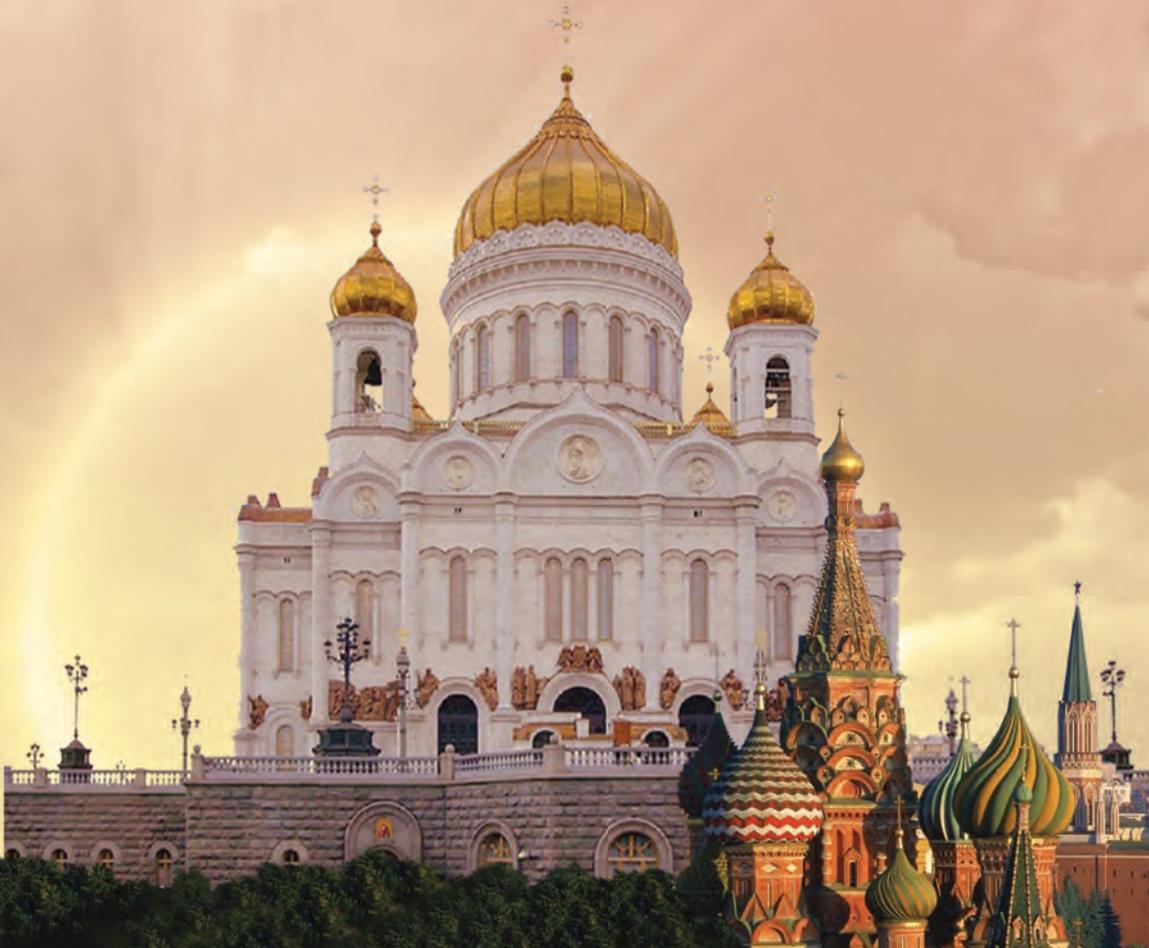


RUSSIAN SUNRISE

A Novel of Faith and Hope

By Bruce W. Walters, M.D.



About the Author

Bruce W. Walters, M.D. is a practicing psychiatrist and former columnist for *Latin Mass Magazine*. In the 1990s Dr. Walters and his wife adopted a son in Russia, and since then he has been a close student of both modern Russian history and the message of Our Lady of Fatima.

At the “**Consecration Now!**” Conference on Fatima held in Rome, Italy in May 2011, he described “How the Consecration of Russia Could Be Done Soon” and introduced his new novel, *Russian Sunrise*.

During his high school years in Battle Creek, Michigan, Dr. Walters studied classical organ, built a pipe organ, won first place in an organists’ competition at Western Michigan University, and toured northern Europe as a tenor in the award-winning Battle Creek Central High School A Cappella Choir.

After completing his B.A. in English Literature at Western Michigan University and working for several years in bank management, he completed medical school at Michigan State University College of Human Medicine in East Lansing, with clinical studies in Kalamazoo and Pittsburgh.

It was during medical school that he became an adult convert to the Catholic Faith.

Following internship at West Virginia University Hospital and psychiatric residency at the Donahue Mental Health Institute in Oklahoma, he became CEO and Medical Director of Central Oklahoma Community Mental Health Center, practiced privately at several Oklahoma City area hospitals, and served as a Catholic parish organist.

Dr. Walters was awarded the Exemplary Psychiatrist Award from the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, given at the American Psychiatric Association annual meeting, 1993. He returned to Michigan in 1994, where he is Psychiatrist and Medical Director for the Ottawa County Community Mental Health system and for Livingston County Catholic Charities.

In 2006 Dr. Walters and his wife, a family physician, co-founded St. Luke Hometown Healthcare in Brighton, Michigan, a third-party-free Catholic clinic designed to the needs of those caught in the health insurance affordability crisis.

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Russian Sunrise

A Novel of Faith and Hope

Bruce W. Walters, M.D.

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This is a work of fiction, intended to entertain. Ideas or opinions expressed in this work are those of fictional characters, and do not necessarily represent the views of the author or publisher.

Foresight

And the Lord answered me, and said: **Write the vision, and make it plain** upon tables: that he that readeth it may run over it. **For as yet the vision is far off, and it shall appear at the end**, and shall not lie: **if it make any delay, wait for it: for it shall surely come**, and it shall not be slack. Behold, **he that is unbelieving, his soul shall not be right in himself**: but the just shall live in his faith.

— Habacuc 2:2-4, DRV

All these died according to faith, not having received the promises, but beholding them afar off, and saluting them, and confessing that they are pilgrims and strangers on the earth.

— Hebrews 11:13, DRV

For, amen, I say to you, **many prophets and just men have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them**, and to hear the things that you hear and have not heard them.

— Matthew 13:17, DRV

Dedication

Dedicated to my beloved wife Jeanne,
my best friend and helpmate,
who helped extensively in developing the plot,
cheerfully tolerated the long hours of writing and
research,
and encouraged me not to give up on this project
of envisioning what good things might yet be.

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Prologue

This is a novel exploring in detail what *might* be, based in broad concept on what *will* be. It is written for all those who are discouraged by present world circumstances, and who may be tempted to see the apparent waning of the once-Christian West as a sign that all hope for the future is lost. This book presumes that it is precisely when the whole world thinks that the Church has once and for all been defeated, that She will rise again to bring honor and glory to God. This will happen through a miraculous series of events, in such a way that the whole world will know, beyond any reasonable doubt, that the restoration of peace, prosperity, and right order in the world of nations was brought about through the intercession of Heaven. This novel depicts one possible set of circumstances through which such great events might yet unfold. It is not written to prophesy in detail exactly what will happen, but rather to engender hope – in faithful souls now tempted with profound discouragement – that such things, in some similar manner known to Heaven alone, *will* happen.

Section I: Consecration

“And the temple of God was opened in Heaven: **and the ark of His testament was seen in His temple**, and there were lightnings, and voices, and an earthquake, and great hail. **And a great sign appeared in Heaven: A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under Her feet, and on Her head a crown of twelve stars.**”

— Apocalypse 11:19-12:1, DRV

“And there was seen another sign in Heaven: and **behold, a great red dragon**, having seven heads and ten horns: and on his heads seven diadems: And **his tail drew the third part of the stars of Heaven**, and cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to be delivered; that, when She should be delivered, he might devour Her Son.”

— Apocalypse 12:3-4, DRV

Chapter One

Monday, May 4, 2015.

Moscow, Russian Federation.

Kathleen Houston Matches, an independent American financial advisor known for her radical views (such as favoring cohesive neighborhoods, local self-government, and the everyday interests of the common man), had just concluded a secret, late-afternoon meeting with the President and Prime Minister of the Russian Federation. Medium in height, trim, and confident yet feminine, she was attired in a modest, traditional woman's business blouse and skirt, and was adorned with a solid gold necklace, earrings, and bracelet. Her brunette hair framed a beautiful face with narrowly-spaced green eyes, a petite nose, and a perfect chin. She carried herself with the confidence and poise of the highly-placed Washington insider she had once been. At age fifty-two, she remained youthful due to her athletic discipline, which included running two marathons each year. Only two weeks earlier, she had placed fifth in her age category in the Big Sur Marathon along the California coastline – one of America's most challenging marathon courses due to its many steep hills.

On the top floor of the Russian White House, Moscow's towering white marble seat of government overlooking the Moscow River, the discussion had centered upon emerging plans to restructure the Russian economy in ways that would reward the common people at the expense of the fabulously wealthy. What they envisioned was neither enslaving Communism (under which wealth becomes concentrated in the hands of a few government oligarchs), nor rapacious modern Capitalism (under which wealth becomes concentrated in the hands of a few super-powerful international business elites). Rather, they had focused on an idea called Distributism, which has not really been tried except perhaps in the High Middle Ages: a sound, inflation-proof currency, the wide dispersal of wealth among the general population, and general economic freedom which rewards those who create real wealth (valued goods and necessary services) while placing strict limits on the parasitical class of "money changers" who produce no real wealth at all, but endlessly scheme to extract a percentage of the wealth which others produce.

Needless to say, Kathleen Matches was considered a "loose cannon" and "dangerous fringe agitator" in the hallowed halls of American financial control and political power. The Russian leaders were assimilating her uniquely ingenious ideas in secret, avoiding the turmoil and distractions that would result from an international press exposé of her presence in the seat of Russian power. Her ideas posed a direct threat to the moneyed interests that owned or controlled most of the world's mainstream publishers and news organizations. If the Russian leaders' developing program of social justice were known by those who currently held the money power, harsh steps would be taken immediately to stop the planning, and probably to impeach (if not assassinate) the offending politicians and their consultants.

Kathleen understood this, and thus accepted the need for strict Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB) security protocols.

It was now early evening, and as the private guest of the government, she was being transported back to her hotel by a presidential security staff driver. The meeting had been intense, and she looked forward to a leisurely ride through the Moscow night, with an experienced driver, in the black full-size SUV that afforded good views on all sides. She marveled at the elegant mix of old world Slavic masterpieces of architecture, amongst which were nestled modern structures still boasting a clear respect for tradition. There was very little of the “modern ugly” Bauhaus¹ architectural junk so typical of Western cities. The magnificent golden domes of the newly reconstructed Cathedral of Christ the Savior gleamed in the spotlights, and Kathleen began to think of how much better it was to be in Moscow now, under a democratic and increasingly business-friendly government, than in the days of Stalin, who dynamited the original cathedral to build a temple to Soviet man, and whose secret agents routinely forced hapless citizens into the maw of the Lubyanka prison, a place of torture and despair from which most of them would never emerge. How good it felt to be safe in the hands of a trusted FSB officer.

Kathleen noticed that the handsome young driver, not more than twenty-five, might, in a different time and place, have been her own son. She was about to engage him in conversation, to try to learn something about his hopes and dreams. But suddenly the SUV swerved sharply, and Kathleen, despite her seat belt and shoulder strap, was forcefully thrown onto the empty leather seat beside her. Tires squealed, and she felt herself pressed into the seat back as the SUV accelerated to a high speed. Then suddenly the vehicle lurched forward, as she heard and felt the impact of another vehicle pushing into the rear bumper. She tried to raise herself upright to see what was happening outside.

“Stay down, Kathleen!” advised the driver. “You must hide yourself!”

“But what ...”

“We are under attack by the Russian mafia. They work for whoever pays them well enough. They do not attack at random. We must assume that they know who we are.”

The vehicle continued to lurch wildly and to maintain a high speed. Kathleen heard the driver calling on his cell phone, but she did not understand the Russian words. She did understand the terror in his voice, and the fright in his blue eyes that she could see through the rear-view mirror. Again there was an impact, and she felt the SUV jump – perhaps a curb – and begin to run down a steep embankment. Suddenly it stopped, spun to the side and rolled over. Shattered glass, grass, and small stones were flying everywhere. When the SUV came to rest Kathleen realized she was upside down, suspended by her seat belt, and for the

¹ An early Twentieth Century school of German architecture, heavily influenced by modernism, which emphasized matter-of-fact objectivity over emotional expressionism. Bauhaus buildings became widespread in Germany, the United States, Canada, and Israel. Many experienced it as a direct assault on tradition.

moment trapped. She could see her driver, unconscious and bleeding, also suspended. Immediately there were voices, whispering in Russian, and figures dressed entirely in black clothing and facemasks, roughly extracting her. She felt her cherished, well-worn Rosary ripped from her fingers and thrown aside. A gloved hand was placed over her mouth, and as she was dragged free of the vehicle her hands were forced behind her back and cuffed together. She was thrown over the shoulder of a burly man who trotted up the hillside and roughly threw her into the back seat of a black SUV not dissimilar from the FSB vehicle. As two of the men took their places on either side of her in the back seat, the wrecked SUV down the hill, in which she had been riding, exploded in flames. Immediately there were squealing tires and rapid acceleration, and then the first words in English, with a heavy Russian accent.

“Kathleen Matches, I believe. Yes. Welcome to Moscow by night. And to your worst nightmare.”

