

✝ THE SPIRITUAL WATCH

Η Πνευματική Εγρήγορση



"Stand fast on spiritual watch, because you do not know when the Lord will call you to Himself"
«Παραμείνετε ακλόνητοι εν πνευματική εγρήγορση, γιατί δεν γνωρίζετε πότε ο Κύριος θα σας καλέσει εμπρός Του»

+St. John Maximovich / +Άγιος Ιωάννης Μαξίμοβιτς

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Inside this issue

Holy Royal Martyrs.....p.1

Ask His Eminence.....p.1

Άγιοι Βασιλομάρτυρες.....p.2

OEI: Message from Met. Moses...3

How to Request SW.....p.5

Monastic Tactics.....p.6

3rd Century Epidemic.....p.7

Smarter Fights.....p.7

Kid Korner.....p.8

OEI Annual Report.....p.9

Illustrious Latin.....p.9

Metropolis Pledge Form.....p.12

About The Spiritual Watch

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Please see request information
on p. 5

Holy Royal Martyrs of Russia

Tsar St. Nicholas, Tsaritsa St. Alexandra, Tsarevich St. Alexei, and Grand Duchesses
Sts. Olga, Tatiana, Maria, and Anastasia

By St. John Maximovich:

"Why was Tsar Nicholas II persecuted, slandered, and killed? Because he was Tsar, Tsar by the Grace of God. He was the bearer and incarnation of the Orthodox worldview, that the Tsar is the servant of God, the Anointed of God, and that to Him he must give an account for the people entrusted to him by destiny, for all his deeds and actions, not only those done personally, but also as Tsar...He was the bearer of the consciousness that the Supreme authority should be obedient to God, should receive sanctification and strength from Him to follow God's commandments. He was a living incarnation of Faith in the Divine Providence that works in the destinies of nations and peoples and directs Rulers faithful to God into good and useful actions. Therefore, the longsuffering Sovereign was intolerable to the enemies of Faith and for those who strive to place human reason and human faculties above everything..."

Tsar Nicholas II was a servant of God by his inner world-outlook, by conviction, by his actions; and he was thus in the eyes of the whole Orthodox Russian people. The battle against him was closely bound up with the battle against



God and Faith. In a word, he became a Martyr, having remained faithful to the Ruler of those who rule, and accepted death in the same way as the martyrs accepted it."

By St. Philaret:

"At one time, even fairly recently, the date July 17 in the so-called 'new style,' was marked as a day of sorrow, because on this day the Russian people and the Russian diaspora remembered the great evil act when the Royal Family was brutally killed in the basement of Ipatiev House. This was a day of mourning, but no longer! Now the Royal Family has been glorified as a family of

holy martyrs. Never forget that when the Church glorifies a saint, the act itself does not create the saint, it only declares to the people that this person or this group of people have been glorified in God.

In the collection of the Lives of Saints we see a wonderful example. Once there was a man who occupied a very lofty position, he was renowned and wealthy, but he left to join a monastery, to become a

Cont'd on p.5

Ask His Eminence: "The Faith of Repentance"

Q: Sometimes certain relatives judge me for receiving the Holy Mysteries without fasting on Saturday, but ever since I was a child, with the blessing of my spiritual father, of blessed memory, I did this: received Holy Communion without fasting on Saturday. Is this wrong? (Of course, I do keep Wednesdays and Fridays and the other fasts of the Church.)

A: Essentially, the preparation for Holy Communion is repentance. This fact is made abundantly clear in the prayers that we read before Holy Communion: Here,

we see the Saints condemn themselves to a great degree, confessing to be unworthy to participate in the Holy Mysteries. In the words of the preparation prayers for Holy Communion, we see even the Saints stand fearfully before the Gift of gifts, putting all their trust in God, Who is the only One who can grant us to become worthy. No fasting practice, nor any other act of preparation can make us worthy, in and of itself. Only God can do this,

Cont'd on p.3



"Be Careful! Watch out for your soul! Turn your thoughts away from what will soon pass, and turn towards what is eternal. Thus you will find the happiness that your soul seeks"
«Πρόσεχε! Φρούρησε την ψυχή σου! Στρέψε τις σκέψεις σου μακριά από αυτά που σύντομα θα περάσουν, και στρέψου προς τα αιώνια. Έτσι θα βρεις την ευτυχία που λαχταρά η ψυχή σου»

Οι Άγιοι Βασιλομάρτυρες της Ρωσίας

Γράμματα και Προφητείες

Ο ίδιος ο Άγιος Νικόλαος συνήθιζε να λέει: «Γεννήθηκα την ίδια μέρα που εόρταζε ο Δίκαιος Ιώβ ο Πολυάθλος και είμαι έτοιμος σαν κι εκείνον να δεχθώ τις δοκιμασίες του Θεού και να ανεχθώ τις ταλαιπωρίες έως τέλους.» Και πράγματι όλη του η ζωή ήταν ένας Γολγοθάς. Ήταν πολύ ταπεινός, απλός, λιτός, ευλαβής και σεμνός, παρά την υψηλή καταγωγή του και παρά το ότι ήταν Αυτοκράτορας της μεγαλύτερης σε έκταση, πληθυσμό και πλούτο αυτοκρατορίας που υπήρξε στην ιστορία του κόσμου.

Η αγιότητα του **αγίου Σεραφεΐμ του Σάρωφ** ανακηρύχθηκε επί των ημερών του τσάρου Νικολάου Β', το 1903. «Είναι αξιοσημείωτο και εκπληκτικό, ότι ο Όσιος Σεραφεΐμ είχε γράψει μια επιστολή, και είχε δώσει εντολή να επιδοθεί αυτή στον τρίτο Τσάρο από την εποχή του, όταν θα επισκεφθό το Σάρωφ. Πράγματι, όταν ο Νικόλαος επισκέφθηκε το Σάρωφ κατά την Ανακήρυξη του Αγίου, εδόθη εις αυτόν η επιστολή, η οποία εφυλάσσετο στην Μονή του Ντιβέγιεβο. Την εδιάβασε, αλλά δεν είπε ποτέ σε κανέναν το περιεχόμενό της το πιθανότερο είναι, ότι ανεφέρετο στο Μαρτύριό του» [Βλ. «Οι Ρώσοι Άγιοι Νεομάρτυρες και ο Τσάρος Νικόλαος Β'», Μέρος Β'].

Ο άγιος είχε, λίγο πριν το θάνατό του το 1833, γράψει αυτό το γράμμα, το σφράγισε με πέντε σφραγίδες από κερί και απευθύνονταν **“στον Τσάρο στην βασιλεία του οποίου θα με δοξάσει”**. Το είχε δώσει σφραγισμένο στον Νικολάι Μοτοβίλωφ λέγοντάς του: – «Δεν θα ζούμε εμείς, αλλά η γυναίκα σου θα ζήσει όταν στο Ντιβέγιεβο θα έρθει όλη η βασιλική οικογένεια και ο Τσάρος. Δώσε της την επιστολή να του την δώσει.» Κι αυτός αργότερα την έδωσε στην Έλενα Μοτοβίλωφ, στην ευσεβή σύζυγο του. Κρατούσε την επιστολή αυτή για εβδομήντα χρόνια και όταν έγινε η ανακήρυξη («δόξα») της αγιότητος του Οσίου κι ο Τσάρος ήλθε στο Ντιβέγιεβο, του την παρέδωσε μετά την πανηγυρική δοξολογία.

