

Quo Vadis

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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

In the summer of 1865, just after he began writing *Crime and Punishment*, the greatest novelist of all-time hit rock bottom. Recently widowed and bedeviled by epilepsy, Fyodor Dostoyevsky (November 11, 1821–February 9, 1881), already deeply in debt on account of his gambling addiction, had taken upon himself the debts of his recently deceased elder brother’s magazine. Creditors soon came knocking on his door, threatening to send him to debtors’ prison.¹ In a fit of despair, he agreed to sell the rights to an edition of his collected works to his publisher, a man named Fyodor Stellovsky, for the sum of his debt — 3,000 rubles, or around \$80,000 in today’s money. As part of the deal, he would also have to produce a new novel of at least 175 pages by November 13, 1866. If he failed to meet the deadline, he would lose all rights to his work, which would be transferred to Stellovsky for perpetuity.

Only after signing the contract did Dostoyevsky find out that it was his publisher, a cunning exploiter who often took advantage of artists down on their luck, who had purchased the promissory notes of his brother’s debt for next to nothing, using two intermediaries to bully Dostoyevsky into paying the full amount. Enraged but without recourse, he set out to fulfill his contract. But he was so consumed with finishing *Crime and Punishment* that he spent most of 1866 working on it instead of writing *The Gambler*, the novel he had promised Stellovsky. When October rolled around, Dostoyevsky languished at the prospect of writing an entire novel in four weeks. There was only one thing to do — write the novel, and write it fast!

On October 15, he called up a friend who taught stenography,² seeking to hire his best pupil. Without hesitation, the professor recommended a young woman named Anna Snitkina. Twenty-year-old

¹ A decade earlier, he had narrowly escaped the death penalty for reading banned books and was instead exiled, sentenced to four years at a Siberian labor camp—so the prospect of being imprisoned was unbearably terrifying to him.

² Stenography, in that era, was a radical innovation and its mastery was so technically demanding that of the 150 students who had enrolled in Anna’s program, 125 had dropped out within a month.

Anna, who had taken up stenography shortly after graduating from secondary school hoping to become financially independent by her own labor, was thrilled by the offer — Dostoyevsky was her recently deceased father's favorite author, and she had grown up reading his tales. The thought of not only meeting Dostoyevsky but helping him with his work filled her with joy.

The next day, Anna presented herself at Dostoyevsky's house at eleven-thirty, "no earlier and no later," as Dostoyevsky had instructed her (one of his favorite expressions, bespeaking his stringency). Distracted and irritable, he asked her a series of questions about her training. Although she answered each of them seriously and almost dryly, so as to appear maximally businesslike, he somehow softened over the course of the conversation. By the early afternoon, they had begun their collaboration on the novel — he, dictating; she, writing in stenographic shorthand, then transcribing at home at night.

For the next twenty-five days, Anna came to Dostoyevsky's house at noon and stayed until four. Their dictating sessions were punctuated by short breaks for tea and conversation. With each day, he grew kinder and warmer toward her, and eventually came to address her by his favorite term of endearment, "golubchik" — Russian for "little dove." He cherished her seriousness, her extraordinary powers of sympathy, how her luminous spirit dissipated even his darkest moods and lifted him out of his obsessive thoughts. She was touched by his kindness, his respect for her, how he took a genuine interest in her opinions and treated her like a collaborator rather than hired help. But neither of them was aware that this deep mutual affection and appreciation was the seed of a legendary love.

Their last dictation took place on November 10. With Anna's instrumental help, Dostoyevsky had accomplished the miraculous — he had finished an entire novel in twenty-six days. He shook her hand, paid her the 50 rubles they had agreed on (about \$1,500 in today's money), and thanked her warmly. The following day, Dostoyevsky's forty-fifth birthday, he decided to mark the dual occasion by giving a celebratory dinner at a restaurant. He invited Anna. She had never dined at a restaurant and was so nervous that she almost didn't go — but she did, and Dostoyevsky spent the evening showering her with kindnesses. But when the elation of the accomplishment wore off, he suddenly realized that his collaboration with Anna had become the light of his life and was devastated by the prospect of never seeing her again. Anna, too, found herself sullen and joyless, her typical buoyancy weighed down by an acute absence. She recounts: *"I had grown so accustomed to that merry rush to work, the joyful meetings and the lively conversations with Dostoyevsky, that they had become a necessity to me. All my old activities had lost their interest and seemed empty and futile."*

