

Quo Vadis

The monthly newsletter of Saints Peter & Paul Orthodox Catholic Church of Bayonne, N.J.
Vol. 11, Number 8: April 2024

Editor: V. Rev. W. Sophrony Royer, Ph.D.

98 West 28th Street, Bayonne, N.J. 07002

“**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

“Patriotism means unqualified and unwavering love for the nation, which implies not uncritical eagerness to serve, not support for unjust claims, but frank assessment of its vices and sins, and penitence for them.”
—Alexander Solzhenitsyn (1918-2008)

Normally my Lenten message would focus on the individual Christian’s personal repentance, and the penitential works that follow from it, towards correcting our relationship with God. However, societies also stand before divine judgment, just as individuals do, and likewise have a need for corporate repentance and penitential acts for their social justification before God. This idea of social responsibility to God is very much evident in the Old Testament, which speaks of the judgment of nations, and in particular of Israel’s corporate relationship with God as a people. The holiest day on the Old Testament’s sacred calendar was Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, the day of Israel’s purification from moral impurity. “For on this day atonement shall be made for you, to purify you; from all your sins before the Lord you shall be purified” (Leviticus 16:30). According to the Bible, after the golden calf sin, Moses descended from Mount Sinai and broke the stone tablets which contained the Ten Commandments and symbolized the covenant with God. After God agreed to forgive the people’s sin, Moses was told to return to Mount Sinai for a second forty-day period, in order to receive a second set of tablets. According to rabbinic tradition, the date Moses descended with the second set of tablets was Yom Kippur. On this day Moses announced to the people that they had been forgiven; as a result the Torah set this date as a permanent holiday of forgiveness. More importantly for us, in the New Testament the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ was an act of universal atonement, in which He assumed the role of the Lamb of God who takes away the [corporate] sin of the world once and for all, just as the lamb of atonement sacrificed on Yom Kippur took away Israel’s sin from the past year, as a reminder of God’s commitment to mercy and forgiveness.

Today there is a critical need for corporate repentance and social responsibility in the Church, and our hope rests on the new covenant's characterization of God's nature as merciful and forgiving. The works of penitence may be difficult and call for moral courage, but they serve as indicators of our nearness to God, making us like angels in heaven, purified and close to God. But in order for the Church—our “corporate personality”—to approach God, as did the High Priests of old, with our personal request for mercy, thereby permitting our purification to take place, the Church itself must be pure. Of course, as the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church is both pure and infallible. But its ministers and people are still human—all too often fallible, weak, sinful, and in need of purification. And by purification, I'm not primarily referring here to liturgical practices such as creating clouds of incense smoke in which, as the Bible promises, God would reveal Himself without being seen, and the Eucharistic sacrifice of atonement, though of course the Liturgy is our very life in the Church, but rather of an institutional act of repentance by the Church for the moral failures of its ministers and people, and of this I specifically have in mind the fratricidal war in Ukraine.

Russia's aggressive war against Ukraine has set Orthodox Christians against neighboring Orthodox Christians. It has divided families and disrupted the peaceful lives of tens of millions of people in both countries. War casualties have been horrific, many have lost family and friends; have become exiled or internally displaced as refugees, or have fled their country; or have been wounded or traumatized, not just physically and psychologically, but also spiritually. However, the Moscow Patriarchate demonstrated an unambiguous lack of interest in peacemaking and compassion. Indeed, Patriarch Kirill has declared full support for the Russian aggression, and has been acting as the Kremlin's de facto propaganda minister. In September 2022, Patriarch Kirill said that Russian soldiers who die in the war against Ukraine will be “cleansed of all their sins”—this was a few days after President Vladimir Putin ordered the country's mobilization. This reminds one pointedly of Pope Urban II's promise to the Crusaders: “All who die by the way, whether by land or by sea, or in battle against the pagans, shall have immediate remission of sins. This I grant them through the power of God with which I am invested”—except in the case of the First Crusade, Pope Urban II's promise was given to those fighting against the infidel enemies of Christendom, whereas Patriarch Kirill's promise was given to soldiers fighting against fellow Orthodox Christians! The shame of Kirill's statement will live in infamy. Equally shameful is Patriarch Kirill's support for, and proliferation of, Putin's lie characterizing the invasion of Ukraine as a war against the West and Western decadence.

