



THE LIFE OF  
THE HOLY ROYAL  
MARTYRS OF RUSSIA



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**ICON OF THE HOLY TSAR-MARTYR NICHOLAS**

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*'The Tsar who will glorify me – him will I glorify.'*  
– Saint Seraphim of Sarov

'Our Tsar is of a righteous and pious life,' Saint John of Kronstadt wrote in 1905 of the Sovereign Nicholas II, 'God has sent him a heavy cross of suffering, as to His chosen and beloved child.'

The Holy Tsar Martyr Nicholas II was born on May 19, 1868, in Tsarskoe Selo, near St. Petersburg. At the conclusion of the baptism of the royal infant, the choir sang the Hymn of Thanksgiving. A joyful peal from the bells of all the churches and the thundering of cannon echoed the hymn. The Divine Liturgy was celebrated, and the newly baptized infant partook of the Holy Mysteries of Christ.

From his youth, the Archduke Nicholas was exceptionally pious and strove to imitate the virtues of the Righteous Job the Much Suffering, on whose feast he was born, and Saint Nicholas, in whose honour he was named. 'I was born on the day of Job the Much Suffering,' he said, 'and I am destined to suffer.' Those close to him would say, 'Nicholas' soul is as clear as crystal, and he loves everyone fervently.' He was deeply moved by every human sorrow and need, of whatever kind. He began and ended each day with prayer. He knew the order of the church services well,

and during services he loved to chant along with the choir.

In keeping with the decision of his most august father Alexander III, his education was carried out strictly in the Russian Orthodox spirit. The royal youth spent many hours studying. He amazed his teachers with his extraordinary memory and outstanding capabilities. The future Sovereign successfully completed economic, legal, and military studies at the highest level, under the guidance of illustrious teachers. He also served in the infantry, cavalry, artillery, and navy.

A serious trial came upon the royal family in the autumn of 1888, when the Tsar's train derailed near Kharkov. The train cars crashed down the steep slope of the long embankment. By the providence of God, the lives of the Emperor Alexander III and the entire imperial family were miraculously saved.

Another trial followed in 1891, when the Tsarevich was travelling in the Far East; in Japan an attempt was made on his life. Nicholas Alexandrovich nearly perished by the sabre stroke of a religious fanatic. Prince George of Greece struck down the aggressor with his bamboo walking stick. And again a miracle occurred: only a slight wound remained upon the head of the heir to the throne. Once again, the Almighty had spoken, 'Touch not mine anointed ones' (Psalm 104:15), and showed the world that both kings and kingdoms of the earth are under His authority.

In the autumn of 1891, when famine broke out in many provinces of Russia, Alexander III appointed his son as head of the committee formed to relieve the victims. The future Tsar saw human grief with his own eyes, and laboured tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of his people.

During the spring of 1894, in considering the firm decision of the Tsarevich to enter into matrimony with Princess Alix of Hesse-Darmstadt, the most august parents at last gave their blessing. 'Our Saviour said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in My Name, that will I do" (Saint John 14:13),' the Archduke Nicholas wrote at that time. 'These words are infinitely dear to my heart. For the last five years I prayed, repeating them every night, begging Him to facilitate Alix' conversion to the Orthodox Faith, and to give her to me as my wife.' With deep faith and love the Tsarevich convinced the princess to accept Holy Orthodoxy. During a decisive conversation he said, 'When you come to know how beautiful, grace-filled, and humble is our Orthodox religion, how magnificent are our churches and monasteries, and how triumphant and majestic are our divine services, you will come to love them, and nothing then will separate us.'

In the autumn of 1894, during the serious illness of the Sovereign, the Tsarevich was constantly by his father's bedside. He wrote to his bride at that time, 'As a loyal son and my father's first dedicated servant, I must be with him always.'

A few days before the death of Alexander III, the princess Alix arrived in Russia. The rite by which she



entered into the Orthodox Church was celebrated by the priest John of Kronstadt, beloved by all of Russia. At the Mystery of Chrismation, she was named Alexandra in honour of the Holy Martyr Empress Alexandra. On that significant day, the most august bride and groom, after the Mystery of Repentance, partook together of the Holy Mysteries of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Alexandra Feodorovna embraced Orthodoxy deeply and sincerely with her entire soul. 'Your nation shall be my nation,' she said, 'your people, my people, and your God, my God' (Ruth 1:16).

On the day of the Emperor's death, Nicholas Alexandrovich in deep sorrow declared that he did not want the Tsar's crown, but in fear of spurning the will of the Almighty and the will of his father, he accepted the crown. He trusted not in human strength, but in the Lord God.

