



A JOURNAL OF ORTHODOX FAITH AND CULTURE

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*Christ the Saviour Cathedral in Moscow*

## *We Are Once Again a People:* The Consecration of Christ the Saviour Cathedral and the Glorification of the Royal Family and New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia

*Let none besmirch the fair name of the martyrs, let none rob them of the glory of their crown. The strength and purity of their faith stands unimpaired: nothing can be said or done against Christ by one whose whole hope and faith, whose whole strength and glory, abides in Christ.*

St. Cyprian of Carthage

**E**ARLY SATURDAY, August 6/19, 2000, on the Feast of the Transfiguration of Christ, cross processions honoring the glorification of 1,154 Russian new martyrs and confessors converged on Christ the Saviour Cathedral from the four corners of Moscow.

Over 16,000 people participated in the processions, many after attending all-night vigils in one of the city's three hundred churches. Millions more across Russia joined in prayer, thanking God for the canonization of Tsar Nicholas II, his martyred family, and over 1,100 martyrs of the Soviet regime. The patriarchal services lasted the entire weekend, beginning with the consecration

of Christ the Saviour Cathedral on Saturday morning, and culminating on Sunday with the long-awaited canonizations. The Royal Family and many new martyrs had been previously canonized in 1981 by the Russian-Church-in-Exile, whose members had broken with the Patriarchal Church after the Revolution, and live abroad in Europe and America. The earlier canonization was gratefully acknowledged by many Russian Christians, and spurred the incentive for the glorification on Russian soil.

The consecration was the crowning moment of a decade of effort to rebuild the cathedral, which dominated Moscow's skyline before the Revolution. The original church was built in thanksgiving for Russia's victory over Napoleon in the War of 1812. Conceived after much of Moscow had been burnt to the ground to prevent French troops from occupying the city, the monumental cathedral was the largest and most elaborate church in Russia. Work on the original temple was completed in 1882 and it was consecrated the following year. On December 5, 1931, the cathedral was blown up on Stalin's orders, and a large outdoor swimming pool was built in its place. The new cathedral is a replica of the original, including faithful reproductions of the huge interior frescoes and elaborate relief sculpture.

Sixty-nine years following its destruction, the newly rebuilt Christ the Saviour Cathedral was consecrated on a beautiful August morning. The cross processions, filled with men, women, and children from Moscow's churches, many carrying icons of the last Tsar and his family, marched to the Cathedral from the surrounding thoroughfares. Traffic was rerouted, and only those on foot could penetrate closer than a kilometer's radius around the Cathedral. Many nearby businesses closed in honor of the event.

The sixteen thousand official participants were only a small portion of those who would have attended if the announcement of the canonization had been made earlier. The July 31/August 13 decision of the Synod of Bishops to canonize the Royal Family and the New Martyrs was made public the following day, the Tuesday preceding the glorification, not enough time for the arrival of thousands of Orthodox pilgrims from distant parts of Russia and many points abroad.

Participation in the cross processions were limited to those who obtained passes through local Moscow churches, and admittance to the cathedral for the consecration and canonization services was even more restricted. The invitations that were issued, however, went to a wide spectrum of Orthodox society—not only high-ranking clergy and government officials were admitted, but several thousand lay worshippers from every rank of life. The concern of the Church and the city government about tens of thousands of worshippers converging on the cathedral if access were left uncontrolled, was not an idle fear. For the Russian Orthodox faithful, this weekend was the most important ecclesiasti-

cal event of the century, matched only by the canonization of St. Seraphim of Sarov, "the Batiushka of All-Russia," in 1903.

The *Road to Emmaus* staff was given passes to both the cross procession on Saturday and the canonization liturgy in the Cathedral the following morning. Saturday morning was warm and sunny—by 7:00 AM, thousands of people had arrived at their meeting points for the cross procession near the Cathedral—old, bent Orthodox babushki, young professionals—both men and women, students, families with young children, priests, deacons and acolytes from most



*Cross Procession*

of Moscow's parishes. In honor of the army's role in the century-old defeat of Napoleon, the streets leading to the Cathedral were lined with military honor guards from many Russian regiments. The processions began at 8:30 AM, as the Orthodox wound their way to the church singing troparions to the new martyrs, stichera from the Transfiguration service, and Paschal verses. As they reached the plaza, they took up positions around the cathedral and prayed through the five-hour service. A giant screen and loudspeakers were set up on the main street below the Cathedral, and those who did not have passes to the area, watched the service from afar.