What were formerly hints of a disquieting reassertion of the Russian Orthodox Church's alignment with the State is now out in the open—the Church of Russia has become an integral component of the neo-imperial regime, and has actively engaged in the Kremlin's apparatus of propaganda and violence. The most striking manifestation of the Church of Russia's collaboration is evident in its religious and even pseudo-theological justification for the unbridled aggression of Russia's regime against a rightfully sovereign Ukraine, coupled with the continued blessing of the invasion and all its participants. The sins of justification and benediction are not just the solitary deeds of individual bishops or priests, but rather are institutional transgressions. These sins manifest the overarching, unified ideological stance of the entire Orthodox Church of Russia, overseen and upheld by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia. Public anti-war opinions within the Church are infrequent, with clergy who voice opposition to the war often subjected to sham trials in ecclesiastical or secular tribunals. They face repercussions ranging from suspension to defrocking, and in some cases are compelled to leave the country for fear of their lives.

Not a single bishop in the Russian Federation has preached peace during the past two years of this war. The situation takes on an added dimension of moral reprehensibility with the Patriarch, along with the bishops and many parish priests, not only justifying an aggressive war, but also offering prayers for Russia's victory over Ukraine in every parish church. Patriarch Kirill literally forces priests, and with them all the faithful, to pray not for peace, as commanded in the Gospel, but “for the victory of Holy Russia.” The inevitable consequence, of course, is ideological conformism within the Russian Orthodox Church and with it reprisals against dissenters. Ideological control over clergy in Russia was getting worse every year since Patriarch Kirill was enthroned in February 2009, but no one could imagine that the ecclesial court be would

become the key instrument of reprisal over those who preach peace. Patriarch Kirill has replicated the repressive tactics of the Soviet regime, now resuscitated by Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB). The calculated strategy of the Patriarch and the official Church bureaucracy is the instilling of a pervasive atmosphere of fear within the Russian Orthodox Church, and it sends an unambiguous message—any deviation from the Patriarch's sanctioned stance will incur not just scrutiny but swift and severe punishment. The Moscow Patriarchate is now acting as a de facto arm of a neo-Stalinist State, defrocking clergy who pray for peace.

It has reached a point where silence can no longer be maintained in the face of such egregious acts. We cannot realistically expect a change of heart from Patriarch Kirill and the intimidated hierarchy of the Moscow Patriarchate, though we can pray for it. But sadly, even outside of Russia much of the Orthodox leadership has been silent, or worse. This is most evident within the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR). Once a staunch opponent of the falsehoods and crimes committed by Communist authorities in the Soviet Union, ROCOR in recent years has aligned itself with Putin's Russia, forsaking its past mission and calling as "the free part of the Russian Church." From the very moment when ROCOR established its headquarters in the United States after the Second World War, it stood for freedom of religion and speech, for the defense of dissidents, and as a small but truthful witness against human rights abuses in the Soviet Union. Now, by discouraging clergy from opposing the war or condemning Vladimir Putin as a war criminal and murderer (whose modus operandi in dealing with political opponents is assassination), and continuing to commemorate the war-mongering Patriarch, ROCOR supports human rights abusers, war criminals, and liars. At the time of the signing of the Act of Canonical Communion in 2007, opponents claimed that the reconciliation of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia was the result of an intelligence operation of the Russian FSB. Regardless of whether they were correct, their words have nevertheless proven prophetic. Certainly Patriarch Kirill's tactics in suppressing all freedom of conscience within the Church, if nothing else, differs little from those of the FSB.

The Orthodox Church in America's inadequacy has been one of omission—disappointingly, its leadership has failed to publicly identify the two principal agents responsible for commanding and defending the unjust Russian attack on Ukraine: Russian President Vladimir Putin, who directly ordered the invasion and continuing attacks, and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, who willingly serves as the chief ideologist and propagandist for President Putin. Instead, it has offered mere platitudes about the evils of war. There should be no need to demonstrate to our bishops what people throughout the world—of varied political persuasions but with informed consciences—know: that Russian President Putin bears primary responsibility for the morally unjustifiable Russian invasion and continuing barbaric attacks on Ukraine, and that Patriarch Kirill of Moscow willingly defends the viciously aggressive and repressive Putin regime. Now if there really is a need to demonstrate such evident facts, may God help the OCA! What morally and spiritually overriding reason is there for the OCA Holy Synod to remain silent—except perhaps a this-worldly, but politically realistic, fear of an ecclesiastical reprisal from the Russian Orthodox Church? Of what value is the autocephaly of the OCA if we degrade our moral and spiritual integrity as Orthodox Christians and our values as Americans? If we lose our actual pastoral and administrative independence or, more subtly, our own internal freedom and fortitude to make true public judgments about the Church and the World, then the OCA will cease being the ally of a "persecuted Church" and become the enabler of a "persecuting Church." In speaking forthrightly and truthfully about the reality and dire religious and civil consequences of the catastrophe in Ukraine, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople has set a fitting example for other Orthodox bishops. It is now time for the OCA's leadership to repent of its silence and show the moral courage to follow that example. Again, penitential acts can be difficult, and may imperil painful consequences, but they bring us closer to God. Let us, led by our bishops and priests, frankly assess our corporate vices and sins, including sins of omission, and undertake penitence for them, as Alexander Solzhenitsyn exhorts us in the quote at the top of this message, and pray for peace in the world.