During his whole life, the Tsarevich kept in his heart the precepts his reigning father had given to him on the eve of his death: 'You will assume the heavy burden of sovereign authority which I have borne on my shoulders, and you will bear it to the grave, as I and all our ancestors have done. I hand down to you the kingdom entrusted to me by God, which I received thirteen years ago from a profusely bleeding father... On that tragic day the question arose as to which road I was to follow, the one urged by so-called "progressive society", infected with the liberal ideas of the West, or the one recommended by my own convictions, my highest and holy duty as sovereign,

and my conscience. I chose my path. The liberals called it reactionary. My concern was for the good of the people and the greatness of Russia. My aim was to give Russia an internal and external peace, that the nation might freely and peacefully develop, becoming strong, rich, and prosperous. Autocracy has created Russia's historical individuality. If autocracy falls, which God forbid, then Russia will collapse with it. The fall of Russian paternalistic authority will inaugurate an era of endless troubles, civil strife, and bloodshed. I bequeath unto you to love everything that serves the welfare, the honour, and the dignity of Russia. Guard autocracy, remembering at the same time that you bear responsibility for the fate of your subjects before the throne of the Almighty. Let faith in God and in the sanctity of your royal duty be the foundation of your life... In foreign policy preserve independence. Remember that Russia has no friends; they fear our greatness. Avoid war. In domestic policy, first and foremost, patronize the Church; often has she saved Russia in times of misfortune. Strengthen the family, since it is the foundation of any state.'

The Emperor Nicholas II ascended the throne on November 2, 1894. 'At this sorrowful yet solemn hour of our ascension of the paternal throne of our forefathers,' he said, 'we give our sacred oath before the Almighty, to have always as a sole aim the peaceful prosperity, the might, and the glory of beloved Russia, and the concern and care for the well-being of all our faithful subjects.'



The Tsar sealed the beginning of his reign by acts of charity and mercy. He alleviated the plight of the imprisoned and cancelled many debts, while providing substantial assistance to scientists, writers, and students.

The Autocrat of All Russia Nicholas II was crowned on May 27, 1896, in the Cathedral of the Dormition of the Mother of God, in the Moscow Kremlin. Metropolitan Sergius of Moscow addressed him with the following words: 'There is no greater and more difficult task upon earth than that of the Tsar's authority. There is no heavier burden than that of the Tsar's service. By means of this visible anointing, may the unseen power from above enlighten you and direct your activity as Autocrat towards the well-being and happiness of your faithful subjects.'

The Emperor Nicholas II read the Creed, and then put on the purple mantle. He placed the royal crown upon his head, and took into his hands the orb and sceptre. In prayer to the King of Kings, the Sovereign asked that he be endowed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, to direct him in the service to which he had been called. The choir sang the hymn *We Praise Thee, O God*. After the Divine Liturgy he was anointed with the Holy Chrism. The Emperor then entered through the Royal Gates into the altar and partook of the Holy Mysteries of Christ in the same manner as the clergy.

The Orthodox Tsar, upon the completion of the Mystery of Anointing during the coronation, becomes a sacred person and the bearer of a special grace of the Holy Spirit. This grace works through him so long

as he observes the law of God and restrains the spread of evil in the world. According to the holy Apostle Paul, 'The mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only he who now restraineth will restrain, until he be taken out of the way' (II Thessalonians 2:7). The Emperor Nicholas II was deeply conscious of this spiritual mission which one inherits as a Tsar anointed by God.

Due to a fateful series of circumstances, the days of the coronation festivities were darkened by tragedy on the Khodynka field, where some half million people had gathered. During the distribution of gifts, more than one thousand people lost their lives in the crush. The following day, the Emperor and Empress attended the memorial service and rendered help to the victims' families.

The Sovereign Nicholas II was full of love for all mankind and believed that in politics as well, following the commandment of Christ is imperative. The Emperor of Russia inspired the first international conference for the prevention of war, which took place in the capital of Holland in 1899. He was the first ruler to initiate the struggle for the preservation of peace in the world, and became truly a Tsar peacemaker.

The Sovereign tirelessly strove to create peace within the nation so that it could freely develop and prosper. He was utterly incapable of hurting anyone. Throughout his reign, he did not sign a single death sentence. Nor did he ever reject any petition for mercy that reached him. Each time, he was concerned that his pardon would not be late.

The Sovereign's look was astonishingly sincere, and his eyes shone with unfeigned kindness. One day, the Tsar visited the cruiser *Riourik*, on board which was a revolutionary who had sworn to kill him. But the sailor was unable to fulfil his vow. 'I couldn't do it', he explained, 'his eyes looked at me with such meekness and tenderness.'