Η Ναταλία Chichagova L. (κόρη του Επισκόπου Σεραφεΐμ, μετέπειτα αγίου μάρτυρος Μητροπολίτη Σεραφεΐμ Chichagov, ο οποίος ήταν ο κύριος οργανωτής της αγιοποίησης του Αγίου Σεραφεΐμ) είπε ότι, όταν ο αυτοκράτορας έλαβε την επιστολή, ευλαβικά την τοποθέτησε στην τσέπη του πουκαμίσου του, λέγοντας ότι θα την αναγνώσει αργότερα.

Δεν γνωρίζουμε το ακριβές περιεχόμενο, αλλά είναι πολύ πιθανόν, ο Άγιος Σεραφεΐμ να προετοίμασε τον Τσάρο για τις επερχόμενες δοκιμασίες της Ρωσίας και του ιδίου, κατά την επίσης πρόρρηση του Οσίου: **«Τον Τσάρο που θα με δοξάσει, θα τον δοξάσω»**. Η Έλενα ήταν ανεψιά της οσίας Μάρθας του Ντιβέγιεβο, μεγάλωσε σχεδόν μέσα στο Ντιβέεβο κοντά στον αγ. Σεραφεΐμ και στις θείες της μοναχές Μάρθα και Παρασκευή Μελιούκωφ. Ο Άγιος είχε πει για την Έλενα Μελιούκωφ: «Είναι ένας ένσαρκος άγγελος.

Ωστόσο δεν θα γίνη μοναχή, αλλά θα γίνη σύζυγος του Νικόλα Μοτοβίλωφ». Όπως κ' έγινε. Παντρεύτηκε τον πλούσιο και ευγενή Νικόλαο Μοτοβίλωφ, πιστό μαθητή και συνεργάτη του οσίου Σεραφεΐμ. Ήταν φύλακας του πολύτιμου αρχείου του Ν. Μοτοβίλωφ και των παραδόσεων του Οσίου. Μετά τον θάνατο του Μοτοβίλωφ η σύζυγος του Ελένη ήλθε και πάλι στο μοναστήρι, όπου είχε παράσει τα παιδικά και τα νεανικά της χρόνια, και έγινε κρυφά μοναχή. Κοιμήθηκε στις 27 Δεκεμβρίου 1910.

Όταν το Βασιλικό ζεύγος επισκέφθηκε την γυναικεία Μονή του Ντιβέγιεβο, στις 20 Ιουλίου, συνωμίλησε πρώτα κατ' ιδίαν με την **Οσία**

Παρασκευή του Σάρωφ (Πάσσα Σαρώφσκαγια, 22.9.1915), μία γνωστή διορατική δια Χριστόν Σαλή.

«Η Πάσσα — γράφει η Ειρ. Γκοραϊνίωφ — είχε την συνήθεια να προσφέρει τσάι στους επισκέπτες της. «Παρηγορούσε» αυτούς που μία δυστυχία τους περίμενε, βάζοντας πολλή ζάχαρη στο τσάι τους! Εβαλε τόση ζάχαρη στο φλυτζάνι του Αυτοκράτορα, που το τσάι ξεχειλίστηκε! Ο Άρχοντας ζήτησε να μείνει μόνος μαζί της. Όταν βγήκαν από το κελλί της, η συνοδεία του έμεινε κατάπληκτη από τα αλλοιωμένα χαρακτηριστικά του Τσάρου και την ωχρότητα του προσώπου του. Δεν απεκάλυψε σε κανέναν αυτά που η “Σαλή” του είχε ευεί».

Αργότερα, η υποτακτική της μακαρίας Παρασκευής εφάνέρωσε, ότι η Γερόντισσα της είχε αποκαλύψει στον Τσάρο την τύχη της Ρωσίας, την γέννηση του αμφοφιλικού διαδόχου Αλεξίου, την επανάσταση του 1917, την πτώση της δυναστείας των Ρομανόφ, την καταστροφή της Αγίας Ρωσίας και τον μαρτυρικό θάνατο, τον δικό του και της οικογενείας του και την καταστροφή της Εκκλησίας επίσης τον είχε προτρέψει να παραιτηθεί μόνος του από τον θρόνο και του είχε επιδώσει ένα

δέμα με πολλή ζάχαρη, επειδή «θα είχε να κάνει μεγάλο ταξίδι...».

Μετά από αυτό ο αυτοκράτορας έστειλε αγγελιοφόρους επανειλημμένα στο Ντιβέγιεβο στην Πάσα για να ζητήσει τις προσευχές της για όλα τα σημαντικά θέματα.

Λίγο πριν την κοίμησή της η μακαρία έκανε συνεχώς μετάνοιες μπροστά στο πορτρέτο του Τσάρου, προβλέποντας έτσι το μαρτύριο του και την αγιότητα του, έλεγε **“Αυτός ο Τσάρος θα είναι πάνω απ' όλους τους άλλους”**. Επίσης, έλεγε: **“Ο Άγιοι Βασιλομάρτυρες, πρεσβεύσατε υπέρ ημών, των αμαρτωλών”!** Κοιμήθηκε ειρηνικά το 1915, σε ηλικία 120 ετών και η μνήμη της τιμάται την 22α Σεπτεμβρίου.

«Στις 11 Δεκεμβρίου του 1916, η Τσαρίνα επισκέφθηκε την πόλη Νόβγκοροντ, με μικρή συνοδεία επισκέφθηκε τα στρατιωτικά Νοσοκομεία, τα Μοναστήρια και παρευρέθηκε στην Θεία Λειτουργία στο Καθεδρικό Ναό της Αγίας Σοφίας. Στο Μοναστήρι “Ντεσγιατίν”, επισκέφθηκε την **ασκήτρια Σταρίτσα Μαρία Μιχαήλοβνα** στο μικρό κελλάκι της, όπου με βαριές αλυσίδες η ηλικιωμένη ασκήτρια ευρίσκετο στο σιδερένιο κρεβάτι της. Μόλις εισήλθε η Τσαρίνα, η ασκήτρια πρότεινε τα χέρια της και είπε: “Να! έρχεται η Μάρτυς Βασίλισσα

Συνεχίζεται στη σελ. 4



St. John of Damascus Orthodox Educational Initiative

A Message from His Eminence, Metropolitan Moses of Toronto

To the Reverend Clergy and Faithful of our Holy Church:
Beloved Sons and Daughters in the Lord,

Having consulted with His Eminence, Metropolitan Demetrius, the president of our Eparchial Synod, and with his full agreement, it gives me great joy to share with you good news about an essential apostolic endeavor of our Holy Church - the Saint John of Damascus Orthodox Educational Initiative. As many of you may already know, our educational initiative is an online program providing Orthodox high school and middle school students - as well as adults - classes in the Faith, and in the humanities and sciences, taught from an Orthodox perspective by qualified Orthodox teachers.

After two semesters of operation, we have received many happy reports. Parents who are homeschooling their children or seeking to supplement their public or private education, as well as adults seeking a deeper understanding of theology, philosophy, and history from within the mind of the Church, have reported very high satisfaction with the quality of instruction they received, and they look forward to their families' participating in the Initiative classes in the future.