“Who are you? Why are you ...”

“We are the ones you must obey.”

“Did you kill my driver, that fine young man?”

“Quiet! We will do the talking now. Later tonight you will be told when it is your time to talk, and what very unpleasant things will happen to you if you don’t.”

“I’m a guest of the Russian government, and you’ll pay dearly for this!”

“Tsk, tsk, Kathleen. Surely you are not so naïve as to believe that an elected President holds the real power in a modern plutocratic nation like Russia? Money talks, here. Money is going to make you talk. Or if not, then you will talk because of the carefully calibrated and increasing amounts of pain which money is going to pay us to administer to you.”

As he chuckled, amused by his own dark humor, Kathleen felt her heart pound. She could see that they were entering into a district of rusted and abandoned warehouses along a canal far from downtown. There were abandoned trucks and cars, decrepit trash dumpsters overflowing and stinking, and vast dark regions between the occasional still-functioning streetlight. Suddenly the vehicle turned sharply into a commercial garage and the door then immediately began to close behind them. The vehicle lights were extinguished, and all was darkness.

She felt herself being pulled from the vehicle, thrown into a hard chair, and her ankles and wrists being lashed to the frame. Suddenly she was bathed in blinding light. She could hear voices talking at her – deep male voices in impeccable English with heavy Russian accents – but could see no one.

“American woman Matches! You have the audacity to come into our country and bring foreign ideas to our increasingly idealistic President. You are *not* welcome here. You have greatly angered some very powerful men, men who know what is going on in this country and who intend to control the future of Russia from their private and very secure sphere of operations. You are foolish and suicidal if you think you can change their

plans and remake the Russian economy.”

“I have no power here. It is the Russian President who will change things.”

“Indeed he might, if he should survive. Which is precisely why we are going to make you help us ensure he does not survive in office.”

“Don’t be silly, his security is world-class.”

“Oh? Then how is it that we knew all about your secret meeting with him today at the Russian White House?”

“You have no right to intervene in the President’s work for his people ...”

One of the men chuckled ominously.

“We represent the interests of big money. More wealth than you can imagine. Wealth that prefers to remain anonymous. It’s our job to make sure we always know everything.”

“Well, what if I refuse to help you?”

“A year ago, we would have just killed you. But now we need to see how much information you can give us.”

Two men dressed in black suits emerged from the bright light. Their faces were obscured behind black ski-masks. The one who had been speaking motioned to his companion.

“Kathleen Matches, this is Ivan. Ivan is an expert. He specializes in extracting critical information from even the most unwilling informants. You are going to inform him of the details of your meeting with the President.”

“The President is a good man, and he is my friend. I won’t betray his trust.”

“Ivan, please take her into your procedure room, and introduce her to some of the methods you can use to assist her in cooperating with us.”

Kathleen was roughly handled, and soon found herself strapped into a modern dental chair. A painfully bright surgical light glared down from overhead. Her hands were forced onto flat glass plates alongside the arms of the chair, and were pressed flat against the glass with uncomfortable force by some sort of clamping devices. A nearby stainless steel table contained an array of instruments of surgical steel, clearly intended to be used to inflict pain. Her head was immobilized in a metal halo brace, her mouth was forced open with clamps, and what sounded like a high-speed dentist’s drill began to whine beside her ear. Ivan moved in close to her face and smiled menacingly through his mask.

“You are not going to like this. I don’t especially like doing it either. But it will make you talk.”

As the whirring sound intensified, she felt jabs of sharp pain in a left rear molar.

“My God!” she thought. “Help me to be brave.”

Then, suddenly, the drilling stopped.

“Alright, Kathleen,” said Ivan. “I believe I had your undivided attention just now.”

Kathleen shivered, noting his clinical coldness and utter lack of

compassion.

“Now that we have your attention, we are going to drop you off back at your hotel. If we contact you again for more information, you will understand the importance of cooperating.”

Her heart pounding, she felt a bit dizzy as she was roughly removed from the chair, bound at ankles and wrists, and tossed in the rear seat of another large black SUV. Immediately, three of the black-clad masked men jumped into the SUV, and it sped off into the Moscow night. In a few minutes she saw the bright lights of the Hilton Leningradskaya portico. The SUV came to a stop, she was lifted out onto the pavement still bound, and the SUV sped away.

Earlier that afternoon, Kathleen had been in the top-floor executive meeting room in the Russian White House, nestled along the banks of the Moscow River. The top officials of the vast Russian Federation sat across the table from two nervous Americans. Looking out across the metropolitan skyline, over the Kremlin’s ornate palaces and onion-domed churches, Kathleen Houston Matches, an independent (some said radical) economist, mused at how the outside world had finally brought Moscow to its knees by exporting the world’s worst rush-hour traffic jams. Seated beside her, Patrick O’Malley, founder of the New York-based GAME (Gold Anti-Manipulation Exponents), recalled how the Russian government had sent one of its top economic experts to GAME’s International Gold Conference in the Yukon back in 2005; and how, ever since, the Russian government had quietly shown real interest in the restoration of inflation-resistant gold-backed currency. It was ironic, he thought, to be seated here, as a paid consultant to Russian power, when his compatriots in the New York world of money and politics would not even give him an honest interview. In the U.S., any serious discussion of gold as money was officially suppressed, usually through mockery.

Patrick O’Malley, a former New England Patriots linebacker who had spent two decades as a precious metals financial advisor, was a big man who filled his medium gray Armani business suit with broad shoulders, bulging biceps, and a well-muscled chest atop a boyishly narrow waist. Towering six feet four inches tall, Patrick moved with athletic grace, and projected an aura of youthfulness despite a few strands of silver in his curly blond hair. His handsome face and blue eyes were striking, more so since Lasix surgery two years ago had eliminated the need for corrective lenses. His mind was brilliant, but his powerful and attractive physique served to enhance his credibility during the frequent financial media interviews. Patrick always went against the “party line” promoted by the big money that controlled the mainstream press, and always appeared to be fearless.

Across the table sat three Russian high officials: Russian President Vasily Alexandrovich Polzin, Prime Minister Daniil Yevgenyevich Mikhailov, and Stepan Mikhailovich Ivanov, Chairman of the Central Bank of the Russian Federation.²

² A guide to the pronunciation and meaning of Russian and other foreign names used in this story can

Polzin, who had temporarily yielded his position as President of the Russian Federation to his best friend Mikhailov for one term, due to Russian Constitutional term limits, had been re-elected handily in the presidential elections two years ago and once again officially held the ultimate reins of Russian state power, which he had never in practice relinquished. Vasily Alexandrovich, as he was known familiarly, stood five feet eleven inches tall, and was trim and muscular. Like his American friend O'Malley, his hair was blond and his eyes were blue. His face was noble but not truly handsome, and he was built more like a marathon runner than a linebacker. Vasily always dressed impeccably, in high-end Western business attire, and appeared a decade younger than his fifty-three years. A small scar on his right cheek bore witness to past street fights in his earlier days as a front-line FSB agent.

Vasily Alexandrovich had undergone a profound change of heart during the past decade, and that was a large part of the reason for today's meeting. In his youth, he had been a staunch Communist, and through merit, educational achievement, and connections had become the head of the FSB, the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation, which was the successor to the notorious KGB of the Communist era. The FSB combined the functions of multiple United States agencies: the CIA, the FBI, National Security Administration, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Coast Guard, Border Patrol, Drug Enforcement Administration, and the Secret Service.

Vasily Polzin's grandfather had been personal cook to Stalin in several of his country estates, and his father had been a loyal Communist Party leader in the factory where he worked in a mid-sized industrial manufacturing town. A militant atheist, his father had replaced faith in God with belief in the inevitability of human progress through the dialectic of class struggle – in essence, the survival of the fittest. But Vasily's mother had been quietly tolerated as a deeply religious woman, a daily communicant in the Russian Orthodox Church. Forbidden to display icons openly at home, she nevertheless ensured that her children were baptized, and she had taken them – including young Vasily – to Russian Orthodox Church services regularly. Vasily had turned aside from the faith in his older youth and adulthood, as he advanced through the ranks of secular humanist society. He earned a degree in International Law with high honors at the state university in Leningrad (later restored to its historical name of Saint Petersburg), and was then taken into training by the KGB, the feared Communist secret police. In recent years the old KGB had been succeeded by the newer FSB, and Vasily had rapidly risen in its ranks and ultimately became the powerful head of the agency.

For perhaps three decades he had given little thought to God. But when his beloved wife narrowly escaped death in a serious motor vehicle accident, Vasily quietly took to wearing his old golden baptismal cross, which his mother had given him prior to her death; and he began to pray

be found in the back of the book, just in front of the Bibliography.

daily. Sometimes he attended Russian Orthodox services; after the fall of the Soviet government, there was no longer much career risk in being privately religious, especially for a man already at the top of his agency. Three years after his wife's auto accident, his summer home burned down, and his family barely escaped with their lives. An icon of the Mother of God, which had hung in the dining room, survived miraculously unharmed amid the burned-out rubble of his former home. For Vasily this was a personal sign of Heaven's protection, and he went to Confession and received Holy Communion for the first time in decades. He became profoundly conscious of Mary's special maternal protection. He believed that the Holy Mother of God had saved his family from the fire in order to help him understand that She would one day also help Vasily to save Holy Mother Russia from the spiritual, cultural, and social ruination left behind by the seventy years of official atheism under Communism.

Then, just a few months ago, Vasily spent an evening in prolonged silent prayer, in a private chapel in Moscow's magnificent, recently rebuilt Cathedral of Christ the Savior. While he prayed he knelt in adoration before the Holy Mysteries, the real presence of the Body and Blood of Christ reserved in the ornate Tabernacle. It happened that the treasured Icon of Our Lady of Kazan, Protectress of Russia, which had been returned to Russia as a gift of friendship by Pope Leo Alexander II in 2004, was temporarily on display in the small chapel. As Vasily began studying the icon in the flickering light of the red lamp suspended above the Tabernacle, he perceived that She began to smile at him. He felt that a message was being infused into his very soul, that he must henceforth devote his high position as the most powerful man in Russia, and his exceptional gifts of intelligence and political skill, to seek the restoration of Holy Mother Russia to her proper role as an Orthodox Confessional State. He felt that he must strive to alter Russia's Constitution and laws until they would harmonize with the reign of Christ her rightful King. He knew this would mean pursuing true social justice, and he knew he would be powerless to act alone. He felt the Mother of God promising that She alone could bring Russia to a full spiritual conversion and restoration of Christian society, and that when She did, the whole world would marvel that Russia had once again become a great Christian power for the good of the world. Finally, he sensed that somehow, most mysteriously and beyond any circumstances he could foresee or imagine now, Holy Mary would someday cause the Pope of Rome, whose predecessor had returned this treasured icon, to help Russia become and long remain truly Orthodox.

Prime Minister Daniil Yevgenyevich Mikhailov, a long-time friend of Vasily Alexandrovich, was not so religious. They had bonded as best friends during the decades of their youth and middle age, when both were powerful Communist Party apparatchiks and neither gave much thought to religion. Although Vasily had changed spiritually, Daniil Yevgenyevich had not. Daniil stood five feet eight inches, with black hair, dark brown eyes, and a neatly-trimmed beard. At age fifty-two, his hair and beard were flecked with gray, adding an aura of wisdom to

his boyishly handsome politician's face. He had been trim and fit all his life, but was just beginning to show signs of middle age; and his belly protruded just a bit above his narrow waist. Unlike many of his childhood friends, Daniil remained married to his high school sweetheart. But like many of the fiscally fortunate, philosophically unformed elites who ruled his generation, he loved hard rock music, fast cars, and was an aficionado of the pseudo-scientific anti-religious writings of Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens. His favorite bands included Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath, Pink Floyd, and the Rolling Stones. He had never been to church. He believed in human progress through social planning and education. He was an avid swimmer and weight lifter, and in his youth had excelled in martial arts and wrestling. Daniil Yevgenyevich did not hope for life after death, and found such an ancient superstition curious, much like fairy tales of princes and sorcerers from olden times. But he was loyal to his native Russia, and to his best friend who now had replaced him (by their mutual agreement) as President. Although Vasily held the ultimate power as President, Daniil felt he could temper Vasily's increasing weakness as a religious man, and help keep Russia on the reasonable modern course of human social progress.

Stepan Mikhailovich Ivanov, Chairman of the Central Bank of the Russian Federation, was an appointee of Polzin. He stood five feet six, had a rounded belly and a balding pate, and sweated profusely when nervous. The hair of his temples and beard was graying, and a hint of a double chin suggested that his age was over fifty. In his youth Stepan Mikhailovich had been an economic aide under Boris Yeltsin, and had worked at economic ground zero as Russia had shifted from a centrally controlled Communist economy to a modern free-market state. Over the years he had become increasingly aware that economic freedom was only a charade, and that powerful hidden forces controlled international finance and politics in ways not seen or understood by most people, even most politicians.

"My esteemed colleagues," began President Polzin, "may we come to order. I want to introduce two distinguished guests who sit across our table this afternoon: On the left is Kathleen Houston Matches, renowned internationally in private circles of independent wealth as one of the most original and creative economic minds of our generation. Formerly the Assistant Director of a United States federal government department, she ran afoul of the moneyed interests that manipulate the Western governments for their own profit and power, and has been extensively engaged in self-defense against malicious litigation at no small cost to her personal fortune. She runs a consulting firm that seeks to develop methods of helping broken, bankrupted economies rebuild themselves from the ground up through real freedom and cooperation beginning at the local level. Her real genius is to argue that government is most often the problem rather than the solution when it comes to building just and fair economic structures that broadly benefit the common man while not excessively enriching the elites. To this end, she of course argues that a sound currency with a stable long-term value is a prerequisite. But she

also asserts that the people at the local levels of power must be encouraged to return to the old virtues that caused civilization to prosper: the values of Christianity, which built upon the noble foundations of ancient Greek philosophy and ancient Roman law.