Both in his administration and in his everyday life, the Sovereign adhered to traditional Russian Orthodox principles. He was deeply knowledgeable of Russian history and literature, and as a profound expert in the Russian language, he shunned the use of foreign words. 'The Russian language is so rich that in every instance one may substitute a Russian expression for a foreign one. Not a single word of non-slavic origin should mar our language.'

The Tsar was unmercenary. He gave generous help from his own resources to all in need, irrespective of the amount requested. His kindness was not superficial, nor did it decrease after countless disappointments. Nicholas Alexandrovich spent four million roubles on hospitals and other charitable foundations from his account in the Bank of England, which had been opened in the reign of the Emperor Alexander II. 'He gave away almost everything he had', said the president of His Majesty's administrative council, thus justifying his desire to resign from that post.

'His clothes were often mended', recalls a servant of the Tsar. 'His suit went back to the time when he was still a groom, and he wore them.' After the assassination of the Tsar's family in Ekaterinburg, the

trousers of the Emperor's military uniform were found. They had patches and a label inscribed, 'Made on August 4, 1900', 'Repaired on October 8, 1916'.

The Sovereign's Christian virtues – his meekness and kindness of heart, modesty, and simplicity – were misunderstood by many and were regarded as weakness of character. Yet thanks to precisely these spiritual and moral qualities, an enormous spiritual strength, essential for the imperial service of a ruler anointed by God, was vested in him. 'They say that the Russian Emperor is swayed by various influences,' wrote Loubet the President of France. 'That is absolutely not true. The Russian Emperor himself carries out his ideas. He defends them with consistency and with great strength.'

At the time of the difficult war with Japan, which began in 1904, the Sovereign declared, 'I shall never sign any shameful peace treaty which is unworthy of great Russia.' The Russian representatives in the peace negotiations between Russia and Japan followed his imperative, 'Not a penny of reparation, and not an inch of land.' Despite the pressure exerted on the Tsar from all sides, he showed a firmness of will, and the success of those negotiations was accorded exclusively to him.

The Sovereign Nicholas II possessed rare endurance and courage. His deep faith in God's providence strengthened in him, and conferred on him an absolute calmness of spirit which never abandoned him. 'So many years have I lived close to him,' said one of his servants, 'and I have never seen him angry.'

He was always even-tempered and calm.' The Emperor was never anxious for his life, never feared the abortive assassination plots launched against him, and rejected even the most indispensable safety precautions. At the decisive moment in the Kronstadt uprising in 1906, Nicholas Alexandrovich, after the report of the minister of foreign affairs, said, 'If you see now that I am so calm, that is due to my unshakeable faith that the fate of Russia, my own fate, and that of my family, are in the hands of the Lord. Whatever happens, I shall bow to His will.'

The royal couple showed themselves a model of true Christian family life. The relationship was distinguished by genuine love, heartfelt reciprocal understanding, and a deep mutual trust. 'Our love and our lives are entirely one; we are so united that it is inconceivable that there should be any doubt about our love and faithfulness. Nothing can ever separate us or diminish our love,' wrote Alexandra Feodorovna to her husband in 1909. 'I cannot believe that today is the twentieth anniversary of our marriage,' wrote Nicholas Alexandrovich on November 30, 1914, in his diary. 'The Lord has blessed us with a rare happiness in our family life. Would that we might be worthy of this highest blessing during the whole of our life!'

The Lord blessed this union with four daughters – Olga, Tatiana, Maria, and Anastasia – and a son, Alexis. The heir to the throne for whom they had waited so long was born on August 12, 1904, and at once became the darling of the whole family. His relatives and those close to the family all pointed to

the noble character of the Tsarevich, his kindness, and his responsive heart. 'Not a single fault is lodged in the soul of this child,' said one of his teachers. 'His soul is the most graceful soil for all good seed.' Alexis loved all people and tried as much as he could to help them, especially those whom he felt were being wronged. 'When I become Tsar,' he said, 'there will be no poor or unhappy people. I want them all to be happy.'

The Tsarevich's life was constantly threatened by an incurable genetic illness, hemophilia, which manifested itself soon after his birth. This sickness demanded from the family a great expenditure of spiritual and physical strength, and boundless faith and humility. In 1912, the illness flared up, and according to medical opinion, there was no hope. However, in answer to inquiries about the Tsarevich's health, the Sovereign humbly replied, 'We place our hope in God.'