One participant in the cross procession, Natalia Tikhonova, told us of her experience:

*I was tired after having been up all night at the vigil for the Feast, and I decided to go home after the cross procession. I was on the street below the Cathedral when the massive bells began tolling, so compelling that I thought, "the earth itself could awaken." Suddenly, over the loudspeakers, the choir burst into the opening*

*hymn. I turned to look at the Cathedral, and I glimpsed eternity. I am rather down-to-earth, and I do not imagine such things, but in that moment, as I stood with my physical senses in the twentieth century, I felt Holy Russia descend upon the Cathedral. The holiness that we had driven away with the murder of the Tsar and the blasphemous Revolution settled over the Church. I saw this with the eyes of my heart and I knew I was in the presence of Holy Russia of the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Russian Church in heaven and on earth was one again. You must understand: this was not my imagination, my emotions, my tiredness, this was an experience of my soul. I witnessed this as surely as I talk to you now. This is a gift from heaven, and it was given because we have begun to repent, because of the prayers and tears of millions of Russians from the time of the Revolution until now, and most of all, because of the sacrifices of the Tsar, his family, and all the new martyrs.*

Hierarchs attending the consecration and canonizations included Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and All Russia, Patriarch Ilya II of Georgia, Patriarch Pavel of Serbia, Patriarch Theoktist of Romania, Patriarch Maxim of Bulgaria, Archbishop Chrysostom of Cyprus, Archbishop Anastasy of Albania, Metropolitan Nicholas of Slovakia, and many representatives of local Orthodox Churches, including Archbishop Dimitry (Constantinople Patriarchate in the U.S.), Metropolitan Iriney (Alexandrian Patriarchate), Bishop Nifon (Antiochian Patriarchate), Archbishop Benedict (Jerusalem Patriarchate), Metropolitan Ambrose (Greek Orthodox Church), Archbishop Jeremiah (Polish Orthodox Church), Archbishop Herman of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania (Orthodox Church in America), and the 147 hierarchs from the Moscow Patriarchate who had taken part in the Council (Sobor) of Bishops.

Others who attended the consecration ceremony included Patriarch Garegin II of Armenia, as well as representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and other Christian denominations, Prime Minister M. Kasyanov, Moscow Mayor Y. Luzhkov, and chairman of the Moscow City Duma V. Platonov. Several members of the Romanov family were there, including Olga Nikolaevna Kulikovskaya-Romanov, the wife of Tsar Nicholas' nephew Tikhon, who has worked for many years promoting the canonization.

The consecration of the Church was carried out with the traditional blessing of the altar and all four walls. Later in the service, as the serving bishops processed around the outside of the Cathedral, many of them stopped to bow before a particularly large and beautiful icon of Tsar Martyr Nicholas and his family, carried by parishioners from the Church of All Saints in Moscow.

The Church of All Saints is also the first in Russia to dedicate a church to a member of the Royal Family—announcing at the canonization that they



*Inside Christ the Saviour Cathedral during the Glorification of the New Martyrs*

have begun services at a small chapel dedicated to Tsarevitch Alexis in their home for the elderly. The Tsarevitch, who was fourteen when he was murdered, was chosen as patron of the home because of a declaration he had made as a young boy: “If I become Tsar, there will be no sick or poor or unhappy people in my country.”