“On the right is Patrick O’Malley, founder of GAME, the Gold Anti-Manipulation Exponents, based in New York City. His tireless effort to expose the US-government-linked manipulation of world gold markets by major private banks has been remarkable. His associates have well-documented, clear proof of market manipulations affecting not only precious metals but world stock exchanges as well, with insider trading increasingly benefiting an exclusive club of politically-connected super-wealthy elites. The real victims are all the common people who work and produce, who scrimp and save, only to find the value of their savings and investments gutted by those whose wealth is already obscenely vast. He is no friend of the politically connected, but as a former National Football League linebacker he can handle himself quite well in a dark alleyway.”

“Just like you, Mr. President,” quipped Patrick. “An old KGB ‘tough guy’ who still wrestles at the gym every week!”

The President smiled at this obvious reference to his athleticism. “Personal fitness is a virtue,” he noted, “but like all virtues, we are called to put them at the service of the greater good for our motherland. The FSB has used extreme care in ensuring Patrick O’Malley’s and Kathleen Matches’ safety, as they have quietly come to Moscow to share their wisdom with us.”

The President stood up, and began to pace about the room.

“My friends, the world has been staggering through an unprecedented Global Financial Crisis – dubbed the ‘GFC’ by the press – for the past two decades. Seated at this table are several individuals with an unusually clear and precise idea of how things came to be so. We understand that it was through the enthronement of personal greed and the worship of money – ‘mammon,’ if you will – in high places and in many nations. My conviction is that the root cause of the GFC was that former Christendom, both in the East and in the West, turned its back on Christ and His ‘hard sayings.’ The gross financial dishonesty that followed was merely the logical result of this fundamental loss of Christian moral restraint. Instead, a pre-Christian tribal mentality arose: the idea that only oneself and one’s family and friends mattered, and that the vast expanse of humankind was of no consequence and in general was quite dispensable. Some elites even began to talk about the desirability of vastly reducing the world’s population, forgetting that it is innumerable little people who work and thereby produce – and not those who manipulate numbers behind desks in big banks – who bring real wealth into being.

“We who hold power in modern nations do not really receive it from the people. That is just a silly modern myth originated by deistic European philosophers who rejected the laws of the true God. Power does not arise from the people through some imaginary ‘social contract.’ It descends from the throne of God, and those who deign to take hold of it, however

the people may select them, will one day render an account to God for the uses which they have made of that power. We are warned of how Pontius Pilate boasted of his power either to release Jesus of Nazareth or to have Him crucified. But our Lord Jesus Christ admonished that temporal Roman ruler thus: ‘You would have no power over Me at all, unless it had been given to you from above.’”³

Prime Minister Mikhailov attempted to suppress a smirk, as he stared up at the ceiling, waiting for this embarrassingly inappropriate religious digression to end. But all the others at the table were visibly moved, and President Polzin continued:

“Our mission, then, is to begin to devise a new world financial system, beginning in Holy Mother Russia. Then, by virtue of its integrity, justice, and innate appeal, it will naturally spread out to other nations who, like us, will want to embrace true liberty: the freedom of honest, stable money and the wide distribution of wealth and prosperity. Freedom from greed, freedom from enslavement to avarice. The glorious freedom of widespread human generosity informed by the teachings of Christ the lawgiver. Some historians have argued that such conditions prevailed to the greatest extent when Christendom flourished, in the high Middle Ages. That is because such a system can only work well when the majority of the people are sincerely Christian, as they were at that time.

“So you see, my friends, it will not be enough to devise a promising economic plan. We also need to think about how to get Russia to once again be Christian. And that will be the most daunting task of all. I am praying daily, asking the Mother of God to intercede with Her Divine Son for our spiritually impoverished nation, so that Holy Mother Russia, Her Protectorate, may undergo a miraculous conversion. May it come to pass one day that the whole world will know that, through Holy Mary, Russia – formerly spreading her errors among all nations as the Communist exponent of secular humanist atheism – has once again come to her senses, and now sits, as an eager pupil, at the feet of Jesus, Her Divine Son, Christ Our King!”

Daniil Yevgenyevich, the Prime Minister, could bear it no longer. He was beginning to regret the personal loyalty that had moved him to allow the transfer of the reins of power from himself back to Polzin at the last election. “Vasily Alexandrovich,” he admonished, “you are beside yourself with religious fervor. Some people might say that too much praying is making you mad!”⁴ Do not forget that it was just such religious superstition and foolishness that brought down the Romanov dynasty. And it will bring you down too, unless you cease preaching and resume your proper role as the elected president of a modern secular democracy!”

“Relax, my friend. I have no ‘mad monk’ such as Rasputin, waiting in the wings to beguile me.”⁵ As President I take no direct orders from the

³ John 19:11.

⁴ Acts 26:24.

⁵ Grigori Yefimovich Rasputin was a Russian “starets” (wandering holy man) who befriended and manipulated the last Tsar and Tsarina of Russia – partly because of his apparently preternatural ability

Church. I know that we must work as if everything depends upon us. That is why we are beginning this series of intensive and very secret planning meetings. But we must also pray hard, because in reality everything depends upon God.”

Chairman Stepan Mikhailovich Ivanov of the Central Bank of the Russian Federation had been assigned to present to the group a review of modern economic history. His lecture was entitled “Why Free Markets Require a Sound Currency.” He explained that, after the final destruction of the last vestiges of an international gold standard by United States President Nixon back in 1971, “free markets” could no longer in any sense be truly free, because the value of the international medium of exchange – the United States dollar – was now subject to endless manipulation and obfuscation by hidden powers.

As head of the Russian central bank, Ivanov had begun to understand that Russia and other honest nations must break free of the stranglehold of corrupt Western private banks, and help to establish a truly free and vigorous international market system based on the only reliable system of debt settlement ever known: gold, sometimes supplemented by silver. Back in 2005, Polzin had sent Ivanov to the International Gold Conference held in the Canadian Yukon. The event had been organized by GAME’s Patrick O’Malley, who now sat as a guest at this very table. Stepan Mikhailovich reviewed the amazing, politically incorrect facts he had learned at that conference:

“The abandonment of the gold standard in 1971 was the root cause of the massive unemployment which plagued the once-industrialized world. It was not that economists lacked the intelligence to understand this: they feared for their jobs if, by saying so, they should displease the great financial and geopolitical interests who desired to preserve the status quo. From after World War II until 1971, all nations had sought to maintain a near-balance between their imports and their exports. If they could manage to export a bit more than they imported, they could accumulate a certain amount of financial reserves in the form of gold bullion, real money.

“At the Bretton Woods conference, near the end of World War II, it had been agreed that the United States dollar would be exchangeable for gold at the fixed rate of \$35 per ounce. Any nation that held United States dollars as reserves could exchange them for real gold, on demand, at any time. Because of this option, the United States dollar could function as a suitable reserve behind all other currencies in the world, as it indirectly meant they were all backed by gold. This in turn meant that all nations traded on a level playing field that kept them honest about their balance of payments – all except one, that is: the United States.

“There was nothing to stop the United States from creating as many dollars as it wished, out of nothing. And by doing so, the United States could endlessly import more goods than it exported, and pay for the difference not with real gold but with paper dollars.

to heal their son from attacks of hemophilia. Often called a “Mad Monk,” he is widely viewed as having been a debauched religious charlatan whose emotional power over the Tsarina in particular brought fatal discredit down upon the Russian monarchy.

“The danger always was that some nations might eventually become wise to this scam, and begin to redeem their United States dollars for gold to such an extent that the United States would start to run out of physical gold. By 1968 the United States was, in reality, bankrupt – because it had long since gotten into the bad habit of buying much more than it sold. In early 1968 the effort to keep the price of gold at \$35 per ounce failed at the London Gold Pool. So, later that year, the United States Congress dropped the rule that the Federal Reserve Bank had to hold ‘Gold Certificates’ (certifying there was gold on deposit in federal vaults) to back at least one-fourth of the Federal Reserve Notes that had been issued. The United States faced two choices: (1) it could devalue its currency, by raising the official \$35-per-ounce United-States-dollar price of gold, but this would soon make foreign goods noticeably more expensive to Americans, and would therefore be politically disastrous at home; or (2), the United States could unilaterally refuse to continue honoring its pledge, made at Bretton Woods in 1944, to exchange other nations’ dollars for gold bullion at a fixed price upon demand. Since the United States was the unrivaled military superpower of the Western world, with troops stationed in nearly every nation, it could exercise the second option with impunity.

“So, on August 15, 1971,⁶ with Charles de Gaulle’s France calling America’s bluff by demanding physical gold in exchange for France’s United States dollars, President Nixon was forced to ‘close the gold window.’ No longer could a United States dollar be redeemed for any form of ‘real money.’ The United States Constitution, which authorized only Congress to coin money, was now officially dead. The United States Coinage Act of 1792 had defined gold and silver coins of specific weights and purities as the United States currency, with the dollar specifically defined as 24.1 grams of pure silver. Until 1964, the Federal Reserve Bank issued paper currency clearly labeled as ‘silver certificates.’ These could be exchanged at any bank, anytime, for actual silver dollar coins.

“But in 1971, the United States citizenry, innocent victims of stealth financial mismanagement by their leaders, were not asked whether they wished to finally abandon such constitutional money. Back in 1965, American citizens had already lost the use of coins made of 90% real silver, when 40% silver coins were substituted by stealth. After 1968, silver certificates were no longer redeemed for anything except ‘Federal Reserve Notes,’ made of paper. Then in 1970, coins of base metal, containing no silver at all, were substituted for precious metal coins. Americans were now simply told that ‘progress’ required this change. The ‘barbarous relics’ of gold and silver were said to be incompatible with modern advanced economic systems. So, for the first time in recorded human history, international trade balances were to be settled in ‘floating’ currencies not backed by (or exchangeable for) anything of intrinsic value. They came to be called ‘fiat’ currencies, after the Latin word meaning ‘let

⁶ Perhaps the irony of finally putting honest money (gold) to sleep on the Orthodox Feast of the Dormition, (when Our Lady “fell asleep” and was assumed into Heaven) was not lost on the minions of hell.

it be' – since the United States government was simply now saying, of a worthless piece of ornately-printed paper, 'let it be worth one dollar,' and likewise a fictitious face value was assigned to worthless base-metal 'fiat' coins. All other countries of necessity followed the United States' lead in issuing worthless currencies and coins.

"The former order and harmony among free-trading nations of the world now began to unravel. There was no longer any fixed limit on the expansion of global credit, and so global credit began to expand exponentially until it reached a practical limit around 2010, triggering the Global Financial Crisis or 'GFC.' The doctrine of 'free trade' – all nations being able to buy desired goods wherever they are cheapest – had been developed in an earlier world, under the British Empire, where the sole means of payment for any trade imbalances was gold.

"During the reign of the British pound sterling, a form of the gold standard, there was no inflation for more than one hundred and fifty years. That meant that wealth remained widely distributed among the population, and any one who saved even a little gradually saw his wealth increase. People in our day can hardly imagine such a world!

"Under the gold standard, most payments for trade were made not in gold, but in real goods and services, mutually exchanged through trade. But in that world, no nation could afford to allow the value of its imports and exports to differ by too much, as the difference would have to be paid in real gold. Since a relative balance was always thus preserved between world trading partners, very little gold was actually needed to settle international accounts.

"But once the gold standard was removed, 'globalization' suddenly ceased to be an international blessing and instead became a highly destructive curse: it resulted in the de-industrialization of the West and the transfer of manufacturing power to Asia, where labor was much cheaper. Under the gold standard, Asia could only sell as much to the West as it bought from the West. Therefore, Asia could not undercut Western manufacturers simply by endlessly exploiting its own populations through slave-labor low wages.

"But, once off the gold standard, as long as the West could engage in endless credit expansions, it could hide the ultimate worthlessness of its paper currencies. Year after year, it could then buy much more from Asia than Asia was buying from the West. And for some decades this massive imbalance of trade went on unabated. But by 2010, the Global Financial Crisis had hit, and the sovereign states of the West were finally seen to be nearing bankruptcy.

"The forty-year attempt to run the world on false money (fiat currency), without ever honestly settling imbalances of payments, was coming to an end. The world was teetering on the brink of vast geopolitical destabilizations, and we began to see that Russia needed to prepare for a very different economic future."⁷

⁷ Key ideas in this presentation must be credited to Hugo Salinas Price, "The Gold Standard: Generator and Protector of Jobs", posted June 16, 2010 at www.lemetropolecafe.com.

An animated discussion followed, in which it was generally agreed that a sound, gold-backed currency would be a prerequisite to any new monetary system that would remain just, over time, for the common man. Governments, like households, would then be forced to budget with honesty and transparency. The need for politicians to overspend in order to buy votes in modern democracies was also noted, and was contrasted with monarchy in which decisions could be based on the long-term good of the kingdom and its people, rather than on the short-term perspective of the next election.