The Tsar and the Tsarina reared their children in devotion to the Russian people, and carefully prepared them for future labour and struggle. 'The children should learn self-denial, and renounce their own desires for the sake of others,' said the Tsarina. 'The higher a man's station, the more should he help others, and in addressing them he should never remind them of his position,' said the Sovereign, 'and my own children also must be like this.' The Tsarevich and the princesses treated all with consideration and care. They were brought up in strictness and simplicity. 'It is the duty of parents to prepare their

children for life,' wrote the Empress, 'for whatever trials God may send them.' The Tsarevich and the princesses slept on rigid cots without pillows, and they dressed simply; clothes and shoes were handed down from elder to younger. Their food was very plain. The Tsarevich's favorite food was cabbage soup, porridge, and rye bread. 'This is the food of all my soldiers,' he would say. 'They led a modest and simple life,' wrote a close friend, 'they addressed others simply, and attached no importance to their royal status.'

This was a true Orthodox family, in which the traditions and structure of pious Russian families reigned. In her diary, the Empress wrote, 'In the organization of a household, each member of the family must play a part, as we only achieve complete happiness in family life when all the members of the family honestly do their duty.' The imperial family led a withdrawn life. They did not like formal ceremonies and speeches, and etiquette was a burden to them. The Tsarina and the princesses often sang in church during the Divine Liturgy. 'With what trembling and with what tears of contrition did they approach the Holy Chalice!' recalled Archbishop Theophan of Poltava. In the evening, the Tsar would often read aloud within the family circle. The Tsarina and her daughters practiced needlework. They liked to converse about God, and to pray. 'For God, nothing is impossible,' wrote the Empress. 'I believe that God always hearkens to whomever has a pure soul, and that such a person has no fear whatsoever of the difficulties and



dangers of life, since they are insurmountable only to those of feeble or shallow faith.'

Alexandra Feodorovna was a born nurse. She visited the sick, cared for them and encouraged them, and whenever she was unable to visit those in suffering personally, she sent her daughters. The Empress was convinced that children should recognize that there exists much beauty in the world, but much sorrow also. She herself never complained and never pitied herself at all, regarding it as her duty 'to remain faithful to Christ and to look after her neighbour.'

They called the Empress a true labourer in philanthropy and charity. As an irreproachable wife and mother, she was especially compassionate to the sorrows of other mothers, and offered them all possible assistance and care. When famine broke out in 1898, she herself offered to the starving one-eighth of her family's annual income. But usually, in order to conceal her identity, Alexandra Feodorovna gave financial assistance to the needy through others to whom she entrusted this duty. The Empress organized various philanthropic sales, and donated the proceeds to help the sick. She also organized vocational schools for the poor throughout the entire country, and opened a nursing school. At her own expense, the Tsarina built a home for soldiers disabled in the Russo-Japanese war, where they learned various skills.

The royal couple patronized the Orthodox Church not only in Russia, but throughout the whole world. During Nicholas II's reign, hundreds of monasteries and thousands of churches were built. With great

zeal, the Sovereign looked after the spiritual education of the people. Nationwide, tens of thousands of parish schools were established. The pious Emperor supported the development of arts that inspire the souls of Orthodox Christians: ecclesiastical architecture, iconography, ancient Church chant, and bell ringing.

In the reign of the Emperor Nicholas II, the Russian Orthodox Church was enriched with new Saints and religious festivals to a greater extent than during the whole of the previous century. In 1903, the Tsar, after examining the evidence for the canonization of the great elder Seraphim of Sarov, disagreed with the opinion of the Synod, and with great boldness issued instructions, 'Canonize immediately!' In the summer of the same year, the royal couple arrived in Sarov for the great spiritual celebration, an event for which hundreds of thousands of Russian Orthodox believers gathered. The Sovereign, on foot as a pious pilgrim, carried upon his shoulders the shrine with the holy relics of the God-pleaser, and partook of the Holy Gifts of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, together with the Empress. On the first of August in Sarov, the Sovereign wrote in his diary, 'Wondrous is God in His Saints. Unutterable is His mercy for beloved Russia. Inexpressibly comforting is the new manifestation of the grace of the Lord, revealed to all of us. O Lord, in Thee do we trust, let us never be confounded. Amen!'

In the Diveevo Convent, the Sovereigns visited the blessed eldress Pasha of Sarov, who foretold the tragic fate of the royal family. During those memorable days,

Orthodox Russia displayed in a deeply moving way her love and faith in the Tsar and the Tsarina. Here they saw with their own eyes the true Holy Russia. The celebrations at Sarov confirmed the Tsar's faith in his people.