Unable to imagine his life without her, Dostoyevsky asked Anna if she would help him finish *Crime and Punishment*. On November 20, exactly ten days after the end of their first project, he invited her to his house and greeted her in an unusually excited state. They walked to his study, where he proceeded to propose marriage in the most wonderful and touching way. Dostoyevsky told Anna that he would like her opinion on a new novel he was writing. But as soon as he began telling her the plot, it became apparent that his protagonist was a very thinly veiled version of himself, or rather of him as he saw himself — a troubled artist of the same age as he, having survived a harsh childhood and many losses, plagued by an incurable disease, a man *"gloomy, suspicious; possessed of a tender heart . . . but incapable of expressing his feelings; an artist and a talented one, perhaps, but a failure who had not once in his life succeeded in embodying his ideas in the forms he dreamed of, and who never ceased to torment himself over that fact."* But the protagonist's greatest torment was that he had fallen desperately in love with a young woman — a character named Anya, removed from reality by a single letter — of whom he felt unworthy; a gentle, gracious, wise, and vivacious girl whom he feared he had nothing to offer.

Only then did it dawn on Anna that Dostoyevsky had fallen in love with her and that he was so terrified of her rejection that he had to feel out her receptivity from behind the guise of fiction. Is it plausible, Dostoyevsky asked her, that the alleged novel's heroine would fall in love with its flawed hero? She recounts the words of literature's greatest psychological writer:

"What could this elderly, sick, debt-ridden man give a young, alive, exuberant girl? Wouldn't her love for him involve a terrible sacrifice on her part? And afterwards, wouldn't she bitterly regret uniting her life with his? And in general, would it be possible for a young girl so different in age and personality to fall in love with my artist? Wouldn't that be psychologically false? That is what I wanted to ask your opinion about, Anna Grigoryevna."

"But why would it be impossible? For if, as you say, your Anya isn't merely an empty flirt and has a kind, responsive heart, why couldn't she fall in love with your artist? What if he is poor and sick? Where's the sacrifice on her part, anyway? If she really loves him, she'll be happy, too, and she'll never have to regret anything!"

I spoke with some heat. Fyodor Mikhailovich looked at me in excitement. "And you seriously believe she could love him genuinely, and for the rest of her life?" He fell silent, as if hesitating. "Put yourself in her place for a moment," he said in a trembling voice. "Imagine that this artist — is me; that I have confessed my love to you and asked you to be my wife. Tell me, what would you answer?"

His face revealed such deep embarrassment, such inner torment, that I understood at long last that this was not a conversation about literature; that if I gave him an evasive answer, I would deal a deathblow to his self-esteem and pride. I looked at his troubled face, which had become so dear to me, and said, "I would answer that I love you and will love you all my life." I won't try to convey the words full of tenderness and love that he said to me then; they are sacred to me. I was stunned, almost crushed by the immensity of my happiness and for a long time I couldn't believe it.

Fyodor and Anna were married on February 15, 1867, and remained besotted with one another until Dostoyevsky's death fourteen years later. Although they suffered financial hardship and tremendous tragedy, including the death of two of their children, they buoyed each other with love. Anna took it upon herself to lift the family out of debt by making her husband Russia's first self-published author. She studied the book market meticulously, researched vendors, masterminded distribution plans, and turned Dostoyevsky into a national brand. Today, many consider her Russia's first true businesswoman. But beneath her business acumen was the same tender, enormous heart that had made loving room within itself for a brilliant man with all of his demons.

In the afterword to her memoir, Anna reflects on the secret to their deep and true marriage — one of the greatest loves in the history of creative culture:

Throughout my life it has always seemed a kind of mystery to me that my good husband not only loved and respected me as many husbands love and respect their wives, but almost worshipped me, as though I were some special being created just for him. And this was true not only at the beginning of our marriage but through all the remaining years of it, up to his very death. Whereas in reality I was not distinguished for my good looks, nor did I possess talent nor any special intellectual cultivation, and I had no more than a secondary education. And yet, despite all that, I earned the profound respect, almost the adoration of a man so creative and brilliant.