Suddenly an elegant pre-revolutionary grandfather clock chimed, indicating it was time for the adjournment of this first meeting. It was announced that the next meeting would be held three days hence at a private hunting preserve about thirty kilometers north of Moscow. Biometric hand scans were required for admission to the compound, so once inside, absolute security was assured. There would be no public announcement of this meeting or of the presence in Russia of Kathleen Matches and Patrick O'Malley. This evening the Americans were to be transported, in separate secure government vehicles, back to their historic landmark hotel, the Moscow Hilton Leningradskaya.⁸

Before departure, a toast to Russia was held, with top shelf vodka for all. Then, FSB specialists arrived to escort each of the Americans to a different underground parking location, and then out of a different ramp into the pandemonium of Monday evening Moscow traffic. In twenty uneventful minutes, O'Malley was back in his hotel room. He rang up Kathleen's room, several floors distant, but there was no answer. Well, no reason to be concerned, he surmised. After all, she was safe with top presidential security agents. She had probably convinced them to take her shopping. He would get a good night's sleep, and see her in the morning to begin planning for the next meeting.

⁸ The Moscow Hilton Leningradskaya is a famous Moscow landmark, one of seven elegant "wedding cake" skyscrapers erected under Stalin to enhance the beauty of the capital city skyline. For a description and photos visit the Hilton Hotels website (Hilton.com) and select Moscow, Russian Federation.

Chapter Two

Tuesday, May 5, 2015.

Rectory, Church of Our Lady of Fatima (“Cova”), on Gratiot Avenue, Detroit, Michigan.

Driving down Gratiot Avenue in near eastside Detroit, after passing block upon block of burned out, abandoned houses and commercial buildings, one suddenly comes upon a green oasis, a large parcel filled with manicured lawns and mature trees. The property, fronting on Gratiot Avenue with a stone fence divided by a large wrought-iron archway over the driveway, is identified in letters across the archway as “Fatima Cova.” A huge neo-gothic gray limestone church with a slate roof stands just inside. At night its brilliant stained-glass windows shine with dazzling colors. A Michigan Historical Site sign, denoting the listing of this venerable church on the National Register of Historic Places, gives the formal name of the church: Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Church (“Cova”).⁹ Prior to 1929, a previous church building on the same site had been known as Saint Mary’s Roman Catholic Church. But upon completion of the new church building, the name was changed to commemorate the 1917 apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Fatima, Portugal. A rectory and convent, both of red brick and boasting three stories with dormer-pierced roofs of slate, flank the church on either side. A modern two-story school building, built in the 1960’s but now used only as a parish center, stands adjacent to the convent.

Behind all these buildings, inside yet another wrought-iron fence, is Our Lady of Fatima Cemetery. A vast expanse of wooded lawn and park-like peace, surrounded by half-abandoned blocks of inner-city urban wasteland, the cemetery rises gently uphill as one walks back through it, along a brick path lined by outdoor Stations of the Cross, until one reaches a replica of the little chapel at the Cova da Iria in Fatima, Portugal. That original Cova chapel was built on the very site where the Blessed Virgin Mary made a series of appearances in 1917 to three young shepherd children. The “Cova” shrine at the Detroit parish had been completed in the early 1930’s after the existing church was built. Behind the Cova shrine, a much steeper hill rises up to a Calvary, a carved stone replica of the three crosses on Golgotha, with representations of Jesus and the two thieves on the crosses, and statues of Mary and John at the foot of the Cross of Christ. The Calvary, originally reached by a stone stairway up the hillside, dates back to the 1880’s. An outdoor kneeler remains in place for those wishing to pray and meditate there, but the stone stairway has fallen into disrepair.

The “Cova” (as the parish is now commonly called) is the oldest parish in Detroit, having been founded in the early 1800’s. In its cemetery

⁹ The Fatima Cova parish bears many similarities to, but is not the same as, Assumption Grotto Church, www.assumptiongrotto.com.

lie the remains of many faithful Catholics, including not a small number of priests, bishops, and even an Archbishop. Some of the graves date back to the early 1800's, when the original church building was just a log cabin.

The Cova's current youthful pastor, Father Kiril Romanov, grew up in the parish after age fourteen, and now, at age thirty-three, had for several years been the successor to a long series of illustrious godly priests who, in their time, faithfully and courageously shepherded generations of Catholics through their earthly pilgrimages toward their Heavenly home. At age fourteen Father Kiril had been a convert, with his parents and five siblings, from the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia. A talented musician, his undergraduate dual degree was in both composition and piano performance. His parish was well known for its regular performances, on high feast days, of elegant orchestral Masses by the great polyphonic composers of Christendom, sung by the acclaimed Cova Latin Mass Choir and accompanied by members of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. But Father Romanov was also known for his strictly orthodox Catholic theology, preaching, and practice. In many ways, his parish was a "magnet" parish for those yearning for the solid, clear teaching and dignified liturgy that typified the Catholic Church in Western nations prior to the revolutionary changes that followed the Second Vatican Council.

Father Kiril Romanov stood just shy of six feet tall, with dark brown hair and green eyes. His face was handsome and clean-shaven, and his physique was somewhat muscular and trim but not svelte. Whether on the parish grounds or out in the community at large, he always wore a black shirt and Roman collar, sometimes with black pants but most often a black cassock. The only exceptions were when he performed yard work on the parish grounds, or when he donned athletic wear in the early morning to work out in the parish gymnasium.

Mary Moretti, the rectory housekeeper and cook, smiled as she worked, and for a moment almost twirled like a ballerina, despite being "well over seventy." Mary was "eighty-five going on sixty," causing most people who guessed her age to underestimate her years by at least two decades. In her youth she had been a ravishing redhead, and a hint of her former beauty still shone in her countenance. Tonight would be a special dinner for her pastor, Father Romanov, and two visiting clergymen, and she was preparing her best Italian fare. The rectory kitchen, just off the parlor, was alive with the joyful strains of Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Suite, in a transcription for piano four hands, wafting in from the parlor. There, Father Kiril sat playing on his Steinway concert grand piano. Beside him on the bench, providing the other pair of hands, was Father Vasily Soloviev, the fifty-some year old bearded pastor of Holy Archangels Russian Orthodox Church in Detroit. Father Vasily, a black-haired Russian giant with a waist-length full beard, had an aging face with dark brown eyes that still retained a hint of a handsome youth. He was tall, large in frame, and had an imposing physical presence. When he laughed, his deep Russian voice almost thundered.

Both talented musicians and composers, the two priests were preparing

a joint performance as part of the annual “Music by Candlelight” wine and dinner fundraiser, a volunteer classical music talent show that drew upon talented parishioners from both their congregations, and was staged annually, on successive weekends, once at each of their parishes. They laughed heartily as the music drew to a rousing close, and agreed it was time for a pre-prandial imbibition. As if on cue, Mary glided through the door from the kitchen, carrying a tray bearing two tall glasses.

“Russian Sunrise, Fathers?” she smiled. “A good bit of healthful orange juice, plus real fruit-based grenadine and a touch of Jagermeister herbal liqueur.”

“Thank you, my dear” said Vasily, bowing in the old-world manner of respect and acknowledgement of a kind service. As he and Kiril raised their glasses together, Vasily toasted first: “За нашу дружбу! (To our friendship!)”

“За встречу! (To our meeting!)” seconded Kiril. “We have just a few minutes before Father Kelleher should be here. I want to pick your brain, if I may, about something I have been pondering.”

“Let me guess – you want to know why the Orthodox Churches obstinately refuse to reconcile with the Chair of Peter?”

“I wasn’t going to be quite that blunt, Vasily. But it is something along that line, I suppose.”

Father Romanov led the way into his study, a high-ceilinged room lined with tall bookshelves on two walls, and numerous religious icons and works of art on a third wall. The fourth wall was graced with a large window looking out across the parish cemetery, a park-like peaceful green space in the midst of the surrounding urban wasteland. The upper third of the window was antique stained-glass depicting an ancient Galilean fishing boat and nets.

As the two priests settled into two worn but comfortable upholstered chairs in the rectory study, the window rattled momentarily due to the repetitive “ka-boom! ka-boom!” of a massively overpowered stereo system, passing by on Gratiot Avenue in a dilapidated minivan.

“Alas, while the world tumbles into a culture of pagan degeneracy,” sighed Vasily, “we still struggle with the splitting asunder of Christendom. We Christians have circled the wagons in self-defense, but we have turned our weapons inward upon each other.”

“Have you read Vladimir Soloviev?” asked Kiril. “The great Russian Orthodox theologian and philosopher of the latter Nineteenth Century? Perhaps a distant relative?”

“I’m not aware of any close family connection. In Orthodox seminary, the professors mostly emphasized that he supposedly recanted from his Catholic conversion on his deathbed, and died back in the grace of the Orthodox Faith. However, I’ve always been skeptical about that, since the priest who supposedly heard his recantation would have been breaking the seal of the confessional in revealing it. And such a disavowal would have been inconsistent with the whole thrust of Soloviev’s later life and work.”

“But did you Orthodox seminarians also study Soloviev’s arguments? About how the universal Church on earth *must* have a visible head in the Pope? I am wondering what you really think about that issue, my friend.”

“Kiril, we’ve been friends for years. And you were Orthodox yourself until this very parish drew you and your late parents and your brothers and sisters away from us into the Catholic Church. How old were you – thirteen?”

“I was fourteen, my brother Mikhail was sixteen, and our younger brother Vladimir was twelve. Our sisters are older and keep their ages secret. Our father had made an extensive study of Soloviev, and of Filaret of Moscow and Saint John Chrysostom – and he concluded they were right, that to be truly Orthodox one must acknowledge the primacy of Peter over all the Church. And so the usual reasons given – the uncertainty about procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son, and the uncertainty about the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary – these are red herrings, not part of ancient Orthodox belief. Soloviev pointed out that the Orthodox always believed the same as Catholics about these things, and these Catholic doctrines are clearly reflected in the ancient Orthodox liturgical prayers, such as the Mass of Saint John Chrysostom. He argues that they were just used as excuses, to justify separation from the authority of a Western foreign power in Rome.”

“I have long felt that the division between the two main branches of Christendom – Catholic and Orthodox – is due to politics and not really due to theology,” volunteered Vasily.

“That’s exactly what Soloviev was arguing, back in the latter Nineteenth Century.”

“We Orthodox don’t deny the procession of the Holy Spirit from Father and Son, and we don’t deny the Immaculate Conception – we simply say that we don’t know for certain; we can’t say they are dogmas, because these things were defined by Catholic councils that took place after the schism.”

“Will you read this little book of Soloviev’s writings, Vasily? It’s in paperback – *The Russian Church and the Papacy*¹⁰ – an abridgement of his large work *Russia and the Universal Church*. I want to know what you think of his arguments.”

“Yes, I’ll read it. You have my interest aroused, Kiril. But listen – I want to ask you something, too. You better have some more of your Russian Sunrise.”

Kiril raised his glass and drained the final delicious drops.

“Okay, shoot.”

“Well,” began Vasily, “it’s about Vatican II and its aftermath. Even as the Church in the countries of the former Soviet Union seems to be undergoing a hesitant rebirth, the Church in the Western nations seems to be dying out. Its once-vast influence has waned, and its reputation has been horribly tarnished. How do you account for this, Kiril? Wasn’t

¹⁰ Soloviev, Vladimir, *The Russian Church and the Papacy*. See Bibliography.

Vatican II supposed to usher in a 'New Springtime'?"

"Vasily, it seems there are as many opinions about that as there are Catholics! What is clear in retrospect is that the Catholic Church lost its missionary zeal after Vatican II. It had become ashamed any longer to proclaim, with its former missionary zeal, *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* – there is one true Church, and 'outside the Church there is no salvation.' It started to deny that other Christian denominations needed to convert to the one true Church. Before the council, they had been called 'heretics and schismatics.' After the council, they became 'separated brethren.' The Mass changed: from the re-presentation to God of the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary to a celebration of the community in the form of a 'meal' together. The faithful lost the sense of the supernatural and came to see the Church as a worldwide social-work agency. The priesthood was emasculated by the dumbing-down of the ritual and the increasing inclusion of the laity in functions once reserved to priests alone. The sanctuary – once the exclusive domain of males during the liturgy – was invaded by females. All these changes made the priesthood less attractive to manly men, and so the standards were lowered to fill the slots in seminaries. Rules excluding the unfit – those with marginal intellectual ability, those suffering from the disorder of same-sex attraction, and so forth – were ignored. Both the numbers of priests and their quality declined. Religious orders were decimated as real belief in the supernatural world and the life of self-sacrifice gave way to the 'psycho-babble' of 'self-actualization' in the here and now. The documents of Vatican II were cleverly crafted with extensive ambiguities, which could be used after the council to undermine the traditional doctrines and practices of the Faith."

"Sounds exactly like a modernist revolution, planned and carried out with great skill," Vasily observed.

"Cardinal Suenens, a Vatican II leader, said openly that Vatican II was 'the French Revolution in the Church,' " replied Kiril. "Concern about proclaiming the rights of man replaced the defense of the rights of God. And Père Congar, another Vatican II expert, said that the Church had had its peaceful 'October Revolution.' He implied that changing the rite of the Mass really constituted the destruction of the Roman Rite."

"The Russian Orthodox in Russia still have their Divine Liturgy in Old Slavonic, which is comparable to your pre-Vatican II Latin Mass. Old Slavonic, like Latin, is a dead language, so the meanings of things can't be tinkered with through subtle mistranslations, such as creep in – or, more often, are intentionally inserted – with the vernacular."