The Sovereign realized the necessity for the rebirth of a Russia based upon the spiritual foundations of Holy Russia. At this time, Saint John of Kronstadt wrote, 'The kingdom of Russia is tottering. Its fall is imminent. And unless Russia is purged of many weeds, it will waste away, as did the kingdoms and cities of old, which Divine Justice obliterated from the face of the earth because of their godlessness and iniquities.' In the Sovereign's understanding, the success of that idea, which he had conceived, depended greatly upon the revival of the Patriarchate, and the election of a Patriarch. After deep thought he decided, if it be pleasing to God, to undertake this burdensome task of patriarchal service himself, after first becoming a monk and receiving ordination. He proposed to entrust the throne of the Tsar to his son, having appointed the Empress and his brother Michael as regents. In March of 1905, the Sovereign met with members of the Most Holy Synod and informed them of his intention. The response was silence. The great moment was lost. 'Jerusalem knew not the time of her visitation' (Saint Luke 19:44).

The Sovereign, as the bearer of supreme authority in the Orthodox autocratic Empire, fulfilled his sacred duty as the ecumenical patron and protector of Orthodoxy, and the peace of the Church throughout

the world. He protested and reacted when the Turks slaughtered the Armenians and oppressed and tormented the Slavs. He opened wide the Russian borders to Christian refugees. When, in the summer of 1914, Austro-Hungary launched an attack on unprotected Serbia, Tsar Nicholas II unhesitatingly answered their call for help. Russia defended her sister-land. The Serbian crown prince Alexander sent the Sovereign a letter in which he wrote, 'It is impossible that difficult times should fail to strengthen the bonds of deep affection which bind together Serbia and Holy Slavic Russia, and a feeling of everlasting gratitude to your Majesty for help and protection will be sacredly preserved in the hearts of the Serbs.'

The Anointed of God was deeply conscious of the duty of the Tsar's service and would say, 'Ministers may be succeeded by others, but I alone carry responsibility before God for the well being of our people.' In proceeding from the original Russian principle of *sobornost* the all-embracing nature of the authority of Russian rule, he strove to attract the best people to participate in the government of the country, and remained a decided opponent to the introduction of a constitutional system into Russia. He did much to avert political unrest and to ensure internal peace in the land. However, passions continued to rage. The newspaper *Liberation*, which was published abroad, openly identified those who rebelled against the Tsar's authority in Russia as 'all the intellectuals, and a section of the populace, all the local administrative committees, the Municipal Council in certain cities... all

the press.' The prime minister Stolypin in 1907 said, 'They want great commotions, we want great Russia.'

During the twentieth year of the Emperor Nicholas II's reign, the economy of Russia reached its highest point. The production of grain was twice what it had been at the beginning of his rule, while the population had increased by fifty million. From illiteracy, Russia quickly became educated. In 1913, European economists predicted that by the middle of the century, Russia would predominate over Europe in the areas of politics, economics, and finance.

The First World War began on August 1, 1914, the day on which Saint Seraphim of Sarov is commemorated. The Sovereign Nicholas II went to the dependency of the Diveevo Convent in St. Petersburg. As it is recalled, the Sovereign stood before the icon of Saint Seraphim. The choir began chanting, 'Save, O Lord, thy people, and bless thine inheritance. Grant thou unto our faithful Emperor Nicholas Alexandrovich victory over barbarians, and by the power of thy cross, do thou preserve thy commonwealth.' The Sovereign wept much before the icon of the great elder. Diveevo's blessed Pasha of Sarov declared that the enemies of the fatherland had undertaken the war in order to dethrone the Tsar and tear Russia into pieces.

A few days after the outbreak of war, the Sovereign came with his family to Moscow. The people rejoiced, and the bells of the ancient capital of the throne of his forefathers rang out in celebration. In response to the welcome, the Tsar replied, 'In this hour of the threat of

war, which suddenly and, contrary to my intentions, has confronted my peace-loving people, in accordance with the tradition of our ancestors the Tsars of Russia, I seek fortification of the strengths of my soul in prayer at the holy sites and shrines of Moscow.'

From the first days of the war, the Sovereign, aside from vigilant government tasks, would visit the front lines, the cities, and the towns of Russia, blessing the troops and encouraging the people in the trial that had been sent. The Tsar fervently loved the army, and was deeply concerned with its needs. It is well known that once the Sovereign walked several kilometres in new full battle-dress, in order to gain a better understanding of the difficulties of a soldier's life. With fatherly love he showed concern for the wounded by visiting military hospitals and infirmaries. A genuine and sincere love for the simple Russian man was always felt as he addressed the lower ranks and soldiers.

The Tsarina tried to convert as many palaces as she could into military hospitals. Frequently, she involved herself personally in the organization of ambulances and medical depositories in cities throughout Russia.