From our own point of view as those entrusted with the Church's highest ministry - the apostolic office to be overseers of the flock of Christ - we see the Initiative supporting our work in at least three critical ways:

1. It offers a thoroughly Orthodox, as well as academically, serious resource to our families who are struggling valiantly to rear their children in learning and piety amid a hostile culture.

2. It is reinforcing the sense of community, throughout the year, among our widely scattered teens and pre-teens, that has been nurtured so carefully, and with much labor, by the once-a-year Saint Xenia Camp and the Family and Youth Conferences. In light of the many restrictions associated with COVID, the assistance the Initiative provides in this context is all the more important.

3. It helps parents provide the kind of education that will form a natural preparation not only for all types of further education in general, but also, and specifically, for the theology and humanities program offered at our Saint Photios Orthodox Theological Seminary.

We encourage you to read the accompanying report that we assembled on the Initiative's progress during its first full year of operation (See <https://orthodoxlearninggoc.com/appeal/>). Yet, we need your help. We extend our archpastoral blessing to those who contribute to the Initiative's operating fund with a donation. As most of you probably know, very few educational institutions can operate only on the basis of tuition payments, and nearly all rely also on the generosity of benefactors who believe in their institution's mission. We certainly believe in ours.

Please donate to the Saint John of Damascus Orthodox Educational Initiative. Donations can be sent to:

Saint John of Damascus Orthodox Educational Initiative, c/o Fr. John
357 N Rolling Road
Springfield, PA 19064

Please address it to "Joy of All Who Sorrow Mission" and earmark it
"Orthodox Educational Initiative"

Donations may be offered online at:

<https://orthodoxlearninggoc.com/donate/>

Cont'd on page 9

Ask His Eminence: Preparation for Holy Communion *Cont'd from front cover*

through His great mercy and love for mankind. Our preparation practices are the *means*; they are not the *end*. However, even though our acts of preparation for Holy Communion are not the goal, but simply tools to assist us in approaching our goal, still, these *means* are necessary. We must prepare ourselves for Holy Communion, and we must also preserve Holy Communion. Therefore, preparation is very important, but preservation is also very important. This latter part, the importance of preserving the Grace of the Holy Mysteries within our souls once we have received, has been forgotten by many faithful.

As we know, many people came to our Church from the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR). In ROCOR, the faithful generally prepared to approach the Holy Chalice by keeping all the fasts of the Church, by attending Vespers and Vigil every Saturday, by going to confession, by repenting, forgiving all, and by reading the preparation prayers. A separate fast on Saturdays was not a part of this preparation, as a general rule.

In fact, there is a canon which prohibits strict fasting on Saturday, which caused this practice to become a point of contention among many



Orthodox faithful. St. Photios the Great mentions that fasting on Saturday was one of the distinctions between the East and the West: Those in the West would fast on Saturdays, and those in the East would not. There have also been other points of contention in relation to this issue, such as defining what exactly constitutes the Saturday fast in preparation for the Holy Mysteries.

Interestingly, even though they generally did not fast on Saturdays, the Russian Orthodox faithful tended to be very strict about attending Vespers and Matins each Saturday evening, in preparation for the Holy Mysteries. Those approaching the Holy Chalice understood the importance of preparing through these Sacred Services of the Church. Also, as part of their preparation for Holy Communion, the Russian faithful practiced frequent confession with their spiritual father, who would also assign very specific, additional prayer rules.

Among the Greeks, various practices became common, and some people think that these practices are absolute and universal; they are not. For example, it has become common among many Greek faithful to

Cont'd on page 10



Οι Άγιοι Βασιλομάρτυρες της Ρωσίας

Συνεχίζεται από την σελ. 2

Γράμματα και Προφητείες



St. Nektary, the last of the great Optina Elders, prophesied: "This Tsar will be a Great-martyr..."
Ο Άγιος Νεκτάριος, τελευταίος των μεγάλων Γερόντων της Όπτινα προφήτευσε πως «Αυτός ο Τσάρος θα γίνει Μεγαλομάρτυς...»

Αλεξάνδρα· η ασκήτρια καταφύλουσε αγκαλιάζοντας την Τσαρίνα και την ευλόγησε. Μετά από λίγο στις 29 Ιανουαρίου του 1917 κοιμήθηκε η ασκήτρια σε ηλικία 107 ετών· η προσφώνησή της όμως προξένησε βαθεία εντύπωση στην Τσαρίνα» (από τις Αναμνήσεις της Άννας Βυρούμπωβα).

Η οσία **Μαρία Ιβάνοβνα (Fedina)**, η δια Χριστόν **Σαλή του Ντιβέγεβο (+ 1931)**, τη νύχτα της 17 Ιουλίου του 1918, που η βασιλική οικογένεια μαρτύρησε, μαινόταν και φώναζε: "Ο Τσάρος, ο Τσάρος... Οι πριγκίπισσες με ξιφολόγχες! Καταραμένοι Εβραίοι!" Υπάρχουν ενδείξεις ότι οι δολοφονίες ήταν τελετουργικές. Βρέθηκαν παράξενα καβαλιστικά αποκρυφιστικά σύμβολα στους τοίχους του δωματίου όπου διαπράχθηκε το έγκλημα.

Ο άγιος **Νεκτάριος της Όπτινα (1853-1928)** προφήτευσε το 1917, πριν την οκτωβριανή επανάσταση:

«Χαλεποί καιροί έρχονται σύντομα. Στον κόσμο ο αριθμός έξι έχει περάσει και ο αριθμός επτά πλησιάζει... Να είστε σιωπηλοί, υπομονετικοί. Το έτος 1918 θα είναι ακόμη χειρότερο. Ο τσάρος και ολόκληρη η οικογένειά του θα βασανισθούν και θα δολοφονηθούν. Μια ευσεβής ψυχή είδε ένα αποκαλυπτικό όνειρο: Ο Κύριός μας Ιησούς Χριστός καθόταν σ' ένα θρόνο και γύρω του ήταν οι δώδεκα Απόστολοι. Εν τω μεταξύ φρικτά βάσανα και θρήνοι ακούγονταν από την γη. [...] Αίφνης ο Τσάρος παρουσιάστηκε μπροστά στον θρόνο του Χριστού με στεφάνι μεγαλομάρτυρος... Μάλιστα! Αυτός ο Τσάρος θα γίνει **μεγαλομάρτυρας**. Αν δεν μετανοήσουμε και δεν επιστρέψουμε στον Θεό, τότε όχι μόνο η Ρωσία, μα ολόκληρη η Ευρώπη θα καταρρεύσει. Η ώρα της προσευχής έχει έρθει».

Τα παραπάνω κατέθεσε ο Β. Σούστιν, πνευματικό παιδί του αγίου Νεκταρίου, και καταγράφονται στη βιογραφία του (Όσιος Νεκτάριος, Ο τελευταίος μεγάλος σάρετς της Όπτινα, έκδ Σταυροπηγιακής και Συνοδικής Ι. Μονής Οσίου Συμεών του Ν. Θεολόγου, Κάλαμος Αττικής 2003, σελ. 83-86).