Excerpt from the Church Fathers

"Confession heals, confession justifies, confession grants pardon of sin, all hope consists in confession; in confession there is a chance for mercy . . . In the active life all the vices are first of all to be removed by the practice of good works, so that in the contemplative life a man may, with now purified mental gaze, pass on to the contemplation of the Divine Light."

— St. Isidore of Seville (c. 560-636).

Lives of the Saints

St. Januarius of Benevento, Bishop & Martyr – commemorated on April 21st

According to various hagiographies, such as the *Acta Bononensia* (6th century) and the *Acta Vaticana* (9th century), and later folk traditions, St. Januarius was born in Benevento to a rich patrician family that traced its descent to the Caudini tribe of the Samnites. At a young age of fifteen, he became local priest of his parish in Benevento, which at the time was largely pagan. When St. Januarius was twenty, he became Bishop of Naples and friend of Ss. Juliana of Nicomedia and Sossius, whom he met during his priestly studies. During Emperor Diocletian's eighteen-month-long persecution of Christians (lasting from 303 until Diocletian's retirement in 305), St. Januarius hid his fellow Christians and prevented them from being caught. Unfortunately, while visiting St. Sossius in jail, he too was arrested. He and his colleagues were condemned to be thrown to wild bears in the Flavian Amphitheater at Pozzuoli, but the sentence was changed due to fear of public disturbances, and they were instead beheaded at the Solfatara crater near Pozzuoli. Other legends state either that the wild beasts refused to eat them, or that he was thrown into a furnace but came out unscathed.

The earliest extant mention of St. Januarius is contained in a letter by Uranius, Bishop of Nola, written on the death of his mentor St. Paulinus of Nola, where it is stated that the ghosts of Ss. Januarius and Martin appeared to St. Paulinus three days before the latter's death in 431. About St. Januarius, the account says only that he was "bishop as well as martyr, an illustrious member of the Neapolitan church." St. Januarius' feast day is observed on April 21st in the Eastern Orthodox Church and on September 19th in the Roman Catholic Church. The city of Naples has more than fifty official patron saints, although its principal patron is St. Januarius. In the United States, the Feast of San Gennaro (St. Januarius) is also a highlight of the year for New York's Little Italy, with the saint's polychrome statue carried through the middle of a street fair stretching for blocks.

St. Januarius relics were transferred by order of St. Severus, Bishop of Naples, to the Neapolitan catacombs "outside the walls" (*extra moenia*). In the early 9th century the body was moved to Benevento by Sico, Prince of Benevento, with the head remaining in Naples. Subsequently, during the turmoil at the time of Frederick Barbarossa, his body was moved again, to the Territorial Abbey of Montevergine, where it was rediscovered in 1480. At the instigation of Cardinal Oliviero Carafa, his body was finally transferred to Naples in 1497, where he is the city's patron saint. Carafa commissioned a richly decorated crypt, the Succorpo, beneath the cathedral to house the reunited body and head properly. The Succorpo was finished in 1506 and is considered one of the prominent monuments of the High Renaissance in the city of Naples.

St. Januarius is famous for the annual liquefaction of his blood, which according to legend was saved by a woman called Eusebia just after the saint's death. Thousands of people assemble to witness this event in Naples Cathedral three times a year: on 19 September (his feast day, commemorating his martyrdom), on 16 December (celebrating his patronage of Naples and its archdiocese), and on the Saturday before the first Sunday of May (commemorating the reunification of his relics). The blood is also said to spontaneously liquefy at certain other times, such as papal visits, e.g., it liquefied in the presence of Pope Pius IX in 1848. The blood is stored in two hermetically sealed small ampoules, held since the 17th century in a silver

reliquary between two round glass plates about 12 cm. wide. Separate reliquaries hold bone fragments belonging to St. Januarius.

