the bishop in the parish, and the *Antimension* is the sign that both the priest and the parish are under the jurisdiction of the bishop, and, through him, in the living Apostolic Succession and unity of the Church.

### The Offertory

The Cherubim Hymn, the censing of the Altar and congregation, and the transfer of the eucharistic elements to the Altar (the Great Entrance) constitute the first essential “movement” of the Eucharist: the *Offertory*, which is the sacrificial act of the Church offering to God the oblation of our lives. We speak very often of the sacrifice of Christ, but so easily forget that the sacrifice of Christ requests and implies our own sacrifice, or rather our “uniting ourselves” to the sacrifice of Christ, for we are His Body and the partakers of His Life. A sacrifice is the natural movement of love, which is the gift of oneself, a self-denial for the sake of the Other. When I love somebody my life is *in* him whom I love, I give him my life – freely, willingly, joyfully – and this “giving away” becomes the very meaning of my life.

The mystery of the Holy Trinity is the mystery of the perfect and absolute sacrifice because it is the mystery of Absolute Love. God is Trinity because God is Love. The whole of the Father’s Essence is eternally “given away” to the Son, and the whole of the Son’s Life is in having the Essence of the Father as His Own, to exist as the Perfect Image of the Father; and, finally, this mutual sacrifice of perfect love, this eternal Gift of the Father and the Son, is the very Spirit of God – the Spirit of Love, of Perfection, of Beauty, of the whole inexhaustible depth of Divine Essence. The mystery of the Trinity is essential for the proper understanding of the Eucharist, and first of all, of its sacrificial character. God so *loved* the world that he gave (sacrificed) His Son to us, to bring us back to Himself. The Son of God so *loved* His Father that He gave Himself to Him. His whole life was a perfect, an absolute sacrificial movement. He performed it as God-Man, not only in His Divinity, but also in His Humanity, which He assumed out of Divine Love for us. In Himself He thus restored human life to perfection, as a *sacrifice of love to God*, a sacrifice not of fear, not of any kind of “interest,” but of love and love alone. And finally, this perfect life as love, and therefore as sacrifice, He gave to all who accept Him and believe in Him, restoring in them the initial relationship with God. The life of the Church, being His life in us and our life in Him, thus is necessarily a *sacrificial life*, an eternal movement of love towards God. The essential attitude and the essential act of the Church, which is the new Humanity restored by Christ, is, therefore, the *Eucharist*, the act of Love, Thanksgiving, and Sacrifice.

Now it is possible for us to realize that, at this first stage of the Eucharistic movement, the Bread and Wine that are being offered in the rite of Offertory *stand for us*, i.e. for our life, for the whole of our existence, for the entire world created by God for us. They are our *food*, but food is what makes us live, is that which becomes our body. By offering it to God, by sacrificing it to Him, we show that our life is “given away” to Him, that we follow Christ, our Head, in His movement of total love and sacrifice. Let us stress again – our sacrifice in the Eucharist is not distinct from that of Christ, is not a *new* sacrifice. Christ offered Himself once and for all, and His sacrifice, being full and perfect, makes any new sacrifice needless. But it is precisely the meaning of our Eucharistic offering, that in it we are given the priceless possibility of “entering” in Christ’s sacrifice, of being participants of his unique offering of Himself to God. Or, in other terms, His unique and perfect Sacrifice has made it possible for us – the Church, His Body – to be restored and readmitted into the fullness of true humanity: the sacrifice of praise and love. The one who has not understood this sacrificial character of the Eucharist, who has come to *receive* but not to *give*, has not

accepted the very spirit of the Church, which is above everything else the acceptance of, and the participation in, Christ's Sacrifice.

Thus, in the procession of Offertory our very life is being brought to the Altar, presented to God in an act of love and adoration. True, it is the "King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who comes to be sacrificed" (hymn of Offertory, Great Saturday), it is His Entrance as Priest and Oblation, and yet, in Him and with Him, we also lay on the paten, the members of His Body, the partakers of His Humanity. "Let us put aside all earthly cares," sings the choir, and, indeed, have not all our cares been assumed in this unique and ultimate Care that transfigures all our life – in this movement of love which brings us to the Source and the Giver and the Content of Life?