Vyacheslav Marchenko, a supporter of Orthodox monarchy, spoke of his convictions:

*I see Orthodox monarchy as a form of government established by God from the time of King Saul in the Old Testament. Other contemporary forms of government were perhaps devised by powerful and wise men, but Orthodox monarchy was established by God Himself, and this was confirmed by our holy Russian ancestors at the Local Council of 1613.*

*Certainly, it is difficult for Americans and Europeans, even Orthodox who have been raised under a democratic system of government, to understand what we feel, something to which they are unaccustomed. But it is as natural to honor the Tsar-Batiushka as it is to honor one’s own father; every other imaginable form of government, democratic or autocratic—no matter if they are run by an elected or self-appointed president or dictator—are as unreal as if you imagined the Kingdom of Heaven ruled not by God, but by a parliament of angels*

*Of course, we have had many Tsars whose human weaknesses were more than evident. It is not their weaknesses that I am defending. The calling is one thing; the one fulfilling the calling is another. I am talking about the ideal of monarchy itself and the position of Tsar. Who of us is without sin? When we are confronted with the personal inadequacies of different Tsars, we must not lose sight of the high calling itself.*

*The question of monarchy is very important for people today, because the time will come when the ruler of this Earth will be antichrist. Only Orthodox tradition gives us the opportunity to recognize him, and only an Orthodox Tsar, if God will again grant us one, will be able to resist the antichrist in the last days. This is why I am Orthodox and a monarchist.*

### ***The Glorification of the Royal Family and the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia***

The day following the consecration of Christ the Saviour Cathedral was Sunday August 7/20, the glorification of the new martyrs and confessors of Russia. During the Divine Liturgy, the names of those approved for canonization by the Synod of Bishops were read aloud before the glorification was sung.

Just six days before, the Moscow Patriarchate had published the decision of the Synod of Bishops to canonize Tsar Nicholas II and his family: “In the last

*Orthodox Russian monarch and members of his family we see people who sincerely strove to incarnate in their lives the commands of the Gospel. In the suffering borne by the imprisoned Royal Family with humility, patience, and meekness in their deaths as martyrs in Ekaterinburg on the night of 4/17 July 1918, was manifested the light of the faith of Christ that conquers evil.”*

The cathedral was filled to capacity, and for the Muscovites who had been to the cathedral for the past few years for services, the consecration of the day before had brought about marked changes. In the words of one worshipper, “The consecration changed the cathedral from a monument into a house of God. The difference from when I was here a few weeks ago is almost miraculous.” Several worshippers remarked on a golden radiance that seemed to wash over the upper levels of the cathedral like warm sunlight.

The liturgy began at 9:30 AM and at 10:00 AM Metropolitan Juvenaly, the head of the Moscow Patriarchate’s canonization committee, read the Acts of the Council regarding the glorification of the new martyrs and confessors. At 10:10 AM he slowly pronounced the names of the last Emperor and his family: “Tsar Martyr Nicholas II, Tsaritsa Alexandra, Grand Duchesses Olga, Tatiana, Maria, Anastasia, and Tsarevitch Alexis.” Time stood still as the entire church willed the pronouncement, many crossing themselves, others with eyes closed, silently praying.

Among those on the list of universally canonized saints were about 1,100 new martyrs, killed for their faith during the Soviet regime. Although it is widely acknowledged that there have been hundreds of thousands of martyrs, only those on whom the Synodal Commission was able to collect relatively



*Patriarchs and Bishops glorifying the New Martyrs*

complete data were officially canonized. To be confirmed for canonization as a new martyr under the Soviet regime, the person had to have been loyal to Patriarch Tikhon's successor Metropolitan Peter Polyansky and not a member of the "renovationist" church (established by the Soviets to undermine the established church). He or she may or may not have been a follower of Patriarch Sergius, whose later statements of loyalty to the Soviet state were clouded with ambiguity, but they could not have given false confessions about themselves or implicated others, even under torture.

Also among the universally revered Orthodox saints were the Optina Elders, who had been locally glorified at Optina Pustyn in 1996. The list of Optina saints includes: Hieroschemamonk Leonid (Nagolkin; 1768-1841), Hieroschemamonk Macarius (Ivanov; 1788-1860), Schema-archimandrite Moses (Putilov; 1782-1862), Schema-abbot Anthony (Putilov; 1795-1865), Hieroschemamonk Hilarion (Ponomarev; 1805-1873), Hieroschemamonk Anatoly I (Zertsalov; 1824-1894), Schema-archimandrite Isaac I (Antimonov; 1810-1894), Hieroschemamonk Joseph (Litovkin; 1837-1911), Schema-archimandrite Barsanuphius (Plikhankov; 1845-1913), Hieroschemamonk Anatoly II (Potapov; 1855-1922), Hieroschemamonk Nektary (Tikhonov; 1853-1928); as well as Monk-confessor Nikon (Belaev; 1888-1931); New Martyr Archimandrite Isaac II (Bobrikov; 1865-1938).