On feast days, all these relics are taken in procession from the Cathedral to the Monastery of Santa Chiara, where the archbishop holds up the reliquary and tilts it to show that the contents are solid, then places it on the high altar next to the saint's other relics. After intense prayers by the faithful, including the so-called "relatives of St. Januarius" (*parenti di San Gennaro*), the contents of the larger ampoule typically appear to liquify. The archbishop then holds up the vial and tilts it again to demonstrate that liquefaction has taken place. The ampoules remain exposed on the altar for eight days, while the priests move or turn them periodically to show that the contents remain liquid.

The Treasure of St. Januarius is a collection of magnificent works and donations collected in seven centuries from popes, kings, emperors, famous and ordinary people. According to studies done by a pool of experts who have analyzed all the pieces in the collection, the Treasure of St. Januarius is of higher value than the crowns of the British monarch and the Russian tsar. The Treasure is a unique collection of art masterpieces, kept untouched thanks to the Deputation of the Chapel of St. Januarius, an ancient secular institution founded in 1527 by a vote of the city of Naples, still existing. Today, the Treasure is exhibited in the Museum of the Treasure of St. Januarius. From the Museum, the Chapel can be entered even when the Cathedral is closed.

Frequently Asked Questions

How is the Eastern Orthodox Church organized and held together as one worldwide Church?

The Eastern Orthodox Church as a whole is the unity of what are called local autocephalous Churches. This simply means that these Churches govern themselves, electing their own bishops and organizing their own lives (the word "autocephaly" means "self-headed"). Each of these Churches has exactly the same doctrine, discipline, and spiritual and moral practices. They use the same Bible, follow the same canon laws, confess the authority of the same Church Councils and worship by what is essentially the same liturgy. It is nothing other than this communion in faith and practice which unites all Eastern Orthodox Churches together into one worldwide body. In this sense, there is no single dominating authority in the Eastern Orthodox Church, no particular bishop or see or document which has hegemony over the Churches.

In practice, the Church of Constantinople has functioned for centuries as the Church responsible for guiding and preserving the worldwide unity of the family of autocephalous Eastern Orthodox Churches. But it must be noted that this responsibility is a practical and pastoral one. It carries no sacramental or juridical power with it, other than that in the past the primatial see held the power to act as arbiter in resolving disputes between local churches, as was once held by the See of Rome.¹ It is possible that in the future this function may pass to some other Church, as it had from Rome to Constantinople after canonical communion was severed, and it would ostensibly be restored to Rome should canonical communion ever be restored.² However, primacy as understood in Eastern Orthodoxy always exists within the context of conciliarity, and the distinction of different levels of primacy does not diminish the sacramental equality of every bishop or the catholicity of each local Church.

¹ For example, in 376, Pope Damasus I was appealed to settle a dispute as to who, among three rival claimants, was the legitimate Patriarch of Antioch. Cf. "Letter of Jerome to Pope Damasus" in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (V2-06).

² In the Ravenna Document, issued in 2007, representatives of the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church jointly stated that both accept the Bishop of Rome's primacy at the universal level, but that differences of understanding exist about how the primacy is to be exercised and about its scriptural and theological foundations.

Recipe of the Month

Lentil Bolognese

Lentil Bolognese is an ideal dish for when you're craving something rich and "meaty" . . . something that would hold up to a glass of red wine, all the while staying plant-based (and putting the lentils into Lent).