"*May the Lord God remember all of you in His Kingdom ...*" says the priest while approaching the Altar with the Gifts. The love, which Christ has "poured into our hearts" (Romans 5:5) has its natural expression in the mutual love of Christians for each other. The Kingdom of God is that of perfect unity – "that they may be one, even as we are one" (John 17:11). Therefore, there is no other way to approach God but in love. He *remembers* us if we remember each other. Whatever the number of those who offer *this* Eucharist, it is always the whole Church – the unity of faith and love – that offers and is being offered, and this organic unity of the Church is expressed in the commemoration at the Great Entrance.

Now the priest has placed the Gifts on the Altar. He reads the *Prayer of Oblation*, asking God to accept this sacrifice, and he covers the paten and the chalice with the *aer*. Just as the meaning of Christ's life and sacrifice was hidden from the powers and dominions of this world, our true lie, the one we received from Christ, remains hidden, revealed to the faithful alone, until the final Advent of Christ in His glory. Today, since the Prayer of Oblation, as all other prayers of the celebrant, are read "secretly" – in the past they were read aloud – a litany of supplication follows the Great Entrance.

## The Confession of Faith and Love

Since the sacrifice of the Church is the sacrifice of love, the movement of the offertory is completed, "sealed" by the Kiss of Peace. *Let us love one another that in one accord we may confess Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: the Trinity, one in essence and undivided!* In the early days the kiss of peace was transmitted from the celebrant to each member of the congregation – each giving it to the next one. Today only the priests, when concelebrating, kiss each other with the greeting *Christ is among us! He is and shall be!*

After expressing our unity of love, we express, in the Creed, our *unity of faith*. The unity of the Church is not a partial, limited, human unity (national, social, emotional, etc.). It is the unity of Truth: the divinely revealed, total, and absolute Truth. The one who does not accept it, does not belong to the Church, for he has preferred something else to the Truth; he has blinded himself and is till the slave of the "old life," with its errors, darkness and sins. Of this Truth, the Creed is the confession and thus, the criterion.

*Fr. Alexander Schmemmann,<sup>1</sup> Liturgy and Life, pp. 46-52.*

## Recipe of the Month

### Acadian Molasses Spice Cookies

*This iconic recipe from Pubnico, Nova Scotia, can be sampled at the Historic Acadian Village/Le Village Historique Acadien. (The recipe is from Le Village Historique Acadien cookbook: Recipes to Treasure, page 65). Makes 80 thick, soft cookies. The village of Pubnico on the southern tip of Nova Scotia is a close-knit community founded 365 years ago, in 1653, by Philippe Muis-d'Entremont, whose descendants still populate the village. Originally of French descent and Roman Catholic faith, they developed a close relationship with the Mi'kmaq people, who adopted Catholicism, and their lives, and families, intermingled. They developed a unique self-reliant identity quite separate from their French and British counterparts (which made sense as they were physically isolated from them) and came to know themselves*

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<sup>1</sup> Fr. Alexander Schmemmann (1921-1983) was an influential Orthodox priest, teacher, and writer. From 1946 to 1951 he taught in Paris, and afterwards in New York. In his teachings and writings he sought to establish the close links between Christian theology and Christian liturgy. At the time of his death, he was the dean of St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary in Yonkers, New York.

*as Acadians. Pubnico is one of the areas in Atlantic Canada where the Acadians returned after the Great Deportation of 1755, thus the history of this community is one of the oldest in Canada. Today, the identity of the Acadian people is rooted in honoring their past, as they know stories of each ancestor for generations (I can personally attest, being part Acadian myself, that when Acadians meet one another for the first time they are apt to compare genealogical notes), and keeping their culture, including its distinctive cuisine.*

### **Ingredients:**

- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup margarine (or butter)
- 1 cup dark molasses
- 1 large egg
- 4 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 teaspoon each of ginger, cloves, cinnamon, and salt
- 1/2 cup milk

### **Directions:**

(1) Pre-heat oven to 350 Fahrenheit. Cream sugar and butter. Add molasses and egg; blend well. Combine dry ingredients: add to the above, alternately with milk. Bring dough together; refrigerate tightly wrapped.

(2) Roll to 1/4 inch thick (this is quite thick; these cookies should not be thin). Cut into shapes (They are round at *Le Village Historique Acadien*).

(3) Bake at 350 degrees Fahrenheit for 10 minutes; serve warm or cold (optional: dust with confectioners' sugar).

## **Parish News**

### Parish Council Meeting

The Parish Council is meeting on Sunday, December 9, 2018 after Divine Liturgy.

### Parish Confessions

All parishioners ought to go to confession during the Nativity Fast, which may be heard after any Vespers. Those unable to attend a Vespers ought to call the Rectory at (201) 436-3244 to make an appointment.