*This enigma was cleared up for me somewhat when I read V.V. Rozanov's note to a letter of Strakhov dated January 5, 1890, in his book *Literary Exiles*. Let me quote: "No one, not even a 'friend,' can make us better. But it is a great happiness in life to meet a person of quite different construction, different bent, completely dissimilar views who, while always remaining himself and in no wise echoing us nor currying favor with us (as sometimes happens) and not trying to insinuate his soul (and an insincere soul at that!) into our psyche, into our muddle, into our tangle, would stand as a firm wall, as a check to our follies and our irrationalities, which every human being has. Friendship lies in contradiction and not in agreement! Verily, God granted me Strakhov as a teacher and my friendship with him, my feelings for him were ever a kind of firm wall on which I felt I could always lean, or rather rest. And it won't let you fall, and it gives warmth."*

In truth, my husband and I were persons of “quite different construction, different bent, completely dissimilar views.” But we always remained ourselves, in no way echoing nor currying favor with one another, neither of us trying to meddle with the other’s soul, neither I with his psyche nor he with mine. And in this way my good husband and I, both of us, felt ourselves free in spirit. Fyodor Mikhailovich, who reflected so much in so much solitude on the deepest problems of the human heart, doubtless prized my non-interference in his spiritual and intellectual life. And therefore, he would sometimes say to me, “You are the only woman who ever understood me!” (That was what he valued above all.) He looked on me as a rock on which he felt he could lean, or rather rest. “And it won’t let you fall, and it gives warmth.”

It is this, I believe, which explains the astonishing trust my husband had in me and in all my acts, although nothing I ever did transcended the limits of the ordinary. It was these mutual attitudes which enabled both of us to live in the fourteen years of our married life in the greatest happiness possible for human beings on earth.

Here in the United States, we have the third highest divorce rate in the world — for the last forty years the divorce rate has ranged between 40% and 50%, and the average length of a marriage is eleven years. Lately the divorce rate has been declining — e.g. this year’s divorce rate is estimated to come in at 39% — but this may be not good news. While it is true that the people who are getting married are increasingly staying married, that group is an ever-smaller and more privileged group of individuals. The reason for the falling divorce rate is that many “millennial” couples, especially low-income couples, are choosing cohabitation instead of marriage, so that when their relationships break-up (and many have had children), it doesn’t count towards the divorce rate. Marriage is becoming one of the many institutions from which the poor, less-educated, and disadvantaged are excluded, and that is very sad, as according to surveys more than half of those who aren’t married say that they would like to be married. It may be high time for modern Americans to take to heart Anna Dostoyevsky’s words on the secret to a happy marriage.

Parish Council President’s Message

GREETINGS PARISHIONERS AND FRIENDS OF SS. PETER AND PAUL CHURCH:

THIS AUGUST 6, 2020, WE WILL BE OBSERVING THE FEAST DAY OF THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST. THE TRANSFIGURATION IS RECORDED IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS OF MATTHEW, MARK, AND LUKE. THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN DOES NOT MENTION THE TRANSFIGURATION.

LET US BEGIN BY UNDERSTANDING WHAT BEING TRANSFIGURED MEANS. TO BE TRANSFIGURED SIGNIFIES A CHANGE OF FORM OR APPEARANCE. THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED TO JESUS, HIS APPEARANCE CHANGED AND HIS FACE SHONE LIKE THE SUN, AND HIS GARMENTS BECAME AS WHITE AS LIGHT. THE GOSPEL OF LUKE 9:28-35 TELLS US: “NOW ABOUT EIGHT DAYS AFTER THESE SAYINGS JESUS TOOK WITH HIM PETER, AND JOHN, AND JAMES, AND WENT UP ON THE MOUNTAIN TO PRAY. AND WHILE THEY WERE PRAYING, THE APPEARANCE OF HIS FACE CHANGED, AND HIS CLOTHES BECAME DAZZLING WHITE. SUDDENLY THEY SAW TWO MEN, MOSES AND ELIJAH, TALKING TO HIM. THEY APPEARED IN GLORY AND WERE SPEAKING OF HIS DEPARTURE, WHICH HE WAS ABOUT TO ACCOMPLISH IN JERUSALEM. NOW PETER AND HIS COMPANIONS WERE WEIGHTED DOWN WITH SLEEP; BUT SINCE THEY STAYED AWAKE, THEY SAW HIS GLORY AND THE TWO MEN WHO STOOD WITH HIM. JUST AS THEY WERE LEAVING HIM, PETER SAID TO JESUS, “MASTER IS IT GOOD FOR US TO BE HERE; LET US MAKE THREE DWELLINGS ONE FOR YOU, ONE FOR MOSES, AND ONE FOR ELIJAH. WHILE THEY WERE SAYING THIS, A CLOUD CAME AND OVERSHADOWED THEM; AND THEY WERE TERRIFIED AS THEY ENTERED THE CLOUD. THEN FROM THE CLOUD CAME A VOICE THAT SAID,” THIS IS MY SON, MY CHOSEN, LISTEN TO HIM.”