Λίγο πριν τη δολοφονία του, ο Τσάρος Παύλος Α' έγραψε ένα γράμμα καθ' υπαγόρευσιν ενός αγίου μοναχού, με προορατικό χάρισμα, του **Άβελ του Προφήτη (+ 1831)**. Σε αυτό συμπεριλαμβανόταν περιγραφή των γεγονότων που επρόκειτο να επακολουθούσαν στην Ρωσία:

Η τύχη των ρώσων τσάρων μέχρι και το δισέγγονό του, του αυτοκράτορα Νικολάι Β'. Οι προφητείες ήταν γραμμένες και κλεισμένες σε φάκελο με την προσωπική σφραγίδα του αυτοκράτορα Παύλου Α' και χειρόγραφη επιγραφή του. «Να ανοιχθεί από τον απόγονό μου, εκατό χρόνια μετά τον θάνατό μου», το έγγραφο ήταν αποθηκευμένο σε μια ειδική αίθουσα στο παλάτι Gatchina. Όλοι οι τσάροι γνώριζαν γι' αυτό, αλλά κανείς δεν τόλμησε να παραβιάσει τη θέληση του προγόνου τους.

Στις 12 Μαρτίου 1901, 100 χρόνια ακριβώς μετά τη δολοφονία του, ο Τσάρος Νικόλαος ο Β' μαζί με την οικογένειά του επισκέφτηκαν το παλάτι Γκατσίνια, όπου διέμενε ο Τσάρος Παύλος Α' (1796-1801). Μετά

την επιμνημόσυνη δέηση για τον αυτοκράτορα Παύλο, άνοιξε το φάκελο, όπου έμαθε για την ακανθώδη πορεία του και την σταυρική πορεία του έθνους του.

Ο άγιος **Ιωάννης της Κρονστάνδης** προειδοποιούσε και φώναζε: "Δεν μπορείτε να φανταστείτε τι έρχεται στη Ρωσία".

Την άνοιξη του 1918 η **Μεγάλη Δούκισσα Όλγα** έγραψε στο ημερολόγιό της: "Ο Πατέρας παρακαλεί να

μεταφέρετε σε όλους, όσοι παραμένουν πιστοί σε αυτόν, και σε όσους αυτοί δύνανται να επιδράσουν, να μην εκδικηθούν χάριν του Βασιλέως, διότι αυτός τους έχει ήδη συγχωρήσει όλους και προσεύχεται για όλους· επίσης να μην εκδικηθούν για τον εαυτό τους να ενθυμούνται δε, ότι το κακό, το οποίο τώρα υπάρχει στον κόσμο, θα γίνη ισχυρότερο, αλλ' όμως το κακό δεν νικάται διά τον κακού, αλλά μόνο διά της αγάπης..".

Γράμμα της **Αγίας Τσαρίνας Αλεξάνδρας** από την φυλακή στο Εκατερίνεμπουργκ πριν το μαρτύριο:

"Κύριε, βοήθησε εκείνους που δεν μπορούν να έχουν αγάπη για τον Θεό στις πικραμένες καρδιές τους, που μόνο βλέπουν τα πάντα κακά και δεν καταλαβαίνουν ότι όλα αυτά θα φύγουν, δεν μπορεί να είναι αλλιώς. Ο Σωτήρας ήλθε και μας έδειξε έναν δρόμο. Όποιος ακολουθήσει τον δρόμο Του, δρόμο αγάπης και παθών, καταλαβαίνει την δόξα της Βασιλείας των Ουρανών."



The Holy Royal Martyrs of Russia

Cont'd from front cover

monk, and took up the life of the ascetics, in fasting, prayer and deprivation. Others lived nearby who shared his way of life, many of them were more severely ascetic than he. Yet the faithful began to flock to him, benefiting from his inspired spiritual discussions and guidance, and the Lord glorified him with the gift of sagacity and miracles. One of the monks asked his elder: 'Why is this so? This man is an ascetic, of course, but he is no better than the others; in fact, there are others who lead stricter ascetic lives, but are not granted the gifts of discernment or miraculous works, with such spiritual talents. Why did the Lord bestow these upon him, then?'

The elder responded: 'This is why: All the others, when they entered the monastic life, became ascetics, but in essence did not much change the world, they simply became monks themselves; their way of life was not the same as it had been in the world, but they did not deprive themselves of very much: they had already lived modestly, without great means, just like everyone else. But this person, renowned, wealthy, at the top tier of social life, took the ascetic step of denying a great deal more of the world than did others. He denied his high calling, he refused the honor, he renounced everything else, and that is why the Lord has now bestowed upon him these gifts, for his denial of the world was much greater and more profound than that of other monks.'

As far as the glorification of the Royal Family is concerned, we must never forget from what great heights these people descended!... They went to the depths of terrible suffering, for we know from their lives what they had to endure! At the beginning, when this wicked deed was committed, their holy names were abundantly covered with slanders, oh, what kinds of things they would say about the Royal Family! But all of this, like a shell, has broken and fallen away from them before the entire world, and truly, this family is beheld as a purely-Christian family, radiant with good works, especially during their years of slander and sorrows. From what great heights they had come to endure these bitter torments! Or to better put it, from what great heights did their enemies cast them!

We know that as they endured terrible denunciations and suffering, they shone with remarkable meekness, goodness, all-forgiveness and good will.



We know that for this reason the wicked enemies who were in charge constantly changed the guards; they would appoint the most base, the most perverted and amoral people as their overseers. At first they would mock the helpless captives, but later the meekness and kindness of the longsuffering royal family, and their remarkable good will, so affected the guards that they would gradually soften and become friends with their prisoners. It was for this reason that the personnel would be constantly changed, because their hearts would soften towards their captives.

They continued this ascetic feat even to their deaths, in the spirit of goodness, in the spirit of Christian love, until they were cruelly murdered. The Russian Church properly glorified them as martyrs, because they were killed as such, and they showed themselves to be true Christians their entire lives. The Church has now canonized them, and while before we prayed for the repose of

their souls, now we lift our prayers to them, so that through their intercession at the Divine Throne, our persecuted people, which they loved so much, would be granted mercy by the Lord, that He free her from this terrible yoke, both material and spiritual, which they endure today. Amen!"

-St. Philaret of New York, the New Confessor

Over a decade before the godless Bolshevik revolution, during which the communists burned or destroyed almost 50,000 churches and 1,000 monasteries, there had been a smaller, unsuccessful revolution, known as "the First Revolution." The Revolution of 1905-1906 was a warning to the people that, if they did not return to Christ, they could lose God's blessing. As St. John of Kronstadt said in 1905: "Our Tsar is a man of righteous and pious life. God sent him a heavy cross of sufferings...If the Russian people do not have repentance, the end of the world will be near. God will take the pious Tsar from them and will send a scourge in the persons of impious, cruel, self-proclaimed rulers, who will inundate the whole land with blood and tears." It is to the great credit of Tsar Nicholas that he was able to keep this from happening for more than ten years.

Cont'd on page 9

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Questions? KeepSpiritualWatch@gmail.com



Monastic tactics

GUIDANCE FOR ALL ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS, OUT OF THE SPIRITUAL BATTLEFIELD OF MONASTICISM

“Be at peace with one another...”