### Christmas Social

The Carpathian Club invites all our parishioners and visitors to its annual Christmas Social, which shall be held after Divine Liturgy on Christmas Day in the club's hall behind the church building.

### Christmas Card Collection

We are collecting the front sides of used Christmas cards for recycling by the nuns of Holy Transfiguration Monastery. So please bring your Christmas cards to church rather than tossing them in the trash.

### St. Mary's "St. Nicholas" Dinner

St. Mary's Orthodox Catholic Church, 89 W. 29th St., Bayonne, N.J. is having its annual "St. Nicholas" Dinner on Sunday, December 2, 2018 at 12 PM. For information, call Fr. John Fencik at (201) 436-5549 or (201) 779-6604.

### "Souper Bowl" Outreach Project

Starting in December, our parish will be collecting cans of soup for donation to a local soup kitchen. A bin for the soup cans will be in the church until February 3, 2019. Thank you for co-operating in this project!

### In Memoriam

Mr. Yaser Nesheiwat, of Bayonne, N.J., passed into blessed repose on November 18, 2018. Memory Eternal!

## Schedule of Services

### December 1-2, 2018

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

### December 5-6, 2018 (St. Nicholas)

6:00 PM (Wed.) – Great Vespers w. Lity  
9:30 AM (Thu.) – Divine Liturgy

### December 8-9, 2018

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

### December 15-16, 2018

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

### December 22-23, 2018

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

### December 24-25, 2018 (Christmas)

4:30 PM (Mon.) – Vigil w. Lity  
9:30 AM (Tue.) – Divine Liturgy

### December 26-27, 2018 (2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> Days of Christmas)

9:30 AM (Wed.) – Divine Liturgy  
9:30 AM (Thu.) – Divine Liturgy

### December 29-30, 2018

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

## Daily Bible Readings

1. Gal. 5:22-6:2; Luke 12:32-40
2. Eph. 6:10-17; Luke 18:18-27
3. 2 Tim. 2:20-26; Luke 20:27-44
4. 2 Tim. 3:16-4:4; Luke 21:12-18
5. 2 Tim. 4:9-22; Luke 21:6-7, 10-11, 20-24
6. Titus 1:5-2:1; Luke 21:28-33
7. Titus 1:15-2:10; Luke 21:37-22:8
8. Eph. 1:16-23; Luke 13:18-29
9. Gal. 1:12-18; Luke 17:12-19
10. Heb. 3:5-11, 17-19; Mark 8:11-21
11. Heb. 4:1-13; Mark 8:22-26
12. Heb. 5:11-6:8; Mark 8:30-34
13. Heb. 7:1-6; Mark 9:10-16
14. Heb. 7:18-25; Mark 9:33-41
15. Eph. 2:11-13; Luke 14:1-11
16. Gal. 3:4-11; Luke 14:16-24
17. Heb. 8:7-13; Mark 9:42-10:1
18. Heb. 9:9-10,15-23; Mark 10:2-12
19. Heb. 10:1-18; Mark 10:11-16
20. Heb. 10:35-11:7; Mark 10:17-27
21. Heb. 11:8, 11-16; Mark 10:23-32
22. Eph. 5:1-8; Luke 16:10-15
23. Heb. 11:9-10, 17-23, 32-40; Mark 1:1-25
24. Heb. 1:1-12; Luke 2:1-20
25. Gal. 4:4-7; Matt. 2:1-12
26. Heb. 2:11-18; Matt. 2:13-23
27. James 1:19-27; Matt. 11:27-33
28. James 2:1-13; Matt. 12:1-2
29. Col. 1:3-6; Luke 17:3-10
30. Gal. 1:11-19; Matt. 2:13-23
31. James 2:14-26; Matt. 12:13-17

## Special Donations

*Please note that for Special Donations in January to be acknowledged in Quo Vadis, it is necessary for the donation to be recorded in the Special Donations register in the church vestibule by December 16, 2018.*

### December 2, 2018

**Altar Vigils** offered by John and Helen Wanko in memory of Lydia Wanko (anniversary of birth).

### December 23, 2018

**Altar Vigils** offered by John and Helen Wanko in memory of June Bianchini (anniversary of birth).

### December 30, 2018

**Triple Candelabra** and **Sacramental Bread** offered by Tais Fedetz in memory of Archpriest Nicholas Fedetz (anniversary of repose).