AS TOLD BY LUKE IN HIS GOSPEL, THE TRANSFIGURATION IS ONE OF CHRIST’S GREAT MIRACLES. HE TOLD US CHRIST TOOK PETER, JAMES, AND JOHN UP THE MOUNTAIN TO PRAY AND STRENGTHEN THEIR FAITH FOR WHEN THEY WILL HAVE TO BEAR WITNESS TO HIS PASSION, CRUCIFIXION AND DEATH ON THE CROSS. IT IS FOR THIS REASON CHRIST REVEALS HIS DIVINE GLORY, THE SPLENDOR OF TRUTH AND LOVE TO THEM. THE TRANSFIGURATION IS ALSO A THEOPHANY, A MANIFESTATION OF THE HOLY TRINITY. WE HAVE CHRIST IN HIS

HUMANITY, THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE CLOUD, AND GOD THE FATHER PRESENT IN HIS VOICE. WE ALL SHOULD PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO THE WORDS OF GOD THE FATHER WHEN HE SAID," THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, WITH WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED, LISTEN TO HIM."

I OFFER TO YOU, MY FRIENDS, A PRAYER THAT I WILL BE SAYING ON THE FEAST DAY OF THE TRANSFIGURATION:

O GOD, WHO IN THE GLORIOUS TRANSFIGURATION OF YOUR ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON. CONFIRMED THE MYSTERIES OF FAITH BY THE WITNESS OF THE FATHERS AND WONDERFULLY PREFIGURED OUR FULL ADOPTION TO SONSHIP, GRANT WE PRAY, TO YOUR SERVANTS THAT, LISTENING TO THE VOICE OF YOUR BELOVED SON, WE MAY MERIT TO BECOME CO-HEIRS WITH HIM. HO LIVES AND REIGNS WITH YOU IN THE UNITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, ONE GOD FOREVER AND EVER.

"THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, LISTEN TO HIM."

WITH FAITH IN CHRIST,
ROBERT PIERCE

Excerpt from the Church Fathers

"Just as the body has an ear, so also does the soul. Not everybody has an ear that is open, nor does every soul. God commands the soul: do not kill, do not steal, do not commit adultery, turn away from evil and do good, etc. The soul whose ears are open, hears and listens to God speaking and does what God commands. Truly, such a soul cannot but hear God and obey His commandments if it has its ears open. Men listen and carry out the commands of earthly kings and lesser authorities, and will not a soul listen to God speaking if it has its ears open? Of course! And with what fervor and delight will it not listen and say to Him: 'Ready is my heart, O God, ready is my heart' (Ps. 107:2 LXX)."

— St. Tikhon of Zadonsk (1724-1783)

Lives of the Saints

St. Tikhon of Zadonsk, Bishop – commemorated on August 13th

St. Tikhon of Zadonsk was born in 1724 into an impoverished family of the village of Korotsko in the Novgorod oblast of Russia, and was named Timothy Sokolov at birth. In his youth he was sent to seminary in Novgorod where he received a good education and later taught Greek and other subjects. Having received the monastic tonsure with the name Tikhon, in the same year he was ordained deacon and priest, and appointed two years later as rector of the Seminary in Tver.

In 1761 he was consecrated Bishop of Kexholm and Ladoga, and in 1763 nominated Bishop of Voronezh, a difficult diocese to administer because of its large size and transient population, which included many schismatics. Feeling the burden of the episcopacy to be beyond his strength, St. Tikhon resigned in 1767, retiring first to the Monastery of Tolshevo, and later to the Monastery of Zadonsk, where he remained until his blessed repose. In retirement, he devoted all his time to fervent prayer and the writing of books. His treasury of books earned him the title of "the Russian Chrysostom," whose writings he employed extensively; simple in style, replete with quotes from the Holy Scriptures, they treat mostly of the duties of Christians, with many parables taken from daily life. In them the Christian is taught how to oppose the passions and cultivate the virtues. A large collection of his letters is included in his works, and these give a wealth of spiritual guidance directed both to the laity and monastics.