We all have to die, beloved brethren, and it will be hard for us if, while we are in this world, we do not love each other, if we are not reconciled to our enemies, whom we have offended, and if one has grieved another, if we do not forgive him. Then we will not have eternal blessedness in that world, and the heavenly Father will not forgive our sins.

(St. Peter of Cetinje, Letter to Radulovichs, 1805)

When you want to direct someone toward the good, first put him at peace bodily and honor him with words of love. For nothing inclines such a man to shame and induces him to cast off his vice and be changed for the better as do bodily comforts and honor, which he receives from you. Then, with love tell him a word or two, and do not be inflamed with anger toward him. Do not let him see any cause of enmity toward you. For love does not know how to lose its temper.

(St. Isaac the Syrian, Homilies, 85,57)

The Lord wants us to love one another. Here is freedom: in love for God and neighbor. In this freedom, there is equality. In earthly orders, there may not be equality, but this is not important for the soul. Not everyone can be a king, not everyone a patriarch or a boss. But in any position, it is possible to love God and to please Him, and only this is important. And whoever loves God more on earth will be in greater glory in His Kingdom.

(St. Silouan the Athonite, Writings, VI.23)

He who keeps watch over the words he is about to say also keeps watch over the deeds he intends to do, and he never goes out of the bounds of good and benevolent conduct. The graceful speech of a Christian is characterized by delicateness and politeness. This fact, born of love, produces peace and joy. On the other hand, boorishness gives birth to hatred, enmity, affliction, competitiveness, disorder and wars.

(St. Nektarios of Aegina, The Path to Happiness, 7)

With all your power, ask the Lord for humility and brotherly love, because God freely gives His grace for love towards one's brother.

(St. Silouan the Athonite, Writings, XVI.8)

Cleanse your mind from anger, remembrance of evil, and shameful thoughts, and then you will find out how Christ dwells in you.

(St. Maximus the Confessor, Chapters on Love, 4.76)

If someone puts his trust in God in a matter, let him not argue with his brother about it.

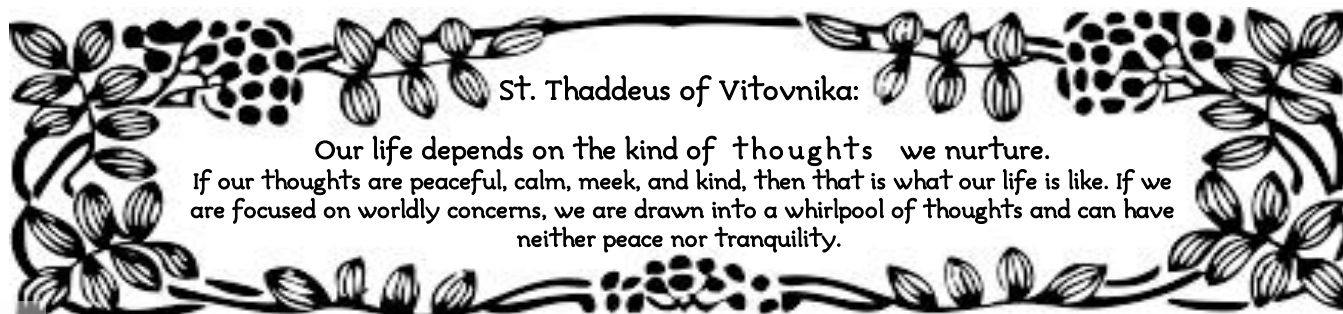
(St. Mark the Ascetic, Sermon 2.103)

As fire is not extinguished by fire, so anger is not conquered by anger, but is made even more inflamed. But meekness often subdues even the most beastly enemies, softens them and pacifies them.

(St. Tikhon of Zadonsk)

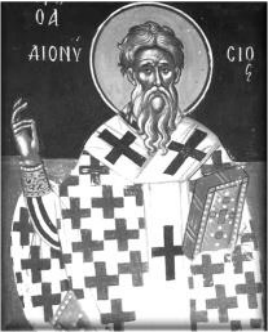
The purpose of God's Providence is to unite, by means of right faith and spiritual love, people who have been separated by evil. To this end the Savior also suffered for us, "in order to gather together the children of God who were scattered." (John 11:52)

(St. Maximus Confessor, Chapters of Love, 4.17)



epidemic in the 3rd century

A Letter from St. Dionysios the Great, Patriarch of Alexandria



St. Dionysius the Great was Patriarch of Alexandria from 248 to 264. During that time, the Church of Alexandria suffered relentless persecution. As the persecution subsided, an epidemic broke out in the city, just as Pascha was approaching. St. Dionysius described the epidemic, and the Church's response, in a letter to his flock outside of Alexandria.

St. Dionysius's letter was printed by Eusebius in his seminal Church History, chapter 7. The following English translation is by G.A. Williamson, published by Dorset Press in 1965 and again in 1984.

[Eusebius writes:] Later, when a severe epidemic followed the war just as the festival [Pascha] was approaching, he [St. Dionysius] again communicated in writing with the Christian community, revealing the horrors of the disaster: "Other people would not think this a time for festival: they do not so regard this or any other time, even if, so far from being a time of distress, it is a time of unimaginable joy. Now, alas! all is lamentation, everyone in mourning, and the city resounds with weeping because of the numbers that have died and are dying every day. As Scripture says of the firstborn of the Egyptians, so now there has been a great cry: there is not a house in which there is not one dead — how I wish it had been only one!

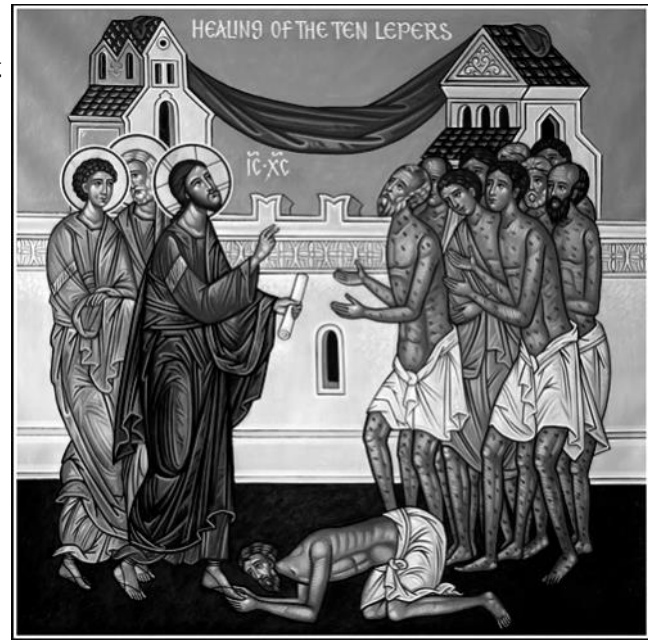
Many terrible things had happened to use even before this. First we were set on and surrounded by persecutors and murderers, yet we were the only ones to keep festival even then. Every spot where we were attacked became for us a place for celebrations, whether field, desert, ship, inn, or prison. The most brilliant festival of all was kept by the fulfilled martyrs, who were feasted in heaven. After that came war and famine, which struck at Christian and heathen alike. We alone had to bear the injuries they did us, but we profited by what they did to each other and suffered at each other's hands; so yet again we found joy in the peace which Christ has given to us alone. But when both we and they had been allowed a tiny breathing-space, out of the

blue came this disease, a thing more terrifying to them than any terror, more frightful than any disaster whatever, and as a historian of their own [Thucydides] once wrote: 'the only thing of all that surpassed expectation'. To us it was not that, but a schooling and testing as valuable as all our earlier trials; for it did not pass over us, though its full impact fell on the heathen... [ellipses in original]