"The Society of Saint Pius X was a priestly fraternity founded by Archbishop Lefebvre in reaction to the doctrinal and liturgical changes which followed Vatican II. Basically, this order of priests simply kept on following standard Catholic practice that had been universal prior to Vatican II. They never denied anything the Church had always held and taught. They argued, correctly, that Vatican II was specifically a non-dogmatic council; therefore, it could define no new doctrine. They noted that it is a Catholic dogma that revelation ended with the death of the last

Apostle; therefore, the Faith can't change. The Society of Saint Pius X priests simply handed on what they had been taught from those who came before them. But they were vilified by the Church leadership, said to be 'schismatic,' and were persecuted mercilessly within the Church, while at the same time outrageous modern theologians threw out all sorts of 'new' ideas that had always been condemned as heresy, but they were left alone."

"Didn't the Pius X group finally get to negotiate with the Vatican?"

"Well, Vasily, as you may recall, in 2009 formal theological discussions got underway between Vatican theologians and Society of Saint Pius X theologians. These discussions, I believe, have had a profound effect on the current Pope over the past several years. They have forced Pope Nicholas to face the reality that one can't possibly reconcile everything in certain documents of Vatican II with the timeless teachings of the Catholic Church."

"Wasn't religious liberty one of their big issues?"

"Right. The Pius X group argued that the Church had condemned the idea – that separation of Church and state is a good thing – as a heresy. They were right, of course. This had been stated *ex cathedra* – that is, infallibly – by Pope Pius IX in 1864 in *Quanta Cura*, which condemned the following proposition: "The Church ought to be separated from the State, and the State from the Church."

"But that's where we Orthodox get it right!" exclaimed Vasily. "We have a state Church in each Orthodox country, and we actively limit the freedom of false religions to proselytize inside our borders."

"Yes, but then you move to America and you become just like the rest of us – Americanists."

"Oh, you mean acting as if there should be no established religion? But where we are only a minority, it's better to have religious freedom."

"Maybe so in a country where Catholics or Orthodox are only a minority, but you can't act as if that is the ideal. Don't *you* believe America would be better off if it was officially an Orthodox state?"

"Of course, but you can't talk that way."

"Yes I can! At least in the privacy of this study, with you, my trusted friend. I believe America would be better off if it were a Roman Catholic Confessional State. But of course I can't talk that way in public. Still, if I don't believe that there is one religion that is true and therefore all others must contain error, I'm not really a Catholic; not if I really believe other religions are adequate alternate paths to God. If I believe one religion is as good as another, then I'm simply an indifferentist, and a heretic from my Faith."

"Or maybe a good modern Catholic in the 'spirit of Vatican II'?" quipped Vasily.

"Now you're understanding it, my friend!"

"Well, we both know America is not about to become either Catholic or Orthodox. We'll be lucky if she doesn't criminalize us both before long as bigots and hate-mongers."

"No, America and the other Western nations of former Christendom

don't seem close to becoming religious states anytime soon. But ... what about Russia?"

"Russia!?"

"Yes, Holy Mother Russia."

"You're joking, Kiril ..."

"Vasily, have you heard of Fatima?"

"Well, I know about the so-called 'Fatimists.' There's a Father Nicholas Gottschalk who has his 'Fatima Herald' organization based here in Detroit, and also across the river in Windsor, Canada. I've seen some of his publications, though they're not much to the liking of us Orthodox believers. He seems to feel the Orthodox nations need a miraculous intervention from Heaven in order for them to 'convert' to the Catholic Faith."

"Right. And these Fatima devotees claim that this miraculous conversion will not happen until the Pope, in union with all the Catholic Bishops in the world, performs a public consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. But in 2000 the Vatican issued a document¹¹ implying that the consecration of Russia has been done – insofar as possible, and to Heaven's satisfaction – and that Fatima is now a thing of the past."

"Well, we Orthodox were separated from Rome before the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was formally defined, and so we neither profess nor deny it as a dogma. Of course, all the ancient Fathers of the Church believed She was Immaculate, and our own ancient Orthodox liturgy reflects that belief. Still, you won't find any Orthodox Church named for the Immaculate Conception in Russia."

"Right, only our Roman Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, in Moscow."

"But we Orthodox believe we have the true Faith and are already part of the universal Church. We even acknowledge a certain theoretical primacy for the Bishop of Rome. We certainly don't believe we need to convert!"

"So then Father Gottschalk would not be very popular among Orthodox leaders."

"True. But then, I hear he is not much in favor with the higher-ups in your Church, either. I've read that he has been unjustly persecuted by powerful forces in the Vatican curia. Those 'Fatimists' are a bit like the 'Lefebvrists,' I'd guess. An irritation to those engaged in mainstream contemporary Church politics."

"Well, first, I suppose, we would have to explore what it might really mean for Russia to 'convert' ..."

But then the doorbell rang, and Kiril sprang to his feet.

"That'll be my friend Father Kelleher, the Anglican Use Catholic priest. I think you'll find him quite interesting, Vasily."

The Reverend Father Michael S. Kelleher, the youthful thirty-

¹¹ "The Message of Fatima" from the Vatican, 2000. See text at www.vatican.va.

something pastor of Saint Luke's Anglican Use Catholic Church on Woodward Avenue in downtown Detroit, had much in common with Father Kiril. Both were talented musicians, both had large historic parishes celebrated for their fine traditional music programs, and both were now Catholics known for their unhesitatingly orthodox preaching. Father Kelleher, whose ancestors harked from the Anglican high society in the Irish capital of Dublin, himself looked a bit like a leprechaun. He was trim and short of stature, with green eyes and jet black hair that curled so tightly that his Detroit parishioners referred to it as his "fro." His skin was on the pale side, even in summer. An Irish tenor, his golden voice was magnificent. Completely American, he had no hint of an Irish brogue, and spoke teen slang as fluently as anyone in his parish youth groups. It was rumored that he "texted" so furiously that his cell phone occasionally emitted wisps of smoke.

Saint Luke's parish was previously known as Saint Luke Episcopal Church, and had been the flagship Episcopal Church in all of greater Detroit.¹² But the congregation and pastor had voted in 2010 to convert, as a parish, to the Anglican Use in the Catholic Church. Soon after the new Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus* was issued by Pope Nicholas VI in 2009, they grasped their opportunity to come into full communion with Rome while retaining their liturgical customs. In becoming a Catholic priest, Father Kelleher, a married man, had to agree not to remarry should he someday be widowed.

Father Kelleher had been invited on the pretext of discussing the upcoming "Music by Candlelight" fundraiser being planned by his colleagues, as he could foresee potentially expanding it into a three-parish project. But he was also intrigued to make the acquaintance of Detroit's most prominent Russian Orthodox priest.

"Welcome, Father Kelleher!" beamed Father Romanov at his guest, and motioned the way down the corridor to his study.

"Father Kelleher, I am Father Vasily Soloviev, pastor of Holy Archangels Russian Orthodox Church, just a few blocks up Woodward Avenue from Saint Luke's. Please call me Vasily."

"I'm honored to meet you, Father Vasily. I understand from Father Kiril that you are quite a musician."

"A kind exaggeration, to be sure. But we have been playing a bit of Tchaikovsky together on the piano, for our upcoming parish fund-raisers."

Several tones from a tabletop bell sounded from the dining room.

"Dinner is served, Fathers," warned Kiril. "We dare not keep Mary waiting long."

The other two priests mused quietly about how housekeepers, not pastors, run rectories.

The dining room, on the rear corner of the brick rectory building, had two outside walls with large windows looking across the park-like expanse of the cemetery in the rear, and onto a small private garden between the

¹² Inspired by, but not the same as, St. John's Episcopal Church, www.stjohnsdetroit.org.

rectory and the towering limestone wall of the neo-gothic church. Finely detailed woodwork, dating back almost a hundred years, graced the room with warmth. The table had been made small and was set for three, ideal for conversation.

Through an archway off the dining room was the parlor, where the two concert grand pianos stood side-by-side. One, a Steinway concert grand, was the personal property of Father Romanov. It had been inherited from his late father, Nicholas Alexandrovich,¹³ a piano professor at Wayne State University. As the three priests prepared to gather around the dining room table, Mark Szczypiorski¹⁴, a young man of the parish completing a Master's Degree in piano and organ performance at Wayne State University, took his place at the Steinway and prepared to provide soft background music for the dinner hour. But he would wait until the blessing was prayed.

The other piano, a Yamaha concert grand, had been bequeathed to the parish by the widow of Kiril's dear friend Ken Schultz, FAGO,¹⁵ a prominent Catholic organ scholar, whose untimely death had cut short a brilliant career of service to the Church. A devout traditional Catholic who formerly taught music at Detroit's Sacred Heart Seminary, Ken had become a refugee from the modernist iconoclasm and hatred of traditional music which had then infected a slight majority of the faculty. Ken had for his final few years – the best years of his life, he had insisted – served as composer-in-residence and instructor for advanced organ students at the Cova. Mark's organ skills, including classical improvisation, had progressed from very good to outstanding under Ken Schultz's rigorous tutelage, and Mark and Father Romanov both missed him sorely.

Mark was the oldest of six homeschooled children, having four brothers and a sister. His family lived in the farming country north of Detroit, and like many Cova parishioners commuted an hour each way to what was arguably the finest traditional Catholic parish in the archdiocese. A child prodigy, Mark could skillfully sight-read the most complex scores on piano or organ, and had made an impressive start as a composer. Though not quite six feet in stature, Mark appeared tall, slender, and strikingly handsome. A natural athlete, he had the physique of a long-distance runner, and preferred track and tennis over football or weightlifting. His dark curly hair was thick and obstinately unruly, and his fair complexion caused him to appear never-ever quite clean-shaven. Like all his brothers, his blue eyes were set wide apart in a symmetrical face of classic proportions, reflecting the dignity of the Szczypiorski family's ancestry in the Polish nobility. Mark's baritone voice was melodic, and he could have become a renowned vocal soloist except that he was always

¹³ Note that Russians commonly refer to others who are familiar to them by their first and middle names, omitting the last (or family) name, which is understood.

¹⁴ A Polish surname, pronounced "sh-chee-pyor-ski." A pronouncing guide to foreign names can be found at the back of the book.

¹⁵ Fellow of the American Guild of Organists, the ultimate organist's credential, which only a select few musicians ever manage to achieve.

chosen instead as the best available keyboardist. Mark was intelligent, but at heart he was a craftsman who loved to create music and to make things with his hands. For the past several years he had worked as an apprentice in the Detroit pipe organ shop of Vladimir Romanov. Recognizing that even highly trained musicians seldom receive a living wage in Catholic settings, he was considering organ building as a main career, especially if he hoped to marry and provide for a family. Having as his other mentor Vladimir's older brother Father Romanov – a similarly gifted musician who had become a priest – did make it impossible for Mark to completely ignore the possibility of a vocation to the priesthood. But there was a wild streak in Mark that, at each stage of his life, would take time to tame.

When Mark had completed ninth grade in Catholic homeschooling, his parents, Karl and Diane Szczypiorski, had allowed their oldest child to enter tenth grade in a rural public high school, close by Father Kiril's former Saint Jude parish in a small farming town north of Detroit. Karl and Diane felt Mark had a firm grounding in his Catholic Faith, and should be able to successfully withstand the secular influence of a rural public high school. But Mark – basically an other-centered, emotionally stable, and intelligent young man (but not without a wild streak) – had been quickly adopted by the “in” crowd that valued outward good looks and athletic ability. Very soon, his parents found that Mark, Catholic altar boy though he was, could not adequately resist the manifold temptations of the secular-school world. Young women with no self-restraint were competing for his attention, and his formerly excellent grades were plummeting. Invitations to weekend parties, with rumors of alcohol and impure entertainments, became weekly events. After one disastrous year in public school, his parents put him back into homeschooling for the remainder of high school. For a year or more, Mark had sorely resented this, and had engaged in some passive-aggressive resistance to his school work to “punish” them for being so “narrow minded” and “old-fashioned.” But they held their ground until he matured into young manhood and won a coveted place as a protégé of Father Kiril Romanov, serving as an assistant organist at the renowned Cova. His longstanding close friendship with Mariya Peterson, a talented young Cova parishioner and Wayne State organ major, helped to rein in his wild side. Ultimately, Mark had blossomed into an outstanding example of Catholic young manhood. Mark's parents quietly rejoiced that, despite past struggles, their oldest son now served as an important role model and hero for many a young girl or boy in the Cova Parish.

The three priests were now all standing at the dining room table.

“Father Vasily,” said Kiril, “would you kindly offer thanks to our Lord according to the customary prayers of your Church?”

They all stood at their places, hands folded, and bowed their heads. Father Vasily began with the sign of the cross, and then prayed:

“The poor shall eat and be satisfied, and those who seek the Lord shall praise Him; their hearts shall live forever!

“Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

“Lord, have mercy!

“Christ, have mercy!

“Lord, have mercy!

“Christ God, bless the food and drink of Thy servants, for Thou art holy, always, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.”

“Please be seated, Fathers,” said Kiril. “While Mary serves, I will pour our wine.”

In the next room, the quiet piano music began with *Images* by Claude Debussy. Vasily, given the first small sample of red wine, swirled the glass to note the wine’s “legs,” deeply inhaled its aroma, took a small taste, and then nodded enthusiastic approval.

“Michael,” said Vasily, “I’m told that a few years ago you and your entire parish opted to leave the Anglican communion and become Catholic. Tell me about that.”

“Well, it wasn’t an impulsive decision. Saint Luke’s Episcopal Church had spent years developing a parish identity as a Traditional Anglican community, following the old doctrines and liturgical practices of the Anglican communion. It had systematically resisted each new modernizing change that swept through the worldwide Anglican communion after the 1960’s. Anglicans basically defined themselves by their differences from the Catholic Church, thinking themselves to be more pure than the decadent Catholics. Then, as the Catholic Church experienced a modernizing revolution, so did the Anglicans – but, for a time, always one step behind.”