St. Tikhon reposed peacefully in 1783, at the age of fifty-nine. Over sixty years later, in 1845, when a new church was built in Zadonsk in place of the church where he was buried, it was necessary to remove his body. Although interred in a damp place, his relics were found to be whole and incorrupt; even his vestments were untouched by decay. Many miracles were worked by St. Tikhon after his death,

and some 300,000 pilgrims attended his glorification on August 13, 1861. He is one of the most beloved Russian saints, and is invoked particularly for the protection and upbringing of children. The life and works of Tikhon inspired Dostoyevsky and are reflected in the character of Bishop Tikhon in *Demons* and the characters of Alyosha Karamazov and the Elder Zosima in *The Brothers Karamazov*. He is the patron saint of the first Eastern Orthodox monastery established in the Western Hemisphere, the Monastery of St. Tikhon of Zadonsk in South Canaan, Pennsylvania, founded in 1905, and of St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary (across the road from the monastery), founded in 1938. The Russian Orthodox Church of St. Tikhon of Zadonsk in San Francisco, California, founded in 1951 by Russian refugees from Shanghai, China, is also named after him.

Modern Theological Classics

III. Some Problems in the History of Religions

There is something unique and unparalleled in the religious experience of the Old Testament that, in spite of many points of contact with surrounding civilizations, makes it so utterly different from all the religions of the ancient world. What strikes us, even from a purely historical comparative point of view, is *the permanence and the uninterrupted tradition* of its monotheistic faith, soaring to greater and greater heights in the religious experience of the spiritual leaders of Israel, leaders who too often have been persecuted by their own countrymen, but whose message, consigned to writing, becomes the holy books, the sacred treasure of the Jewish people. The unswerving monotheistic line, not in the life of wide circles of the people who during the period of Kings were often only too eager to combine their allegiance to Yahweh with the worship of alien, pagan gods, but in these leading prophetic personalities whose faith and religious experience at last prevailed and proved to be decisive — this line of monotheistic experience (that in many cases can be called an ascending line) strikes us with wonder and is simply unaccountable from purely evolutionary, historical presuppositions. It is an incomparable exception, standing forth — as we said — unequaled among the religions of the ancient world. Even the pure and noble religion of Zoroaster cannot be compared with its intransigent, unflinching proclamation of the Only God, the Only Lord and Master. It is an historical enigma.

But if we approach this complex of unparalleled religious facts and experiences *from the inside*, i.e. if we try to realize the very core, the deepest inner inspiration of this experience, we perceive some characteristic features thereof that are even more striking. We see that here the initiative *belongs to God* — not only in revealing Himself as Supreme and Holy and the One to whom alone the plenitude of Being belongs (“I am He Who Is!”) and Who does not suffer and recognize any other deity beside Himself, but also as the One who *supports* and *maintains* this true knowledge of Himself, in spite of the faithlessness and inconstancies of the Jewish people. “I revealed Myself to those who did not ask for Me. I was found by those who did not seek Me, I said: ‘Here am I, here am I’ to a nation who did not call on My name. I spread my hands all the day to rebellious people . . . a people that provoke Me continually . . .” (Isaiah 65:1-3). The initiative is God's: He is spreading His arms to a rebellious people. He is meeting them more than halfway. He had elected them and He is still condescending to them and drawing them to Himself, by punishment for their unfaithfulness, by judgment and . . . “bonds of compassion, bonds of mercy” (Hosea 11:5). So *His is the initiative*: in revealing Himself to Abraham and the patriarchs and to Moses and the prophets, in revealing His Holy Name to Moses, in the great act of Salvation and in the giving of the Law and concluding His covenant with them, sending out the prophets,³ even against their own will,⁴ in punishment and help, in the destruction of their Holy City and of His own temple — all that in order to move, to hit their hardened, self-conceited heart — and in loving condescension and pardon, announced by the prophets along, with the doom and judgment. This is the leading, electing, chastising, destroying and . . . restoring, pardoning *initiative of God* trying to awaken in their hearts a *response* to His faithfulness

³ See Isaiah ch. 6.

⁴ See Amos 7:15-16; Jeremiah 20:7-9. Compare the beautiful pages in Louis Bouyer, “La Bible et l’Evangile,” Paris 1958, pp. 19ff.

and bounty, and to His severe and awe-inspiring Holiness (“The Lord your God is a devouring Fire, a jealous God” — Deut. 4:24) and in His pardoning love “See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no God beside Me: I kill and I make alive, I wound and I heal, and there is none that can deliver out of my hand” (Deut. 32:39). And compare also e.g. these words full of condescending love and majesty:

“And now Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul, and to keep the commandments and the statutes of the Lord, which I command you this day for your good? Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it; yet the Lord set His heart in love upon your fathers and chose their descendent after them, you above all people ... Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn. For the Lord our God is God of Gods and Lord of Lords, the Great, the Mighty and the terrible God, Who is not partial and takes no bribes. He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and loves the sojourner (the stranger) giving him food and clothing.” (Deut. 10:12-18).