Alexandra Feodorovna and the elder princesses became themselves nurses in the military hospital of Tsarskoe Selo. The entire day, from dawn till dusk, was devoted to the wounded soldiers, to whom they gave all their love and care. The Tsarevich Alexis also visited the military hospitals, encouraging the wounded and spending much time in discussion with

them. The Empress even worked in the operating room. Eyewitnesses reported that she handed the sterilized instruments to the surgeon. She assisted him in the most difficult operations, taking from him amputated arms and legs, and collecting the soldiers' blood soaked, lice infested clothing. With great humility, she tirelessly performed her work, as one to whom God Himself had assigned this particular service. During difficult operations, the soldiers often implored the Empress to stay by their side. She consoled the wounded and prayed together with them. 'I took charge of men injured with horrible wounds,' wrote Alexandra Feodorovna. 'My heart is in pain for them. To them I am especially compassionate as a wife and mother.' Several recall how at Peterhof, as they performed a litany for the soldiers of the division leaving for the front line, the Empress cried and wept as if her own children were departing.

The Sovereign, as commander in chief, possessed valuable qualities: great self-control, and a rare talent for making decisions both quickly and soberly under any circumstances. In the summer of 1915, a very difficult time for the Russian army, the Tsar himself assumed the high command of the armed forces. He was certain that only thus would the enemy be defeated. As soon as the Anointed One stood at the head of the army, success returned to the Russian troops. The arrival of the Tsarevich Alexis at the front lines contributed greatly to the surging of the army's morale.



In the spring of 1916, in accordance with the Tsar's will, the icon of the Mother of God of Vladimir was brought from the Kremlin to the armies in action. Litanies were served before the icon with faith and hope. Then, on the Sovereign's orders, an attack was launched on the enemy's position in the south-west, and was crowned with great success. Whenever the Sovereign was at the head of the armies, not one inch of territory was yielded to the enemy.

Until February 1917, the army remained unyielding, the troops lacked for nothing, and victory seemed assured. The Emperor Nicholas II, in extremely difficult circumstances, led Russia to the threshold of victory. However, the enemies of Orthodox Autocracy did not allow him to step over that threshold. 'Only now is it possible to dethrone the Tsar,' they said, 'for after his victory over the Germans, his authority will be established for a long time.'

Already in 1832, Saint Seraphim of Sarov had predicted the universal revolt against the Tsar's authority, and the bloody event of its fall. 'They will bide their time, until the moment when the Russian land will be in an extremely difficult position. Then, on the same day and hour, at a predetermined time, they will instigate an uprising of the populace in every region of the Russian land. And since many officials will take part in this plot, there will be no one to stop them, and in the first phase, much innocent blood will be spilled, and rivers of blood will flow throughout the land of Russia. Then there will be killed many nobles,

priests, and merchants, who will remain loyal to the Sovereign.'

In December 1916, the Empress visited the Monastery of Desiatina at Novgorod. The eldress Maria, who had worn heavy chains for many years, stretched out her wasted arms towards her and said, 'Behold, the Martyr Empress Alexandra cometh!' and embracing her, she blessed her. The blessed Pasha of Sarov, shortly before her death in 1915, continually prostrated herself in repentance before the Tsar's portrait, saying, 'He will be higher than all Tsars.' She venerated the portraits of the Tsar and the royal family as icons, saying, 'O Holy Royal Martyrs, pray to God for us.' One day someone reported to the Tsar her words, 'Sovereign, descend yourself from the throne.'

The fateful March 15 arrived. In the capital the disturbance increased. In the active army, the 'generals' revolt' broke out. The highest officers requested that the Tsar abdicate from the throne 'for the sake of the salvation of Russia, and victory against the foreign enemy,' even though victory was already at hand. His close relatives on bended knee implored the Tsar likewise to abdicate. Without violating the oath he had given when anointed Tsar, and without abolishing the autocratic monarchy, the Emperor Nicholas II handed over authority to the eldest relative, his brother Michael. That day the Tsar wrote in his diary, 'All around is betrayal, cowardice, and deceit.' When the Tsarina heard of the Tsar's abdication, she said, 'It is the will of God. God permitted it for the spiritual salvation of Russia.'

The people lost the one who possessed the hereditary grace to execute Russian justice.

Exactly on that fateful day, there miraculously appeared in the village of Kolomenskoe in the suburbs of Moscow the icon, which is called the 'Reigning Mother of God'. The Heavenly Queen appeared there wearing royal purple, and the crown on her head, holding in her hands the orb and sceptre. The Most Pure One took upon Herself the burden of the Tsar's authority over the people of Russia, preserving it for the future.