Ingredients:

- Lentils – the smaller the better!
- Onions and garlic
- Olive oil
- Carrots and celery
- Fresh oregano and thyme (or substitute 2 teaspoons dried Italian herbs)
- Tomato paste
- Red wine (optional, adds complexity)
- Fresh tomatoes (or substitute canned tomatoes)
- Vegetable stock (or substitute water plus vegetable bouillon)
- Hemp seeds (optional, adds texture and richness)
- Balsamic vinegar
- Cooked Pasta (e.g., Ziti, Rigatoni, Penne, or Rotini)

Directions:

- (1) Sauté onions in olive oil until fragrant.
- (2) Add carrots, celery and garlic, continue cooking and stirring about 5 minutes. Add herbs and seasonings.
- (3) Add tomato paste, browning it a bit. Deglaze, and add a generous splash of red wine and cook this off.
- (4) Add tomatoes and their juices. Add the lentils, hemp seeds, and broth. Bear in mind the smaller the lentils the faster the Bolognese will cook.
- (5) Bring to a boil and cover. Simmer for 20-30 minutes.
- (6) Once the lentils are tender, remove the lid and cook off some of the liquid.
- (7) Taste and adjust seasonings, and stir in the balsamic vinegar.
- (8) Toss it with cooked pasta—keep it vegan if you like or top with Parmesan or Romano cheese.

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. Please note that for Special Donations in May to be acknowledged in "Quo Vadis," the donation must be recorded in the Special Donations register in the church vestibule by April 21, 2024.

April 7, 2024

Sanctuary Lamp offered by Fr. W. Sophrony Royer in memory of Evelyn Zaleckis.

April 14, 2024

Altar Vigils offered by Helen Wanko in memory of Andrew Wanko (anniversary of repose). **Triple Candelabra** offered by Fr. W. Sophrony Royer in memory of Walter Royer.

April 28, 2024

Sanctuary Lamp offered by Fr. W. Sophrony Royer in memory of Right Rev. Bishop Daniel (Alexandrow).

Schedule of Services

April 5-7, 2024

6:00 PM (Friday) – Presanctified Liturgy w.
Litany of the Departed & General Parastas
5:00 PM (Saturday) – Great Vespers
9:30 AM (Sunday) – Divine Liturgy

April 12-14, 2024

6:00 PM (Friday) – Presanctified Liturgy w.
Litany of the Departed & General Parastas
5:00 PM (Saturday) – Great Vespers
9:30 AM (Sunday) – Divine Liturgy

April 18-21, 2024

5:00 PM (Thursday) – Great Canon of Repentance
6:00 PM (Friday) – Akathist of the Virgin Mary
9:30 AM (Saturday) – Divine Liturgy
5:00 PM (Saturday) – Great Vespers
9:30 AM (Sunday) – Divine Liturgy

April 26-28, 2024

6:00 PM (Friday) – Canon of St. Lazarus
9:30 AM (Saturday) – Divine Liturgy
5:00 PM (Saturday) – Great Vespers w. Lity
9:30 AM (Sunday) – Divine Liturgy

Parish News

Parish Confessions

All parishioners ought to go to confession during Great Lent. Confessions may be heard after any Friday or Saturday evening service, or call the Rectory to arrange for confession at another time.

Blessing of Easter Food Baskets

Easter food baskets will be blessed in the church hall at 4:00 PM on Saturday, May 4, 2024.

Paschal Repast

A Paschal repast is being held at the Carpathian Club Hall after Divine Liturgy on Easter Sunday, May 5, 2024. All parishioners and visitors are welcome!

Blessing of Graves

Graves at Bay View Cemetery in Jersey City shall be blessed on Bright Saturday (May 11, 2024), starting at 10:00 AM, followed by Evergreen and Rosedale cemeteries. Please call the Rectory at (201) 436-3244 to schedule appointments for grave blessings at Graceland and other cemeteries.

Daily Bible Readings

6. Hebrews 10:32-38; Mark 2:14-17
7. Hebrews 4:14-5:6; Mark 8:34-9:1
13. Hebrews 6:9-12; Mark 7:31-37
14. Hebrews 6:13-20; Mark 9:17-31
20. Hebrews 9:1-7; Luke 10:38-42; 11:27-28
21. Hebrews 9:11-14; Mark 10:32-45
27. Hebrews 12:28-13:8; John 11:1-45
28. Philippians 4:4-9; John 12:1-18

For weekday Old Testament readings during Lent, consult the St. Tikhon's Wall Calendar.

Deanery Lenten Vespers

**** All Services at 5:00 PM ****

March 31, 2024: St. John the Baptist Church,
170 Lexington Ave., Passaic, New Jersey

April 7, 2024: St. Vladimir Church, 812
Grand St., Trenton, New Jersey

April 14, 2024: Ss. Peter and Paul Church,
98 W. 28th St., Bayonne, New Jersey

April 21, 2024: Holy Resurrection Church,
285 French Hill Rd., Wayne, New Jersey

Remember to support the parish every time you shop!



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