This is the deepest sense of the progressive, pedagogical revelation of God in the Old Testament: to come to know God in His Majesty and Transcending, incomprehensible Goodness and Power and loving kindness and to fulfill His commandments and to serve Him with a humble and loving heart, to trust in His pardon and His promise and to yearn for His Kingdom to come. A revelation that in the prophets (especially in Isaiah and Jeremiah) points to a new stage, beyond itself, to a New and more perfect Covenant:

“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord, I will put my law within them and I will write upon their hearts, and I will be their God and they shall be my people . . . For I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember sin no more.” (Jer. 31:11-34).

But already in the experience and the revelation of the Old Testament what wonderful accents of yearning for God and of trust in Him, what deep feeling of His nearness and of His readiness to answer our prayer and stretch forth His helping hand into the abyss of our suffering!

“As a hart longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for Thee, O God! My soul thirsts for God, for the living God! When will I come and behold the face of God?” (Ps. 42:1-2).

“Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and art thou troubled within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him, my Salvation and my God.” (Psalm 42:5).

“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want; he makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters: He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness, for His name’s sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil: for Thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me . . .” (Ps. 23:1-4).

These accents of fervent supplication, this lifting up of the heart towards God, this crying out to God from the depth of the abyss, this trust and confidence, the impassionate stretching forth of the soul towards God, its sole Refuge and Helper and this rejoicing in the Lord are incomparable. They have been adopted by the Christian Church as the best expression of this turning of the soul towards her God in distress and anguish and in thankful praise.

“Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is nothing on earth that I desire but Thee. My flesh and my heart are failing. But God is the strength of my heart and my part forever.” (Ps. 72:25-26).

The overwhelming Omnipotence of God i.e. His nearness to me wherever I am, His Goodness and Incomprehensibility and Saving Presence; and the support of His mighty and merciful arm are depicted in Psalm 139.

“O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me! Thou knowest when I sit down and when I rise up; Thou desirest my thoughts from afar . . . Even before a word is on my tongue, lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it perfectly. Thou dost beset me behind and before, and layest Thy hand upon me . . . Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit?

Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend in heaven, Thou art there! If I wave my bed in Sheol, Thou art there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Thy hand shall lead me, and Thy right hand shall support me.” (Ps. 139:1-2, 4-5, 7-10).

Out of the highest expressions of this piety of the Old Testament we find in the longest and perhaps one of the most beautiful psalms — Psalm 119. It describes the delight of the soul in the Word of God, in His commandments and it is a fervent prayer, ascending to Him from the depth, a fervent hope and a cry for Salvation.

“Blessed are those who keep His commandments, who see Him with their whole heart . . . Thou hast commanded Thy precept to be kept diligently. O that my ways be steadfast in keeping Thy statutes. I will observe Thy statutes; O forsake me not utterly . . . With my whole heart I seek Thee; let me not wander from Thy commandments. Thy testimonies are wonderful; therefore, my soul keeps them . . . I open my mouth and I sigh, because I long for Thy commandments. Turn to me and be gracious to me as is Thy wont towards those who love Thy name . . . With my whole I cry: answer me, O Lord. I will keep Thy statutes. I cry to Thee: save me, that I may observe Thy testimonies. Look on my affliction and deliver me, for I do not forget Thy law . . . Let my cry come before Thee, O Lord; give me Understanding according to Thy word! Let my supplication come before Thee; deliver me according to Thy word! Let Thy hand be ready to help me, for I have chosen Thy precepts. I long for Thy salvation, O Lord, and Thy law is my delight . . . I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Thy servant: for I have forgotten Thy commandments.” (Ps. 119: 2, 4-5, 8, 10, 129, 131, 145-146, 170, 173-174, 176).

The highest revelation of the Old Testament, pointing beyond itself is that of the coming of the Righteous One, Who will take upon himself our sins, our diseases and our suffering. “He is despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief. But he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions . . . upon Him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray . . . and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth. Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter and like a sheep that before his shearer is dumb, so He opened not His mouth. Yet he bore the sin of many and made intercession of the transgressions” (Isaiah, chapter 53). The New Testament speaks of the *fulfillment*: it *has been achieved*; the reconciliation has taken place; the abyss is filled up by the condescension of Him who became our brother. (“It is consummated,” John 19:30).