“So then, what would be the point of returning to Rome?”

“Well, there came a point when the Anglicans began to surpass even the progressive Catholics in liberal anti-traditionalism. Contraception, easy divorce and remarriage, openly gay clergy, women as priests, and finally gay and female bishops – all led to an eventual rupture, as many in the Anglican communion could no longer accept the radical changes that were obviously contrary to the timeless doctrine and practice of the Church. Rome was now suddenly appearing to be *more* conservative than many Anglican parishes. But we still had a liturgical tradition that was not as modern as the typical New Mass among *novus ordo* Catholics. We wanted the solid rock of Rome, but not the ‘schlock’ of the New Mass. When Rome suggested that we could keep our liturgical traditions, as an Anglican Use within the Latin Rite of the Roman Catholic Church, we tradition-oriented Anglicans were very much attracted. We could come under the shelter of Peter’s authority without giving up our cultural treasures.”

“So why were certain Catholic Cardinals quite strongly opposed to the conversion of tens of thousands of Anglicans?”

“Because they knew we were traditionalists, both in liturgy and doctrine, and we would possibly cause a shift toward tradition within the Roman Church. They preferred to move toward a superficial unity within former Christendom, blending with the Protestants by gradually jettisoning everything Catholic to which Protestants might object. And

eventually, they planned on melding with all religions, as hinted in the previous pope's pan-religious prayer meetings at Assisi, or in the emerging identity of the ultramodern new basilica at the Fatima Shrine in Portugal as a pilgrim center for all world religions."¹⁶

"But what did you have to give up?"

"Well, of course we were more liberal on divorce, and we had married clergy. But mostly we gave up oppression by the liberal wing of the Anglican Church, which is now self-destructing at an accelerating pace."

As dinner progressed, Father Vasily noted that, theoretically, the Orthodox could follow a similar trajectory in coming back into formal union with Rome. They could keep their liturgical practices, and simply acknowledge the rule of Peter, the Pope, over all Christians. By the time the table had been cleared and coffee served, past political errors on all sides of sundered Christendom were acknowledged by all – Catholic, Orthodox, and Anglican.

"But we Orthodox have certain traditional arguments which we like to use to justify our continued separation from Rome," continued Father Vasily. "We object to the statement that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and from the Son, instead of just from the Father. We claim to not know whether Mary was always Immaculate from the moment of Her conception. And we claim that the Pope in Rome does not have jurisdiction over our national churches. But we also know that our own theologians and our own liturgies contradict these arguments, and that they really represent not theology but a stubborn political separatism and nationalistic pride."

"Well, a similar nationalistic pride infected the Anglican Church," noted Father Kelleher. "Think of it: there was a law forbidding the British royal family to be Catholic or to marry Catholics, and the throne itself was forfeit for an infraction of that rule. The British mercilessly persecuted the Irish nation, imposing draconian Penal Laws on all who refused to attend Church of England services. England too was driven by national pride into spiritual blindness. But Fathers, I must be leaving now. I have an early Mass tomorrow, and much work to do to prepare for choir practice."

Father Kelleher took his leave, thanking both priests for their company and for the fellowship of exploring their differences, which caused their vast areas of theological closeness to come into better focus. Father Kiril and Father Vasily were just settling into a plan for an after-dinner drink, when suddenly a matronly figure appeared at the kitchen door. This was simply Mary Moretti's moment of evening departure, like hundreds before, but for some reason Father Kiril was particularly struck by the glory of her white hair, the purity of her visage, and the dignity of her soul, so devoted to serving Christ and His Church.

"Fathers, good evening," she smiled. "The dishes are done, and I'll be heading home for the night. Just leave your cups in the sink and I'll tend to them in the morning after Mass. And Father Kiril, I believe you know

¹⁶ Maehlmann and Fringeli article. See Bibliography.

where the after dinner drinks can be found.”

Father Kiril gave Mary his priestly blessing, and she went out the side door of the rectory. Mary always parked on the far side of wide Gratiot Avenue, in the church’s auxiliary lot, for fear that some late arrival for a Mass would not find a place to park. About ninety seconds after Mary left the rectory, both priests heard screeching tires, a sudden loud thud, and then a voice or two crying out in dismay.

All this came from the direction of seven-lane-broad and busy Gratiot Avenue, out in front of the rectory. Father Kiril jumped up and ran out the front door, and at once he saw a woman lying on the road, bleeding, and an old rattletrap car stopped a block down the street. As he approached the fallen figure, he wept. It was Mary Moretti, mortally wounded but still conscious. A few pedestrians were gathering around. So far, there was no sign of police or ambulance, but a passerby said she had just called the 911 emergency dispatcher. Moments later, Mark and Father Vasily also arrived.

“Mark, we have to offer dear Mary confession, last rites, and if possible Communion,” said Father Kiril. “There is no time to waste. I will hear her confession now. Please go to my private chapel and in the Tabernacle there I have a pyx with the Blessed Sacrament in it. I had it prepared for a sick call earlier today that was cancelled. The pyx is inside its leather pouch. Carry the pyx in its pouch and bring it to me as quickly as possible. Please also bring my holy oils.”

Mark, who had been an altar boy in the parish for many years, knew exactly how to swiftly fulfill Father’s request. Taking Mary’s hand, Father Kiril looked into her eyes and smiled through his tears.

“Mary, I am Father Romanov, your priest. I will hear your confession and give you absolution.”

Mary whispered her last confession to Father Kiril, who absolved her from her sins. She recited the Apostles’ Creed, while Father Kiril recited the Lord’s Prayer. Then Mark returned, and Father Kiril presented the Body of Christ before her, saying in Latin: “Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him Who takes away the sins of the world.”¹⁷

She replied, in Latin, “Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. Speak but the word, and my soul shall be healed.”¹⁸

Father Kiril placed the Host on her tongue, saying in Latin, “May the Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ preserve your soul unto life everlasting. Amen.”¹⁹

He then anointed her with holy oil, and offered the traditional Latin prayers for Extreme Unction. Mary seemed to relax then, as if the pain in her disfigured and bleeding body had suddenly and substantially diminished.

Then Mary smiled, and exclaimed, “Oh, Father: see! Jesus and Mary

¹⁷“Ecce Agnus Dei, ecce Qui tollit peccata mundi.”

¹⁸“Dómine, non sum dignus ut intres sub tectum meum: sed tantum dic verbo, et sanábitur ánima mea.”

¹⁹“Corpus Domini nostri Jesu Christi custodiat animam tuam in vitam aeternam. Amen.”

have come, with angels!”

Father Kiril knew, from long experience with the death of the faithful, that the end was nearing.

“And ... the Holy Father will come ... to you, Father ... to seek help... soon ...”

“May the Lord bless you, my daughter,” said Kiril, thinking to himself that she was now becoming quite confused mentally.

“Oh! And see how They smile at you, Father ...”

But then Mary breathed her last. The lifesaving ministrations of the Detroit City rescue squad, just arriving, would not be needed. Kiril slowly arose, in the glare of flashing red-and-blue lights, feeling a profound sadness in his soul. He saw the young driver, perhaps a hundred yards down the avenue, being loaded into a police car in handcuffs.

As he neared the curb, Kiril overheard the bystanders talking about the driver who had killed Mary. He lived in the neighborhood and was only a young man, but he had a revoked driver’s license due to multiple citations for reckless driving. So Kiril offered a silent prayer for him, too, that somehow, through this seemingly senseless accident, grace would reach deep into that young man’s heart and soul. Prompted by his shepherd’s heart, Kiril made a mental note to visit the young man in jail the next morning, and to seek to console him.

Mark, standing by, also saw the young driver being handcuffed and pushed into the back of a police car. “If only such young men could discover what a treasure of Faith and culture was here at the Cova, right in their own neighborhood,” he thought. He realized how profoundly blessed he had been by his strict Catholic upbringing and education.

Watching Father Romanov as he administered the Sacraments to a dying parishioner caused the world’s desperate need for many holy priests to tug at his wild heart. He feared that he might soon have to mention his thoughts about becoming a priest to his mentor, Father Romanov. But now it was night, and a tragedy had just taken place; and he was moved by the drama of it all. By tomorrow, his wild side would safely quench such outrageous thoughts – at least, for a while.

While Mark returned the holy oils to the sacristy, Kiril and Vasily intuitively went together, without speaking, into the quiet, dimly lit Church, and knelt to pray before the Blessed Sacrament which was reserved in the Tabernacle – front and center – on the high altar. The flickering red lamp, suspended above, served to assure all the faithful who might come here to pray that Jesus was indeed truly present – Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity – under the appearance of consecrated bread. The only difference in his Russian Orthodox parish, thought Vasily, was that a chalice of Jesus’ Precious Blood would also be reserved in the Tabernacle, and the Body and Blood thus reserved would be called the “Holy Mysteries.”

Both priests were deeply moved by the tragedy that had just transpired, and now sought solace from their Lord. Father Kiril recalled how good and faithful his dear housekeeper had been: a daily communicant; a calm,

uncomplaining, and completely dependable domestic servant to her parish priests; a holy woman; one of the many quiet saints, who live and die unnoticed by the world.

He felt a quiet peace about her soul. Possibly her time in purgatory would be brief. He recalled that Mary had probably obtained a plenary indulgence, only a few days before, when a newly ordained priest had offered his very first Mass at the Cova and then had given Mary his blessing. Father Kiril silently thanked God for the encouragement that such holy souls brought to him, particularly when he was weary in his burdens as a priest and shepherd for his flock.

But, in his heart, Kiril realized he was also troubled by Mary Moretti's last words. What ever could they mean? "The Holy Father ... coming soon ... to *me* ... to seek help?" He decided he should not concern himself with this. He would simply pray for Divine Assistance to help him to fulfill the Will of God, each day, as his daily duties and the needs of others were continually placed before him. It was not for him to know the future. It was for him to serve God, here and now – this day – faithfully and fervently.

Chapter Three

Wednesday, May 6, 2015.

Romanov Medical Clinic, Nazareth, Michigan.

Between the southwestern Michigan cities of Battle Creek and Kalamazoo, beautiful Gull Lake sparkled in the afternoon sun. The lake was the site of cereal magnate W.K. Kellogg's country estate, the manor house of which was now used as a retreat house for Michigan State University. The estate's vast forests now served as a biological research preserve for the university. Just a few miles west of Gull Lake was the quiet little town of Nazareth, site of the former Nazareth College, a Catholic girls' school that was once operated by an order of Catholic nuns. The old college grounds had become an extension of the Michigan State presence at Borgess Medical Center, which in turn was situated further west at the northeast boundary of the City of Kalamazoo. The road from Nazareth to Kalamazoo was dotted by the private medical offices of the physicians and surgeons who were engaged in the part-time teaching of medical students and residents from Michigan State University College of Human Medicine. One such office, adjacent to the grounds of the former Nazareth College, was known as the "Romanov Clinic." An ornate wooden sign, mounted on two posts on the clinic lawn, read thus: "Capt. Mikhail Nicholaevich Romanov, M.D., USMC (Ret.) – Family Practice."

Inside, Doctor Mike Romanov, an Adjunct Professor of Medicine, was introducing himself to two nervous third-year medical students, Luke and Monica, who were about to begin a summer clinical rotation in Family Practice in his office. Luke, age twenty-three, was from New York City. His plain-faced, intelligent nerd's head with large round glasses always seemed somewhat incongruous with the tall and muscular athlete's body to which that head was attached. His full head of floppy hair, incorrigibly curly and brown with a definite red hue, was always just a bit too long so that it framed his face as if a rock star's wig had been tossed onto a math-whiz/science-nerd/computer-geek's pate. Luke came from a working-class background and had been the first in his family to enter professional school. As a former altar boy, he exuded a quiet, manly self-confidence, being solidly grounded in his Faith and knowing with certainty Whom he served. Monica, age twenty-four, was from Battle Creek. The daughter of a Kellogg Company vice president, she came from money and wore clothing with labels that few medical students could afford. She was confident but caring, assertive but sensitive, and had a profoundly Catholic spirit that intuitively sensed the profound worth and dignity of every soul she met. Gifted with good looks and a tall trim figure, one could not help expecting her to have had a past career as a model. Her hair was blond, her eyes blue, and her complexion was tan and perfect.

Once they were seated and provided with coffee, the professor began to introduce himself. He had been informed, by the Catholic chaplain at Borgess, that both students were active Catholics. And the Michigan

State University Assistant Dean had disclosed that they were both high academic achievers. Armed with these insights, Mike decided to share more than the usual personal information with these particular students.

“My name is Doctor Mikhail Nicholaevich Romanov, but around here everyone calls me ‘Doctor Mike.’ I was born in Detroit way back in 1981 – no mental math, please – where my late father Nicholas was a piano professor at Wayne State music school. My late mother Maria was a fulltime homemaker. We spoke Russian at home, and English in public. I attended Detroit Catholic Central High School, which by then had moved out to the suburbs, in Novi. Back then, my parents were Russian Orthodox, but there was no Orthodox high school available, and they figured Roman Catholic was the best alternative. I lettered in hockey and rugby, and graduated in three years, at age sixteen, as valedictorian. Because of our father’s musical interests, our whole family became involved in the famous music program at Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Church in Detroit, commonly called the ‘Cova.’ And, through the influence of the outstanding priests there, my whole family converted to the Catholic Church when I was sixteen. That led to my interest in the ‘King of Instruments’ – the pipe organ – something that was unknown in the Orthodox Church where the music is all *a cappella*.²⁰

“Anyway, at age sixteen I began undergraduate studies at Wayne State University School of Music in Detroit, majoring in organ performance and voice. My home-taught Russian exempted me from the foreign language requirement, so I managed to squeeze in a minor in pre-med basic sciences.”