Most of our brother-Christians showed unbounded love and loyalty, never sparing themselves and thinking only of one another. Heedless of the danger, they took charge of the sick, attending to their every need and ministering to them in Christ, and with them departed this life serenely happy; for they were infected by others with the disease, drawing on themselves the sickness of their neighbors and cheerfully accepting their pains. Many, in nursing and curing others, transferred their death to themselves and died in their stead, turning the common formula that is normally an empty courtesy into a reality: 'Your humble servant bids you good-bye.' The best of our brothers lost their lives in this manner, a number of presbyters, deacons, and laymen winning high commendation, so that death in this form, the result of great piety and strong faith, seems in every way the equal of martyrdom. With willing hands they raised the bodies of the saints to their bosoms; they closed their eyes and mouths, carried them on their shoulders, and laid them out; they clung to them, embraced them, washed them, and wrapped them in grave-clothes. Very soon the same services were done for them, since those left behind were constantly following those gone before.

The heathen behaved in the very opposite way. At the first onset of the disease, they pushed the sufferers away and fled from their dearest, throwing them into the roads before they were dead and treating unburied corpses as dirt, hoping thereby to avert the spread and contagion of the fatal disease; but do what they might, they found it difficult to escape."

by St. Dionysios the Great



Our Experience in OEI Classes: Parent Testimonial

Two siblings overheard discussing last night's dinner choice:

- Oh, no, not okra again...
- Stop whining; they're good for us.
- No... They're not good for anybody. They're slimy!
- That's a fallacy.
- Well, then, okra are not good for **me**. They make me cringe.
- That's a 1st order enthymeme.
- Well, think about it... How can something that makes me cringe be good for me?
- Not even... Your fallacy denies the antecedent and it does not follow a valid hypothetical format.
- Give me a break. How about this: If okra make me feel bad, then okra are bad for me! Now leave me alone!
- OK, but you have not proven your hypothetical syllogism...



Don't settle for a mediokra education!

Who are those kids? (Even their fights sound smart, nowadays!) My husband and I enrolled our two children in the St. John of Damascus Orthodox Educational Initiative's logic class with Fr. John, and they haven't been the same since. In all seriousness, we have watched them grow, mature intellectually, and engage each other in logical discourse (using rather impressive language, I might add...) This is not how they interacted before. My husband and I are thrilled to see our children develop the ability to think logically, which can be applied to all aspects of their lives. Our daughter, who is in high school, has gained the skills and confidence she needed to move forward, consider colleges, and think critically about her future. This class was probably the first time that our kids had a teacher who held multiple Masters' degrees. But beyond that, Fr. John had a natural way of engaging the students, including a great sense of humor, and the kids looked forward to his classes. We loved the focus on Orthodoxy, and that all the classes began and ended with prayer. Thank you! May St. John of Damascus bless your holy efforts!

-Parents of Students attending OEI classes (Verified)





Kid Corner



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Name the children of the Holy Royal Family—the children of St. Nicholas and St. Alexandra, in order.
2. Critical Thinking: Why did Czar St. Nicholas compare himself to the Righteous Job?
3. What kind of repose was it that seemed to St. Dionysios to be “...in every way, the equal of martyrdom?”
4. What did the Kollyvades Fathers teach about Holy Communion?
5. What does His Eminence, Metropolitan Demetrius, say is the key to preparing for Holy Communion?

Wondrous Word Search

T	Y	R	A	N	I	M	E	S
H	R	E	L	T	S	O	P	A
O	Y	A	R	E	L	I	C	S
P	T	G	D	C	D	O	Y	L
E	R	E	V	I	G	R	O	F
Y	A	F	A	S	T	I	N	G
O	M	Y	Y	K	V	I	N	E
C	O	M	M	U	N	I	O	N
S	T	R	U	G	G	L	E	N

Think about your Faith

Answer one or more of the above questions and, with your parent's permission, send your responses, along with your name and age to: The Spiritual Watch, c/o St. John's Monastery, 151 Heron Road, Cobleskill, NY 12043 or email them to KeepSpiritualWatch@gmail.com. Part or all of the responses may be published in the next issue. (Age will be taken into consideration; parents, feel free to simplify the questions to support younger children.)

Parish Pals

Apostle
Communion
Fasting
Forgive
Hope

Martyr
Relics
Seminary
Struggle
Tradition



The Holy Royal Martyrs of Russia *Cont'd from front p.5*

A great insight into the long-suffering Tsar Nicholas's character can be gained from the following incident, which occurred during one of the most violent moments of the aforementioned revolution. At the imperial residence at Peterhof, near the naval base of Kronstadt, which was under siege by insurrectionists, artillery shelling could be heard. Nicholas' foreign minister, Alexander Izvolsky, was giving a report to the Tsar at the time, and later recalled the following: "He listened attentively,

and, as was his habit, asked questions now and then, showing his interest in the smallest detail of my report. Glance as I would in his direction, I could not detect the slightest trace of emotion in his countenance, although he knew well that it was his crown that was at stake at that moment, only a few leagues away.... When my report was finished, the Emperor remained a few moments looking calmly out at the open window at the line of the horizon. For my part, I was oppressed by profound emotion, and could not refrain, even at the risk of infringing the rules of etiquette, from expressing my surprise at seeing him so unmoved. The Emperor did not apparently resent my observation, for he turned to me with a look which has so often been described as one of extraordinary gentleness, and replied in these few words, deeply engraved in my memory:



Tsarevitch St. Alexei, 14 years old at his martyrdom
Ο Διάδοχος Άγιος Αλέξιος, ήταν 14 ετών όταν μαρτύρησε

"If you see me calm, it is because I have the firm, the absolute conviction that the fate of Russia, my own fate, and that of my family is in the hands of God, Who has placed me where I am. Whatever happens, I will bow to His will, conscious of never having had a thought other than that of serving the country that He confided to me."

At another time, the holy monarch said, "Perhaps an expiatory sacrifice is needed for Russia's salvation. I will be that sacrifice. May God's will be done!" He had a very strong sense of his destiny as an Orthodox ruler. Although he had an opportunity to flee the country with his family and seek refuge outside Russia, he and his Empress deliberately chose to stay and accept whatever awaited them. He had been born on the feast of the Prophet Job and because of this he often remarked to his advisors: "I have a secret conviction that I am destined for a terrible trial, that I shall not receive my reward on this earth."

"To the Tsar in Whose Reign I shall be Glorified"

St. Seraphim prophesied the holiness of St. Nicholas, last Tsar of Holy Russia, when he wrote a letter to the Tsar over

70 years before it was to be delivered to the monarch: From Prascovia Ivanovna they went to see Elena Ivanovna Motovilova. The Tsar knew that Elena Ivanovna Motovilova, the pious widow of St. Seraphim's spiritual child, Motovilov, who had become a nun, was preserving a letter to give to him. This letter was given to her by her late husband, N. A.