Dr. Nicholas Arseniev,⁵ “The Revelation of Life Eternal,” pp. 42-47

Recipe of the Month

Orchard Crumble

Here’s an idea for using the seasonal fruits of late summer — apples, plums, figs, and blackberries — in an easy to prepare dessert that’s basically a tweaking of a traditional English plum crumble. Imagine serving this with afternoon tea!

Ingredients:

Foundation

1. 2 medium apples, peeled, cored, and cut into small pieces
2. 6 plums, stone removed, cut into chunky wedges
3. 2 tbsp. sugar (any type)
4. 3 medium figs, stalks trimmed, and quartered
5. 15 blackberries, washed

⁵ Dr. Nicholas Arseniev (1888-1977) was an Orthodox lay theologian, born in St. Petersburg, Russia of a prominent family whose members included several diplomats. In December 1919, he and his family came under suspicion of counter-revolution from the NKVD and was imprisoned. After release in 1920, he escaped from Russia, and became a professor at the University of Königsberg. After the Second World War, he migrated to the United States, and became professor of New Testament and Apologetics at St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary in Yonkers, New York. Professor Arseniev was known for his knowledge of obscure languages and research on Christian mysticism and Russian piety.

Topping

1. 1 cup of plain flour
2. 1 cup of whole wheat flour
3. ¾ cup (or 12 tbsp.) butter
4. ½ cup brown sugar
5. custard or ice cream, to serve

Directions:

1. First make the topping. Put the flours in a bowl with a pinch of salt, then rub in the butter with your fingertips to form crumbs. Stir in the sugar with a fork, and chill until needed.
2. Heat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Tip the apples, plums, and sugar into a big saucepan with ¼ cup water and cook, stirring, for about 5 minutes, until the apples are soft and juicy. Stir in the figs and blackberries, and tip into a baking dish. Scatter over the crumble and bake for 45-55 mins until the topping is golden and the fruit is bubbling.
3. Serve with custard or ice cream.

Prayer for Protection from the Corona Virus

O God Almighty, Lord of heaven and earth, and of all creation visible and invisible, in thine ineffable goodness, look down upon us, Thy people gathered in Thy Holy Name. Be our helper and defender in this day of affliction. Thou knowest our weakness. Thou hearest our cry in repentance and contrition of heart. O Lord who lovest mankind, deliver us from the impending threat of the Corona Virus. Send Thine angel to watch over us and protect us. Grant health and recovery to those suffering from this virus. Guide the hands of physicians and nurses, and preserve those who are healthy that we may continue to serve our suffering brothers and sisters in peace, that together we may glorify thy most honorable and majestic name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, both now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Parish News

Parish Council Meetings

Parish Council meetings remain suspended until further notice. Parish business shall be conducted by the council officers in consultation with the parish priest as needed; contact and consultation with parish council members shall be through telephone and internet only. All parish gatherings in the church hall are suspended until further notice.

Blessing of Fruit and Fragrant Herbage

Due to social distancing protocols, the blessing of grapes and other fruits on Transfiguration (August 6) and of fragrant herbage and flowers on Dormition (August 15) this year will be done in the parking lot after the dismissal of Divine Liturgy. You will need to stand by your vehicle holding your fruit baskets and flower bouquets while Fr. Sophrony individually blesses each in its turn.

Confessions

In-person confessions may be done without masks if the priest and the penitent stand six feet apart, and the priest will hold his stole up for the absolution prayer (as opposed to putting over the penitent's head as usual), or by the wearing of facial masks by both priest and penitent. Confession is permitted by phone or video conferencing (i.e. Google Meet). Call the Rectory at 201-436-3244 for confession appointments. **General Confession is suspended until further notice.**

Boycott Products of Turkey

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has ordered the Hagia Sophia Museum, one of Istanbul's most famous landmarks, to be converted into a mosque, with Muslim services having started on July 24, 2020. The Hagia Sophia (or, Saint Sophia's) was the episcopal see of the Patriarchs of Constantinople for nearly one thousand years, until the fall of Constantinople on May 29, 1453. No other building has historically been as much a symbol of Orthodox Christianity as the Hagia Sophia.