“Did you win a scholarship?” asked Luke, thinking like the impoverished medical student that he was.

“Not exactly. Since dad was a professor, I was granted free tuition for my undergraduate years. But to afford medical school, I accepted an ROTC commission in my junior year. At age twenty, I went to the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, where I completed my M.D. degree and Family Practice residency on the fast track in six years.”

“Wow, that was fast!” observed Monica. “We don’t have any option like that at MSU.”

“The military was anxious to get medical staff out into the war zones, of course. So I also trained on weekends with the Marine Corps, and became a medical officer in the Marines special operations forces upon residency completion, at age twenty-six.”

“And what did you do in your *spare* time?” quipped Luke.

“Well, in my spare time, I was an occasional assistant organist and bass soloist at Saint Luke Catholic Church in McLean, Virginia. They have a fantastic music program there, which almost rivals the music at ‘Fatima Cova’ in Detroit. In my last year of residency, I was the organist for a compact disc of two lesser-known concertos for organ and orchestra,

²⁰ *A cappella* (literally, “in the manner of the chapel”) is an Italian musical term meaning “vocal only, without instrumental accompaniment.”

by Joseph Rheinberger, recorded and produced at the parish.”²¹

Luke and Monica felt awed by his accomplishments. But, although Doctor Mike did not hesitate to freely mention his many striking talents and endeavors, he did so in a matter-of-fact manner that reflected his fundamental humility. Doctor Mike considered his talents as gifts, and his abilities as mere tools, useful helpers in his life’s vocation of serving God, and of loving and serving his fellow man for the love of God.

Perhaps, thought Luke, his own patron, Saint Luke “the most dear physician,”²² had felt something like that too.

“With the Middle East wars raging,” continued Doctor Mike, “I was immediately posted overseas, and served two extended tours of duty: three years in Afghanistan, followed by three years in Iraq. In war zones, one learns a lot of medicine very quickly, but in horrible circumstances. After just a few years, one feels profoundly drained. So, two years ago, when I was offered my first option to retire to civilian life after being wounded on the field of battle, I gladly took it. I am proud to have served our country.”

“But do you really think those wars are just?” asked Monica.

“Well, our previous Holy Father, Leo Alexander II, made clear that he did not think they were just. But all great world empires inevitably become militarily over-extended, and I don’t suppose America will prove to be any different than all the empires that came before.”

“So weren’t you really ‘selling your soul’ to pay back for your free medical school?” challenged Luke.

“That’s why I was grateful to be a physician rather than an infantryman. It is always just to save life and to heal, even in the midst of an unjust war. And it is an American tradition to treat the wounded enemy, who may be brought into our field hospitals, the same as our own wounded. But you have a valid point, Luke: if I had been a volunteer soldier carrying a weapon in wars that Pope Leo Alexander II had declared to be unjust, then mere blind obedience to the ‘legally constituted authority’ might not have been sufficient justification.”

“Most of our professors, even the Catholic ones, know very little theology,” said Monica. “It seems you have given some serious thought to these matters. That’s impressive.”

“Yes. Well, of course my little brother is a very strict priest. So I always have to ‘be on my moral toes.’ Anyway, now I am here at Borgess, doing Family Practice and teaching eager young students such as yourselves.”

“Is that a Purple Heart medal, in the shadow box on your wall?” asked Luke. “Maybe you weren’t an infantryman, but you must have been brave.”

“I was wounded trying to save soldiers in the field,” said Doctor Mike. “Shot through the chest, but nothing vital was hit. So I have no residual disability. My guardian angel was with me that day.”

“Wow, that’s impressive. And – just curious – what do you do in your

²¹ In the real world this thrilling compact disc was produced by Naxos with organist Paul Skevongton. See Rheinberger in Discography following Bibliography.

²² Colossians 4:14.

spare time *here*?" teased Luke.

"In my spare time, which I actually do have here, I am occasional assistant organist and occasional bass soloist for the Latin Mass Choir at Saint Augustine Cathedral, in downtown Kalamazoo. In fact, we have one final orchestral Mass coming up, for the Feast of Corpus Christi, and then we go on vacation for the summer. We'll be doing the Haydn 'Mass in Time of War,' or 'Paukenmesse.' I'll arrange to make sure you are both off-call for the Mass, if you'd care to come."

"I'd love it!" smiled Luke.

"Doctor Mike, are you married?" asked Monica.

"No. I've been so busy, you know, and military life wasn't really conducive to romance or family life. And now all of a sudden I'm thirty-five and probably looking ancient to any young woman who isn't already married herself! I'm not much good at dating either, I fear. So, I guess it's up to God whether He ever wants me to find someone suitable to marry."

"If you looked around, you'd find yourself supremely eligible, I'm sure," quipped Monica.

"Indeed," replied Doctor Mike, appearing possibly just a bit flustered.

"Tell me about your little brother, the strict priest," asked Luke.

"Ah, yes, my little brother Kiril, two years younger than me. Kiril also went to Wayne State, of course, on free tuition. As an undergraduate he majored in composition and piano performance. But then he went on to Sacred Heart Seminary in Detroit, on a scholarship from our parish, and became a priest. He is quite traditional in his Faith, and I can tell you that he struggled mightily with the liberal, modernist influences at the seminary. He chose to say his first Mass at 'The Cova,' his home parish, in the Traditional Rite of Mass, also known as the Tridentine Mass."

"Wow!" exclaimed the students.

"So, when the Archbishop's Council of Priests heard about that, they pressured the Archbishop to exile Kiril to Saint Jude's, the remotest little parish in the diocese, in a small farming town north of Detroit. I imagine they thought his traditional preaching and liturgical practices would thus remain marginalized."

"Was that what happened?" Monica asked.

"For a while, yes. Although he turned that little Saint Jude Church – the patron saint of hopeless causes – into a magnet parish for those seeking traditional liturgy and great Catholic music. Then suddenly a priest possessing great musical talent was needed to replace the ailing Monsignor at 'The Cova,' which was inner city Detroit's most vibrant parish by virtue of its outstanding traditional Catholic music program and preaching. And there was no priest to be found in the diocese who could fill that position credibly, except for the still-youthful Kiril. So, the Archbishop called him up in person, without even consulting his Council of Priests, and ordered Kiril to leave the small rural parish and take over as pastor of 'The Cova.'

"Ordered him?" asked Luke. "Why not just offer it to him?"

"The retiring Monsignor at 'The Cova' knew that Kiril was too humble

to agree to such a plum position if he were asked to decide. So he had advised the Archbishop not to give Kiril any choice. They both knew he would be obedient. So now Kiril continues the tradition of great Catholic music at ‘The Cova,’ which many consider to be the most liturgically traditional and authentically Catholic parish in the archdiocese. There is a high Extraordinary Mass every Sunday, with Gregorian chant; and with a talented choir, accompanied by pipe organ, singing the great Latin classics of Christendom. On a few high feast days, Masses by the great Catholic composers are sung with organ and orchestra. The professional quality choir, which he directs, has recorded a number of compact discs of little-known composers who deserve to become more widely appreciated.”²³

“So, you respect your little brother!” observed Luke.

“We remain very close. Both to each other, and to our youngest brother Vladimir, who runs an organ building and restoration firm in downtown Detroit. Our three older sisters are all married, have moved to distant cities, and have their own families to keep them busy.”

“Doctor Mike,” interrupted Monica, ever the observant female student, as she studied his wall full of diplomas. “I notice that on your high school diploma your last name was Petrov, but then on your undergraduate and medical school diplomas your last name is Romanov. Is there an interesting story there?”

“Actually there is. Though I very seldom tell it. It has to do with our family’s descent from the Romanov dynasty of Russia. My ancestors kept this fact a carefully guarded secret throughout the early post-revolutionary years, when such a connection could have meant danger even to those exiled far from Russia. We don’t think it matters much to keep it secret anymore.”

“You mean you are a descendant of the Russian royal family?” Monica asked.

“Well, yes. Romanov family genealogists have actually determined that I would be, by direct male descent of noble parents on both sides in every generation, the first in line for the Romanov throne. Except that there is no throne. Plus the fact that, as a Roman Catholic, I would be disqualified. The Tsar had to be Orthodox.”

“Still, it’s a fascinating lineage,” Monica responded. “The forgotten world of princes and princesses and royal palaces strikes a haunting melody in all our hearts – an attraction to a lost world of nobility, civility, and refined culture. Do we have time to hear the whole story?”

“Well, if you don’t mind staying quite a bit late for rounds this afternoon, I suppose we can run through it. Is that okay with you too, Luke?”

“By all means, Doctor Romanov!”

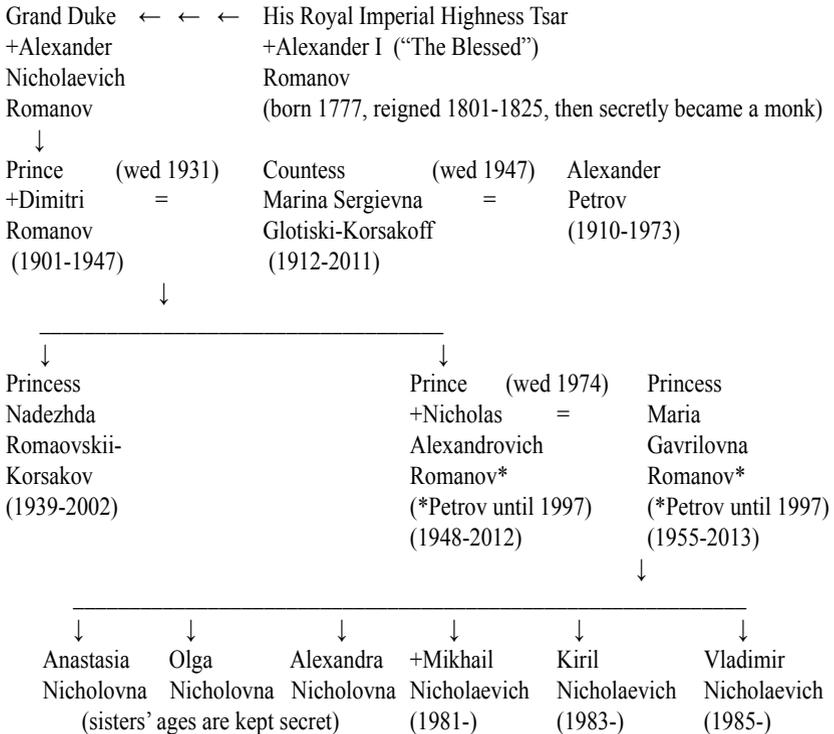
Doctor Mike opened his desk drawer and pulled out a folded chart,

²³ In real life, the beautiful but little-known compositions of Paul Paray, Catholic composer and former maestro of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, have been recorded at Assumption Grotto Church in Detroit, and produced by Grotto Productions. See “Paray” in Discography.

opening it up to reveal a very detailed family tree. In the background was a large shadow-image of the Romanov double-headed eagle. (A portion of the chart is reproduced below.)

A Portion of the Detroit Romanovs' Family Tree

Note: The symbol + indicates the heir to the Romanov throne.



“Now of course Tsar Nicholas II perished under the Bolsheviks in 1918 with his entire family, none of his children yet being married, and so he died without any direct heirs of either gender. Here you can see that Prince Dimitrii Alexandrovich was a direct male descendant of the royal family line, from Emperor Alexander I, through the line of Grand Duke Alexander Nicholaevich. Of course there were various other male descendants of emperors, but in every case they either died without surviving male heirs, or they married a non-royal person so that their children were legally ineligible to inherit the throne. There was only one exception, and for a long time it was kept secret.”

“This is starting to sound like a romantic novel,” noted Monica.

“In 1931 Prince Dimitrii Romanov (1901-1947) married Countess Marina Sergievna Golitski-Korsakov (1912-2011). Their publicly

acknowledged daughter, Princess Nadezhda Romanovskii-Korsakov, was born in 1939. However, Nadezhda married a commoner, and so her children forfeited any rights to the throne. Thereafter, it was widely believed in European royal circles that the last Romanov male heir had died without any male issue born of two royal parents. Talk began about tracing the future pretender to the Russian throne through a female line, something which was only allowed, under dynastic law, when there was no longer any surviving direct male heir.”

“Modern feminists taking over?” quipped Luke.

“Not at all. Catherine the Great ruled Russia famously after just such a dynastic event. But here’s the well-kept secret. When Dimitrii was dying of injuries suffered in a motor vehicle accident in 1947, he being forty-six and Marina being thirty-five, she was already pregnant by Dimitrii. He foresaw that if Marina bore a son, that son could continue the Romanov dynastic line. So Dimitrii, mortally wounded but still of sound mind, signed a notarized document, attesting to the legitimacy of his future child by Marina, who would enjoy full rights of dynastic succession. Dimitrii left the document in Marina’s custody, to be revealed if and when she saw fit. She kept that information secret for many years.

Marina remarried within six months, to a Russian commoner named Alexander Petrov. In those days when Romanov royals were widely dispersed in exile outside Russia, the details of her personal life remained quite private, so her child was assumed to be the offspring of her new husband and therefore not a legitimate pretender to the Romanov throne. That child was a son, born in 1948, and was named Nicholas. Now Nicholas was actually (though secretly) the rightful heir to the Romanov throne under the rules of male primogeniture. In 1974, Nicholas, not yet having been informed by his mother of his royal status, nevertheless married a full princess of an Eastern European royal ruling house in exile. Marina realized that this couple could thus continue the male line of succession unbroken, but kept her secret for a while longer.”