Motovilov, written by St. Seraphim and addressed to Lord Emperor Nicholas II. St. Seraphim had written this letter, sealed it with soft bread, and given it to Motovilov with the words:

"You will not live that long, but your wife will live to the time when

Cont'd on p. 11



St. John of Damascus Orthodox Educational Initiative

Cont'd from p. 3

A Message from His Eminence, Metropolitan Moses of Toronto

Asking your prayers and help for this God-pleasing effort to continue and to flourish, on behalf of His Eminence Metropolitan Demetrius and the Eparchial Synod,

+Moses, of Toronto
Hierarchical Overseer
Saint John of Damascus
Orthodox Educational
Initiative

Our Experience in OEI Classes:

Parent Testimonial

As a parent, I can honestly say that I am thoroughly impressed by my daughter's gains in Latin this school year. I cannot believe how much she has learned. It seems that she has grown far more in Latin in one year in the OEI than she had in two years of taking Spanish at the local brick and mortar high school. Studies show that students who study Latin routinely perform better on standardized tests, so I wanted my daughter to become familiar with this language. I did not expect this much interest or growth in just one year—she walks around the house chanting her declensions, "terra-terrae... terram... terrarum..."

ANNUAL REPORT
by His Eminence, Metropolitan Moses of Toronto
Overseer, Orthodox Educational Initiative
[Excerpt; for complete Annual Report please visit:
<https://orthodoxlearninggoc.com/appeal/>]
It gives me great joy, with gratefulness to the Lord, to report to you on our progress made through your holy prayers since fall of 2019 and the spring of 2020, and are now in the midst of a short summer session. Here is the chronology, which I shall present in two ways: in terms of numbers of classes and total sections, and in terms of numbers of students:
Summer 2019: 1 class/2 sections
Fall 2019: 6 classes, 10 sections
Spring 2020: 21 classes/28 sections
Summer 2020: 6 classes/6 sections
The summer schools, of course, are intended to have light course offerings, with the current six classes being normal for a school our size. The significant datum is the huge jump from the Fall 2019 to Spring 2020 regular semesters. Our reputation spread quickly, and we had to scramble to handle all the signups we had...a good problem to have! The breakdown of student numbers is as follows:
Summer 2019: We began with an adult class in Orthodox Apologetics, with seventeen students.
Fall 2019: We had sixteen teen and pre-teen students, as well as eighteen adults, for a total of 34 students, enrolled in Logic 1, Latin 1, Algebra 1, Apologetics for the High School Student 1, Life Sciences 1, Orthodox Apologetics for Adults (discussion group format).
Spring 2020: 47 children and 45 adults, for a total of 92 students, enrolled in [OEI classes—please see website for complete list -Ed. <https://orthodoxlearninggoc.com/appeal/> and scroll down for the complete Annual Report]

terris...etc." Fr. Steven

Allen is an exceptional instructor—we cannot say enough. I wish we had teachers

like that when I was in school!

-Orthodox Parent of an OEI student (Verified)



Ask His Eminence: Preparation for Holy Communion *Cont'd from p.3*

fast for three days prior to receiving the Holy Gifts. This practice is based upon something which St. Nicodemus suggested. As it happens, many of the people who keep this rule, and fast for three days immediately prior to their reception of the Holy Mysteries, do not attend Vespers or Matins regularly, and some do not go to confession frequently.

Among the Greek faithful, there are also others who keep an 8-day fasting rule before Holy Communion, and still others who keep a 40-day fasting rule prior to approaching the Holy Chalice. Those keeping a 3-day fasting rule who have the temptation to be judgmental should remember that the people who keep longer fasting rules may have a similar temptation to judge them, who keep the three days. Therefore, no Orthodox Christian should sit in judgment of their brother's preparatory fasting rule.

In terms of confession, the Holy Fathers refer to this Mystery as "second baptism." Attending Vespers and Matins, going to confession, as well as completing our prayer rule, are all practices which are vital to our preparation. These actions quite literally prepare our souls to participate in the Divine Liturgy, which in turn, prepares us for the reception of Holy Communion. Therefore, we should start considering these practices as necessary, and not optional: Saturday evenings should be set aside for our Savior and the services of the Church.

The Kollyvades were those Fathers who tried to redirect the faithful to the proper understanding: that Orthodox Christians should be receiving the Holy Mysteries frequently. However, some people have misquoted, and I would say, even distorted the teachings of the Kollyvades Fathers on frequent Holy Communion. Misunderstanding this teaching, some believe that they absolutely must receive Holy Communion at every Liturgy, even if the proper preparation has not taken place. This is the other extreme. We must be very careful and remember the words of St. Paul and the Holy Fathers who instruct us on the danger of participating unworthily in the Holy Eucharist.

Therefore, when we approach the Holy Chalice, we must understand what we are doing, to the extent humanly possible. We must approach with a heart that is grieving over our sinful state, knowing that partaking in the Holy Body and Blood of our Savior will bring Light to our darkened souls. It will renew us, if we participate with repentance. And this is not because we prepared ourselves with fasting for three days, or by doing any outward thing—it is because the preparation, when performed with humility, attracts God's mercy.

It is noteworthy that these Kollyvades Fathers did fast before they received Holy Communion; none of these Fathers forbade fasting before receiving the Holy Mysteries. Think about Moses, the Holy prophet, how he fasted for forty days just to receive the tablets of the Law. We have many such examples of Fathers and Saints of the Holy Church, who fasted in order to receive some type of gift. Well, here we have the Gift of gifts!

Therefore, it would make sense for a person to try to follow some type of fasting rule, which would be given by one's spiritual father.

On the other hand, if a certain practice has become the



custom of a local Orthodox Church, we should not be judgmental. We should try to be understanding of each other. At the same time, I will stress that we need to prepare ourselves prior to approaching the Holy Chalice, and we should use all the means that might help us. St. Makarios of Corinth said, "In as much as you have prepared yourself, so much will you receive the Grace coming from Holy Communion." We must understand that when we fast, it is not just some type of a thoughtless, mechanical action which stands alone and ends with our food choices for the day. Rather, we fast because we are utilizing this practice as a means to get closer to God—as a means to show obedience to Him, to have remembrance of Him, to grow our humility, and to thus truly repent. In doing so, we have utilized the tool of fasting as a means to attract God's Grace—which is, ultimately, the "end," the goal which we mentioned earlier.

When we look at Church history, there have been many different practices. Many Kollyvades Fathers did not commune every day. They had differences of opinion about what frequent Holy Communion meant. For example, some people accused the fathers on Mt. Athos of being "anti-Kollyvades." The anti-Kollyvades taught that one should receive Holy Communion one to four times

per year. However, now it has become common practice on Mt. Athos to receive Holy Communion once every two weeks—this is actually one result of the influence of the Kollyvades Fathers. St. Pachomios of Chios taught, very firmly, that the Orthodox faithful need to receive the Holy Mysteries frequently—he was very much a Kollyvades Father. In fact, we read that, during certain periods of his life, he would come down to the Monastery from his cave every Tuesday, in order to receive the Holy Mysteries once a week.