In 1934, Turkish President Mustafa Kemal Ataturk decreed that it be turned into a museum, as a symbol of peaceful religious coexistence. The rescinding of that decree has now made the Hagia Sophia into a "poster child" of religious insensitivity at best, or more likely, into a deliberate slap in the face against Christians. Given the genocide of 2.5 million Christian Armenians, Assyrians, and Anatolian Greeks in 1915-1922, for which Turkey refuses to this day to take responsibility, and the dislocation and genocide of Christians throughout the Middle East over the last 20 years, this act shows that Erdogan's government feels no remorse for these crimes against humanity.

Therefore, to show that we got Erdogan's message, that the view of Islam represented by Erdogan refuses to peacefully coexist with other religions, and has no contrition for its acts of genocide against Christians, past and present, we are calling for a boycott against all products having Turkey as their country of origin (the most common would be Turkish olive oil). We hope all of this newsletter's readers will join in this boycott, and spread the idea to their families, friends, and neighbors. This may be a small act of protest that probably won't be felt, but at least it offers us a way of doing *something* . . . a way of showing our solidarity with the suffering Christians of the Middle East.

Special Donations

Please note that for Special Donations in September 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 August 23, 2020.

August 30, 2020

Sanctuary Lamp offered by Fr. Sophrony Royer in memory of Protopresbyter Vladimir Shishkoff.

Schedule of Services

August 1-2, 2020

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

August 5-6, 2020

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

August 8-9, 2020

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

August 14-15, 2020

6:00 PM (Fri.) – Great Vespers w. Lity
9:00 AM (Sat.) – Divine Liturgy

August 15-16, 2020

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

August 22-23, 2020

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

August 29-30, 2020

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

Reminder: We shall return to having all morning services at 9:30 AM starting on Tuesday, September 8, 2020.

Daily Bible Readings

1. Romans 13:1-10; Matthew 12:30-37
2. 1 Corinthians 1:10-18; Matthew 14:14-22
3. 1 Corinthians 11:31-12:6; Matthew 18:1-11
4. 1 Cor. 12:12-26; Matt. 18:18-22, 19:1-2, 13-15
5. 1 Corinthians 13:4-14:5; Matthew 20:1-16
6. 2 Peter 1:10-19; Matthew 17:1-9
7. 1 Corinthians 14:26-40; Matthew 21:12-14, 17-20
8. Romans 14:6-9; Matthew 15:32-39
9. 1 Corinthians 3:9-17; Matthew 14:22-34
10. 1 Corinthians 15:12-19; Matthew 21:18-22
11. 1 Corinthians 15:29-38; Matthew 21:23-27
12. 1 Corinthians 16:4-12; Matthew 21:28-32
13. 2 Corinthians 1:1-7; Matthew 21:43-46
14. 2 Corinthians 1:12-20; Matthew 22:23-33
15. Philippians 2:5-11; Luke 10:38-42; 11:27-28
16. 1 Corinthians 4:9-16; Matthew 17:14-23
17. 2 Corinthians 2:4-15; Matthew 23:13-22
18. 2 Corinthians 2:14-3:3; Matthew 23:23-28
19. 2 Corinthians 3:4-11; Matthew 23:29-39
20. 2 Corinthians 4:1-6; Matthew 24:13-28
21. 2 Cor. 4:13-18; Matthew 24:27-33, 42-51
22. 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Matthew 19:3-12
23. 1 Corinthians 9:2-12; Matthew 18:23-35
24. 2 Corinthians 5:10-15; Mark 1:9-15
25. 2 Corinthians 5:15-21; Mark 1:16-22
26. 2 Corinthians 6:11-16; Mark 1:23-28
27. 2 Corinthians 7:1-10; Mark 1:29-35
28. 2 Corinthians 7:10-16; Mark 2:18-22
29. 1 Corinthians 1:26-29; Matthew 20:29-34
30. 1 Corinthians 15:1-11; Matthew 19:16-26
31. 2 Corinthians 8:7-15; Mark 3:6-12

Giving During This Crisis

Please continue to give as you normally would during this crisis. Even if you have not yet resumed attending church there are still bills that need to be paid. This is a time when we need for everyone who is able to give to the church, and to even consider increasing their contributions to make up for those temporarily unable to give. You may mail your contributions weekly, or monthly if you prefer, to the parish's mailing address of: 98 West 28th Street, Bayonne, New Jersey 07002. Thank you in advance for your continued support of Ss. Peter and Paul's Orthodox Church. May Our Lord Jesus Christ bless you all!