The Tsar and his family set out on the way of the cross to Golgotha. All the members entrusted themselves completely into the hands of the Lord. 'Everything is in God's hands,' said the Sovereign in the difficult moments of his life. 'I trust in His mercy, and I calmly face the future with resignation to His will.'

The news of the Tsar's and the Tsarina's arrest by the provisional government on March 21, 1917, was met by Russia with silence. After the abdication of the Tsar, the chief magistrate of the Holy Synod asked the Synod to send proclamations to the people to support Orthodox monarchy. The Synod remained silent.

The committee of inquiry assigned by the provisional government exhausted the Tsar and Tsarina with searches and interrogations, accusing them of high treason, but could not find a single fact. In answer to the question of one of the committee's members, why they had not yet published the correspondence of the Tsar and Tsarina, he said, 'If we

were to publish it, the people would venerate them as saints.'

While detained in Tsarskoe Selo, the royal family worked tirelessly. In the spring the Tsar and his children cleared the park of snow, and in the summer they worked in the vegetable garden and cut wood. The fact that the Tsar worked tirelessly so astonished the soldiers that one of them said, 'If you give him a bit of land and he works it alone, he'll soon regain the whole of Russia.'

In August 1917, the royal family was taken under convoy to Siberia. On the day of the Transfiguration of the Lord, on the steamship *Rus*, they arrived in Tobolsk. At the sight of the most august family, the simple folk took off their hats, made the sign of the cross, and many fell to their knees. Not only women, but men also wept. One day the Sovereign asked one of the soldiers of the red army guarding him, what was happening in Russia. He replied, 'Blood is flowing like a river in the civil war. Men are exterminating each other.' Nicholas Alexandrovich said nothing, but with a deep sigh lifted his gaze towards heaven. The regime of the captivity of the royal prisoners gradually became more cruel. The Empress at that time wrote, 'We must endure, be cleansed, and be reborn!'

Exactly a year after the abdication, the Sovereign wrote in his diary, 'How much longer will our ill-fated homeland suffer and be torn apart by external and internal enemies? There are moments when there is no longer strength to endure, one doesn't even know

what to hope for, or what to wish for. But then, no one is equal to God. Let His holy will be done!

The Tsar and his family loved Russia with all their hearts and could not imagine life outside their homeland. Alexandra Feodorovna wrote from her imprisonment, 'I love my country so much, despite all its shortcomings. It becomes to me even more dear, and each day I thank the Lord, that He has allowed me to stay here.' 'I would never wish to leave Russia, so much do I love her,' said the Sovereign, 'it would be better to go even to the most remote part of Siberia.'

The Sovereign's servants said, 'Until now, we have never seen such a noble, sympathetic, loving, and righteous family, and it is unlikely that we ever shall see the like again.' Germogen, Bishop of Tobolsk, had at one time spread slander about the Empress. He now openly confessed his mistake. In 1918, shortly before his martyrdom, he wrote a letter in which he called the Tsar's family a 'much suffering, holy family,' and implored everyone to exercise care and not to condemn others, especially the Anointed of God, the Tsar.

At the end of April 1918, the royal prisoners were transferred under guard to the city of Ekaterinburg, which for them became the Russian Golgotha. 'Perhaps for the salvation of Russia a sacrifice of redemption is required. I shall be that sacrifice,' said the Sovereign. 'Let God's will be done!' The continual insults and sneers on the part of the guard at the Ipatiev house, where they were kept in custody, caused the Tsar and his family deep psychological

and physical pain, which they bore meekly, forgiving all. The Tsarina, reflecting on the words of Saint Seraphim of Sarov, wrote in her diary, 'When reviled, bless. When persecuted, endure. When defamed, comfort. When vilified, rejoice. That is our way. He that endureth to the end shall be saved.'

The Tsar's family were conscious that death was near. During those days the Grand Duchess Tatiana underlined in one of her books the following words, 'The faithful of the Lord Jesus Christ were led unto death as to a feast... and they stood before inevitable death, retaining a wondrous tranquility of spirit, which never forsook them even for a moment. They went to meet their death calmly, because they cherished the hope that they would pass to that blessed life, which begins for men beyond the grave.'

On Sunday, July 14, three days before their martyrdom, at the request of the Sovereign, permission was given for a divine service to be celebrated at the house. On that day, for the first time none of the imprisoned royalty chanted during the service, but they prayed in silence. In keeping with the order of service, at a certain place it is appointed that the prayer for the departed be read, 'With the Saints grant rest, O Christ, to the souls of Thy servants.' Instead of reading this prayer, the deacon began to chant it. Being a little startled at this departure from the rule of service, the priest also began to chant. The royal family knelt. Thus they prepared themselves for death, accepting this farewell funeral prayer.