To summarize: when you come to receive Holy Communion, you need to be very careful; you need to be focused on your own repentance and humility, not on the practices of others. After you have received the Holy Mysteries, you should read the prayers of Thanksgiving, feeling extraordinary gratitude to our Savior. After the Divine Liturgy, having received, you should consider the whole day sanctified, and you should be very careful about your words and actions. All too often, it is our lack of watchfulness over our wordiness that causes us to lose the Grace of the Holy Mysteries after we have received.

Finally, I would certainly encourage the faithful to participate in Holy Communion frequently—but with preparation and with caution, understanding that our God is a Consuming Fire. Often, people stress that the Holy Gifts are medicine—and They are, as the Kollyvades Fathers taught. However, we must approach cautiously. We must approach the Holy Chalice condemning ourselves, knowing that we are sinners, knowing that we are not worthy, in the words of St. Basil: "I know, O Lord, that I partake of the immaculate Body and precious Blood unworthily...not discerning the Body and Blood of Thee, my Christ and God. But trusting in Thy Compassion, I take courage and approach Thee." Always reflecting on our unworthiness, we must never think of Holy Communion as our "right." We must be careful and not fall into a distorted idea of the Holy Mysteries. Repentance is the key, as ours is the Faith of repentance.

the Royal Family will come to Diveyevo, and the Tsar will come to see her. Let her give it to him."

Natalia Leonidovna Chichagova said that when the Tsar received the letter, he placed it reverently in his breast pocket saying that he will read it later.

When the Emperor read the letter, having already returned to the Abbatial quarters, he wept bitterly. His retinue tried to comfort him, saying that although Fr. Seraphim was a saint, he could also make a mistake. But the Tsar wept inconsolably. The contents of the letter remain unknown. Elena Ivanovna died on December 27, 1910. She had been secretly tonsured.

On the same day, July 20, they all left Diveyevo. After this the Tsar always turned to Prascovia Ivanovna with serious questions, sending the Grand Princess to her. Eudocia Ivanovna said that no sooner had one left than another came. After Mother Seraphima's repose all questions were asked through Eudocia Ivanovna... Prascovia reposed in August of 1915. Before her death she was making prostrations before the Tsar's portrait. When she no longer had the strength, her cell attendants lifted her up, asking, "Mamashenka, why are you praying to the Tsar?" "Sillies! He will be higher than all other Tsars," the blessed one responded.

Terrible was the night of the murder of the Tsar! On that unspeakable night, the prisoners were awakened and ordered to prepare to depart.... The Imperial Family descended to the basement where the Sovereign sat down, with his ill son, on a chair in the middle of the room. The Duchesses, the doctor, and three dedicated servants were seated around him. Every one was waiting for the signal to depart. Instead, the executioner announced the impending execution. The Empress succeeded in crossing herself. She was killed instantly, together with the Sovereign. God spared them from hearing the groans of the Tsarevitch and the cries of the wounded Grand Duchess Anastasia. The first bullets did not bring death to the youngest ones and they were savagely killed with blows of bayonets and gun-butts and with shots at point-blank range. The youngest, Tsarevitch St. Alexei,

was 14 years old.

St. Olga, the Grand Duchess, was the oldest daughter, born in 1895. She was fair, with golden-brown hair, and beautiful blue eyes. She was innocent, modest, sincere and kind. She liked simplicity and paid little attention to

dress. She was most similar to her father, whom she loved better than anyone else. She had a quick mind and possessed the virtue of

reasoning. According to her tutors, she had a "crystal" soul and a bright smile; inner joy radiated from her and had an uplifting effect on those around her. Like her father, Olga deeply loved Russia and the Russian people. When faced with the possibility of marriage to a foreign prince, she flatly refused, saying, "I do not want to ever leave Russia. I am Russian and wish to remain so." Thus she stayed on in her homeland to receive the crown of martyrdom.

St. Tatiana, the second daughter, born in 1897, was a tall, thin and elegant girl. She was beautiful inside and out, with a darker complexion than her sisters. She was somewhat reserved, dutiful and pensive; she was often more decided in her opinions than her sisters. She was a talented pianist and also painted and embroidered well. Tatiana was her mother's favorite, having inherited the Empress' nobleness and sense of discipline. The younger children nicknamed Tatiana "the Governess."

St. Maria, the third daughter, born in 1899,

was strong and good looking, with light gray eyes. She could paint and draw, and she played the piano competently. She was very fond of children and inclined to domesticity, and

would have made an excellent wife and mother. Maria had the rare quality of being perfectly happy in all surroundings, even when the family was imprisoned in Tobolsk. For this reason she was chosen by her parents to accompany them when they were forced to separate from the family as they embarked upon their last fateful journey to Ekaterinburg.

St. Anastasia, the youngest daughter, born in 1901, was initially a tomboy and the family clown. She was shorter than the others, and she had beautiful gray eyes. Refined and witty, she had the talent of a comedienne and made everyone laugh. She had a small dog of Japanese breed, which the whole family loved. Anastasia carried this dog in her arms when she went down into the cellar at Ekaterinburg on the fateful night of July 4th, and the little dog was murdered together with her.

St. Alexis, the heir apparent, was a very special child. He was born in 1904, in response to prayers offered by the Imperial family and the entire faithful populace during the days of glorification of Saint Seraphim of Sarov, asking God to grant Russia an heir. However, though born the heir to the Russian Empire, Alexis could not inherit it, since Russia was already set on its apocalyptic course; instead, he inherited an incomparably higher kingdom—the Kingdom of Heaven. Alexis was destined for martyrdom from the moment of his birth: the only and beloved son, he was the young Isaac who was actually sacrificed...He was born with the dreaded illness of hemophilia, which showed up when he was only six weeks old, and which caused him great pain and suffering for the entire 14 years of his brief life. It was also the cause of the greatest anguish for his family, especially his parents...And yet this young boy bore his terrible burden with great fortitude, silently and without grumbling, in a true Christian manner. At the same time he was like any other boy: he enjoyed games and horseplay, engaged in outdoor activities with other boys whenever possible, loved to go sailing with his father, teased his sisters...He had a kind heart, liked to give presents to everyone, and he loved animals. He was a lively and cheerful child, a universal favorite, beloved by all with whom he came into contact. His mother loved him passionately, suffering a mother's indescribable anguish over his pains and his illness.

God granted these extraordinary royal children a spiritually royal fate on earth: after having spent their childhood and youth in a most glorious Orthodox way of life, in absolute innocence and purity, they were ready for the crowning touch—the shining crown of martyrdom. Their Golgotha began on March 2, 1917, the day of the Tsar-Martyr's abdication - first in their palace at Tsarskoye Selo, then at the Governor's house in Tobolsk, and finally, at the Ipatyev house - the "House of Special Purpose" - in Ekaterinburg, they suffered increasing stages of harassment, humiliation and deprivation. The royal martyrs bore it all with great fortitude, strength of spirit, true Christian humility and total acceptance of the will of God. They sought solace in church services, home prayers and spiritual reading. They were heinously murdered, these pure and innocent children, during the night of July 4, 1918, and from the blood-soaked cellar in Ekaterinburg they passed triumphantly into the royal palace of the King of Heaven.

This article is a summary of information from multiple sources, including: The Royal Passion-bearers of Russia, Their Life and Service. St. Herman Press.



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