Also glorified were Metropolitan Makary (Nevsky; 1835-1926); Protopriest Alexy Mechev (1859-1923); Hieroschemamonk Alexy (Soloviev; 1846-1928); Hieroschemamonk Seraphim Vyritsky (Muraviev; 1866-1949); Thirty-four new martyrs from Holy Transfiguration Valaam Monastery (20 February 1578); Metropolitan Arseny (Matseevich; 1697-1772); Bishop Innokenty (Smirnov) of Penza (1784-1847); Archimandrite Macarius (Glukharev; 1792-1847) apostle to the Altai; Priest Alexy (Gneushev; 1762-1848). About thirty other Russian confessors of Orthodoxy were also canonized.

Patriarch Alexy II spoke following the Divine Liturgy:

*We know that Christ's Church is confirmed by the blood of her martyrs. The spiritual rebirth of lands that not long ago were under communist domination, is being brought about through the prayers and podvigs of the new martyrs who suffered for their faith in Christ... We will always remember and preserve in our hearts these two days, these two Divine Liturgies, which we have served in the presence of the people of God as an example of Orthodox unity and the triumph of Holy Orthodoxy.*

Following the canonization, the Road to Emmaus staff asked Russians gathered at the Cathedral about the significance of the Royal Family's glorification:

*This means that our Russian people have found their soul, because the Orthodox Russian monarch is the soul of his people. He is their emblem, their banner, the symbol of their existence, and now we have recovered our soul. Now we are again a people, not merely a community of individuals. It is a fact. Now, the Russian people have a Tsar, and more importantly, a holy Tsar. We honor him, and this signifies our repentance. Like a pearl he was thrown in the mud and covered with lies, with floods of calumny, deceit, and misinformation. This pearl is now found and put, not into a museum, but enshrined in an icon.*

Moscow priest in the Cross Procession

*I have been a believer in the Royal Family's sanctity for a long time. In our monastery we have honored them as saints and have had icons of them in our cells. We rejoice that our hierarchs have now glorified them. The people glorified them a long time ago. How many miracles and how much myrrh-weeping! The heart of every Orthodox Christian should burn with love for the martyrs and confessors.*

Riassaphore-monk from Holy Ascension-St. Macarius Monastery, Kazan

*Our first "Pascha in Summer" was the canonization of St. Seraphim in 1903. This is the second, and was predicted by St. Seraphim himself, who said, "I will glorify the Tsar who glorifies me." Tsar Nicholas prepared*



Priest and daughter at Canonization of New Martyrs

*the way for St. Seraphim's canonization, and today the Emperor returns, heralded by the Saint.*

Ioann Nikolaevich, Moscow

*One only needs to look at pictures of the Royal Family. Take a look at their faces. Christian suffering is reflected there. And nobility. Then, take a look at the pictures of those who deposed them. Look at their torturers and murderers. It isn't difficult to see. Those who don't see, simply don't want to.*

Vera Alexandrovna, St. Petersburg

*What is the meaning of the glorification of the Royal Family and the new martyrs and confessors? I will tell you: The salvation of Russia!*

Monk from the Seven Lakes Mother-of-God Pustyn, Kazan

*Today our merciful Lord has given us back our martyred Tsar, the real and heavenly ruler of the Russian Orthodox people. I know that many people in the West, even among the Orthodox, say that we are uneducated, that we are dupes or romantics—but we stand here today, knowing that we are once again an Orthodox people. I would ask the readers of your journal who may doubt the significance of the canonization, not to trample our joy underfoot. If you don't understand what has happened here, ask God to show you. To those who already honor the Tsar and his family, I say: Rejoice with us—today we are one family in God's kingdom.*

Olga Dimitrievna, Moscow