The eldest princess Olga wrote from the place of her confinement, 'My father requests to tell all who have remained faithful to him, and to all who may be influenced by them, not to seek vengeance on his account. He has forgiven all, and prays for all. Let them be mindful that the evil that is now in the world will become even stronger, and that it is not evil which conquers evil, but only love.' The Sovereign's letter to his sister revealed very clearly, as never before, the strength of his spirit in those difficult days of trial. 'I firmly believe that the Lord will have mercy on Russia and will at last calm the passions. Let His holy will be done!'

By divine providence, the Royal Martyrs were taken from this earthly life all together, as a reward for their boundless reciprocal love which had tightly united them as an indivisible whole.

On the night of the martyrdom of the Tsar's family, the blessed Maria of Diveevo raved and shouted, 'The princesses with bayonets! Accursed Jews!' She raved frightfully, but only later did people understand what she was shouting about. In the basement of the Ipatiev house, where the Royal Martyrs and their faithful servants completed their way of the cross, inscriptions left by the executioners were found. One of them takes the form of four cabbalistic symbols. This inscription is deciphered as follows: 'Here, according to the directive of satanic powers, the Tsar was sacrificed in order that the nation might be destroyed. And let all the world be informed of this.'



It was not by chance that this inhuman murder was committed on July 17, for on that very day the Russian Orthodox Church commemorates the Holy Duke Andrew Bogoliubsky, who with his martyr's blood sanctified autocracy in Russia. According to the witness of chroniclers, the conspirators assassinated him in a barbarous manner. The Holy Duke Andrew thus became the first to proclaim Orthodoxy and Autocracy as the foundation for the state system of Holy Russia and was, in essence, the first Russian Tsar.

During those tragic days the Most Holy Patriarch Tikhon announced before all in Moscow at the Church of the Kazan Mother of God, 'During these days an appalling act has been committed: the murder of the former Tsar Nicholas Alexandrovich... In obedience to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures we must condemn this deed, or else the blood of the murdered will fall upon us as well, and not only upon those who committed this act. We recognize that he abdicated from the throne, mindful for the benefit of Russia, and because of his love for her. After the abdication he could have lived abroad a relatively peaceful life devoid of danger, but this he would not do, desiring to suffer together with Russia.'

Shortly after the revolution, Makary the Metropolitan of Moscow had a vision of the Sovereign, standing by the side of Christ. The Saviour said to the Tsar, 'You see that I hold in my hands two cups, this bitter one for your people, and another, a sweet one, for you.' Then the Tsar fell on his knees, and for a long

time he pleaded with the Lord that he be given the bitter cup to drink, instead of his people. The Saviour took out of the bitter cup a burning coal and put it into the hands of the Sovereign. Nicholas Alexandrovich began to pass the coal from palm to palm, and at the same time his body began to be illumined until he became like unto a light-bearing spirit... And again, the hierarch Makary saw the Tsar among a multitude of people. He gave them manna. At this time a voice was heard, 'The Sovereign hath taken upon himself the guilt of the Russian people. The Russian people are forgiven.'

'If Thou wilt forgive their sin, forgive; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written' (Exodus 32:32). Nicholas Alexandrovich underlined these words in the Holy Scriptures. The Sovereign ascended Golgotha courageously, and in meek submission to the will of God, accepted a martyr's death. He left the principle of monarchy received from his ancestors for future generations, which he himself in no way tarnished.

Already in 1832, Saint Seraphim of Sarov had predicted not only the collapse of the Tsar's authority, but also the moment of its revival and the resurrection of Russia. '...When the land of Russia is divided, one part of it will obviously remain with the rebels, and the other will obviously stand up for Tsar, Fatherland, and Holy Church. The unseen right hand of the Lord will protect the Tsar and all the Royal Family, and will give a complete victory to those who take up arms for Tsar, Church, and the goodness

of the indivisibility of the Russian land. The victorious side of the Tsar will capture all the traitors and hand them over to the hands of Justice. Then no one will be sent to Siberia, but they will all be put to death, and more blood will be shed than before. But it will be the last, a cleansing blood, for after that, the Lord will bless His people with peace, and exalt His anointed one David, His servant, a man after His own heart.'

**On back cover:**

Holy Mount Athos. The skete of Saint Anna.

October 29, 1998.

Greek hieroschemamonk Ephraim with  
the miracle-working icon of the Holy Royal  
Martyrs of Russia on the eve of the ascent  
with the icon to the summit of Mount Athos.

Translation by:

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