“And so, what became of this Nicholas?” asked Monica, clearly fascinated.

“Nicholas was born in 1948, grew up in Detroit in the Orthodox Church, and was raised by his mother Marina and his presumed father Alexander Petrov, a piano professor at Wayne State. Nicholas Alexandrovich Petrov became a very talented pianist and composer, and went to New York City in 1966, at age eighteen, to study at the Julliard School of Music. He graduated with high honors and stayed on at Julliard to teach until 1980. During those years in New York City, Nicholas providentially met and fell in love with Maria, who as we mentioned was an Eastern European princess of a full royal house in exile. Her royal status meant that, if she married a royal Russian, her children could potentially inherit rights to the Russian throne. Nicholas courted her in the early 1970’s, when they became formally engaged. At that time, Nicholas still had no idea that, like his beloved Maria, he was a royal person.”

“So Maria thought she was marrying a commoner,” noted Monica.

“Yes. Now, here you can see that Nicholas and Maria were married in 1974, he being age twenty-six and she being age nineteen. They married in the Russian Orthodox Church in New York City, in what was assumed by her family to be a morganatic marriage.”

“So they got married in Morgan’s attic?” quipped Luke. “I thought you said they got married in a church.”

“Clever but insolent,” laughed Doctor Mike. “No, ‘morganatic’ was a dynastic legal term for a marriage between a fully royal person and someone who was of lesser standing – either minor royalty, or a commoner. The children of a morganatic marriage would still be considered minor royalty, but they could not inherit any rights to the throne.”

“So, royals could pay a high price to marry just for love,” sighed Monica.

“Yes. Now after the honeymoon, in 1974, Nicholas and Maria elected to settle in Detroit. Alexander Petrov, Nicholas’ presumed father, had died in 1973, and Nicholas was invited to fill Alexander’s chair as a piano professor at Wayne State University. Five years later, in 1979, at age thirty-one, Nicholas was informed by his mother that his biological father was actually the late Prince Dimitrii Alexandrovich, who had left a notarized deathbed attestation to Nicholas’ Russian dynastic rights, and that their real family name was Romanov. Nicholas and his wife and mother all understood the potential implications, and felt it best to keep this a closely guarded family secret for the time being. So, Prince Nicholas and Princess Maria lived in Detroit, and had three daughters followed by three sons. Our older sisters are Anastasia, Olga, and Alexandra. The oldest son and crown prince (myself), named Mikhail, was born in 1981; the second son, my brother Kiril, was born in 1983; and the third son, our youngest brother Vladimir, was born in 1985.”

“So, when did your family begin to use the Romanov name openly?” asked Monica.

“When I graduated from high school in 1997, my parents were still using the family name Petrov. As Catholic converts, they knew they would be unwelcome in the solidly Orthodox ‘Romanov Nobility Organization.’ So they eventually decided there was no real need to keep hiding the family name. They went to court, proved their lineage, and legally changed the family name to Romanov. And that’s why my undergraduate and medical school diplomas have the different last name.”

“Wow! So you are a real Russian prince!” exclaimed Luke. “Actually the crown prince!”

“Yes, arguably. And if I am lucky, that (plus \$2.99) will get me a small Starbuck’s latté,” quipped Doctor Romanov.

“Well, I’m from New York, Doctor Mike. And every year in the *Times* one reads about the Romanov Nobility Ball taking place at some posh hotel. Last year, I think it was at the Waldorf=Astoria.²⁴ Have you ever been to those balls?”

²⁴ This venerable hotel uses an = sign instead of a hyphen in its two-word name.

“No. You see, since I’m Catholic, the Romanov family would never consider me as a legitimate pretender to the throne. In 2011, when my grandmother Marina was ninety-nine and terminally ill with cancer, but still of sound mind, she met with the Romanov Nobility Organization and laid out the evidence. That caused a great disturbance, which was kept out of the press, because the presumed male heir-apparent – through his mother’s female line of descent – had long been groomed as the heir-apparent to the Russian throne. Since he is Orthodox and European, whereas I am Catholic and American, the family decided to quietly ignore my impeccable direct male lineage, and to continue to hold him forth as the next-in-line after his mother.”

“Surely they tried to disprove your mother’s claims?” asked Luke.

“Yes, they did. In 2012, certain Romanov family members paid off my barber to give them a fresh sample of my hair. They also hired a private espionage firm to obtain a tissue sample from Prince Dimitrii’s mausoleum, using a drill and a fiber-optic camera. Then they had DNA analysis done at two universities, one in England and one in Moscow. Unfortunately for them, the analyses both proved with ninety-nine percent certainty that I am the grandson of Prince Dimitrii Alexandrovich Romanov.”

“So then, couldn’t you show up at the Romanov family reunions if you wanted to?” frowned Monica. “After all, *they* proved you are one of them.”

“Oh, I could still go and dance at the Romanov balls, and they would gladly take my money to give to charity in the family name. But there would be a great awkwardness about it. So I prefer to just quietly live my life, and forget about all that royal pomp and ceremony. It’s a lost world that is never going to come back.”

“Well, do you ever go to Russia?” asked Monica.

“I do travel there, about three times a year for a month each trip, and I have a great many good friends there, in both Catholic and Orthodox circles. I am on the visiting medical staff of major clinics in both Moscow and Saint Petersburg, where I lecture. I also oversee some volunteer medical projects which seek to serve poor Russians in remote interior areas, where help is desperately needed.”

“But I thought Russia was a powerful modern nation,” said Luke.

“Sadly, almost twenty percent of hospitals in rural Russia still lack running water,” replied Doctor Mike. “Russia is militarily great, but still suffers from the devastation wrought by seventy years of Communism and atheism.”

“And don’t they still persecute Catholics over there?” asked Luke.

“Catholics often think so. But from the Orthodox perspective it is not persecution. The Russian Federation tries to acknowledge those few religions that are truly traditional within its borders, and for Christianity that means, for them, the Orthodox Church and not the Catholic Church.”

“It’s all wonderfully interesting,” noted Monica. “But maybe we’d better go make rounds?”

“Yes, by all means. They’ll be accusing me of spinning fairy tales of princes and princesses instead of teaching you medicine.”

As they headed out the clinic door to ride to Borgess Medical Center in Doctor Romanov’s BMW, Luke, who had minored in European History, made a mental note of the striking resemblance between his new professor and the most famous Romanov, Tsar Nicholas II. He also noted that when Doctor Mike started the engine, the BMW’s hard-drive resumed playing in the middle of a Tchaikovsky piano concerto. Mounted on the dashboard was a small Orthodox-style icon of Saint Michael the Archangel, the doctor’s patron saint. And on the center console was a well-worn Rosary.

Luke and Monica each decided this would be an exciting summer. Who else among their classmates would be learning medicine from a man who was born to be a king?

Chapter Four

May 2015.

Moscow, Russian Federation.

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of the Mother of God was headquartered in a prominent Moscow landmark along Malina Gruzinskaya street. The Church (now Cathedral) of the Immaculate Conception of the Holy Virgin Mary was a treasure of late pre-revolutionary architecture, having been built between 1901 and 1911, and having been consecrated in December 1911 as the Church of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.²⁵ The striking design was said to have been inspired by Westminster Abbey in London, but with a distinctly Russian flair.

By the end of the Nineteenth Century there were thirty thousand Catholics in Moscow, and the two Catholic churches that had been built previously, the Church of Saint Louis des Français and the Church of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, lacked sufficient capacity for all the faithful. The funds to construct the new Church of the Immaculate Conception came from Poles living throughout the Russian empire, as well as from Catholics of various nationalities living abroad. The design of the church was developed by a parishioner at the Church of Saint Louis, Tomasz Bogdanowicz-Dworięcki, who was a renowned Moscow architect and a professor at the Moscow School of Arts, Sculpture, and Architecture.

After the 1917 Bolshevik revolution the new church was permitted to function until 1939, when it was confiscated by the Communist government. The altar and pipe organ were stolen, the façade was defaced, and wooden decks were built inside to permit profane use of the space. The church suffered some damage from bombing in World War II, and at some point the spire was destroyed. Sadly, the building no longer resembled a Catholic church.

Then in 1989, Catholics in Moscow began to petition for the return of this property to its rightful owner, the Catholic Church. Over a series of years, following the 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union, the city gradually vacated the property. By the end of the Twentieth Century, through the prayers and dedicated hard work of parishioners, and with funds from the generosity of donors all over the world, the church had been restored to its former beauty. In December 1999 the church was reconsecrated by a Cardinal from the Vatican, and was destined to become the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The cathedral has become a center of Western musical culture in Moscow, and contains one of the largest pipe organs in Russia. The organ had been erected by the Kuhn firm in 1955 in Basel, Switzerland, in a Reformed Cathedral. The Kuhn organ was made a gift to the Moscow cathedral when a new organ was planned in the Basel Cathedral. Dismantling of the organ in Basel, by the German organ firm of Gerhard

²⁵ See cathedral web page, with pictures and history, at <http://www.artbene.ru/aboutcathedraleng>, verified January 12, 2011. If interested, note the link to the cathedral's pipe organ web page.

Schmidt, was begun in 2002. The entire organ of seventy-four ranks, four manuals, and five thousand five hundred sixty-three pipes was moved to Moscow, except for a few enormous thirty-two-foot *Principalbass* pipes which were retained in the new organ in Basel. Installation of the organ in Moscow was completed by the end of 2004, and it was dedicated on January 16, 2005 in a solemn Holy Mass celebrated by Moscow's Catholic Archbishop. On that same day, the First International Festival of Christian Music, "The Music of World Cathedrals", was launched, and the organ was played by organists from many of the most famous churches in the world. Today, while the cathedral remains an active center of Roman Catholic worship, it has become an important center of Western musical culture for the city of Moscow. More than fifty concerts take place annually at the cathedral, attended by more than thirty thousand people.²⁶

It was in this very cathedral, early on Monday, May 11, 2015, and on this very Kuhn organ, that Katarina Fyodovsky could be found practicing furiously beginning at four o'clock in the morning. Her husband, George Peterson, an American psychiatrist, and their eighteen-year-old daughter Mariya, were still fast asleep in their suite at the Hilton Moscow Leningradskaya. As a native Russian (now an American citizen) who was renowned throughout the West as a concert organist in constant demand, Katarina had been invited back to Moscow this year as a faculty recitalist, a member of the jury, and a master class instructor for the Ninth Annual *Soli Deo Gloria* International Festival-Contest of Young Organists. Sponsored by De Boni Arte (The Art of Goodness) Charitable Foundation and based at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, the festival was intended to promote competition among young Russian composers.

Katarina, who for several years now had served as Chairman of the Department of Organ at the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre, and Dance in Ann Arbor, was proud to become part of the only organ competition in Russia and sought to promote the spiritual aspects of sacred music. The contestants would be drawn from students of organ departments and graduates of Russian music institutes and conservatories. The contestants would perform masterpieces of sacred organ music, and also present their compositions for organ and/or choir, based on liturgical texts. The juries included prominent organists and composers from the leading music schools of Europe. Jury members would give their own public recitals, and also teach master classes for the contestants. Winners of the competition awards would be invited to give solo recitals in Russian and European concert halls, and to have recordings of their performances

²⁶ The sad reality throughout much of Europe is that declining church attendance has made the maintenance of historic church buildings impossible without the revenue generated by public concerts. Many historic landmark church buildings – including Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, and even Vatican City itself – are no longer entirely controlled by the Catholic Church, but have been signed over to the United Nations' UNESCO World Heritage Sites program. There is every reason to be concerned about the potential for disrespect of the Blessed Sacrament when such churches are filled with secular-minded concert-goers. Here the story reflects not the ideal, but the contemporary reality. It would be expected that, in a Catholic Confessional State, this use of church buildings for secular events would be swiftly corrected.

issued, thus helping to launch their professional careers.

Katarina Fyodovsky had grown up in the Soviet Union, and had emigrated to the West in her late teens as soon as her outstanding musical talent gained her special opportunities to travel abroad. In Soviet Russia, she had been barred from any religious training, but in the West she had been drawn to Roman Catholicism through its great treasury of music. She had met her future husband in Oklahoma City, and later on they had relocated to Detroit. Katarina was almost six feet tall, trim, redhead, blue-eyed, and ravishingly beautiful even in middle age. Not a few said she reminded them of a Russian version of the late American movie star Katherine Hepburn. Lost in concentration as her hands and feet flew across the organ keyboards, Katarina was surprised to hear a sonorous male voice suddenly speak to her in the choir loft.

“Good morning, Professor Fyodovsky,” smiled the Most Revered Nicholas Bogmolov, D.D., the Catholic Archbishop of Moscow. “I have the early Russian Mass this morning, at six. When I came into the cathedral, I was so struck by your music that I felt I must come up to pay my respects to you.”

“Your Excellency, I am honored,” she blushed.

Archbishop Bogmolov was a big Russian man, about age sixty, with black hair and full beard streaked with gray. He stood six feet tall, and had a booming bass voice and an ample girth. He was “big-boned” but not obese, and had the weather-beaten visage of a man whose life has been hard. But he had the smile of a kindly grandfather.

“Is your husband with you this trip ... George, I believe?”

“Oh yes, and our daughter Mariya is with us too. She’s just eighteen, and this is her first trip to Russia. They plan to join me later for the eight o’clock morning Mass, and then we’ll go out somewhere in the neighborhood for breakfast. This is my final free day before the organ competition gets underway.”

“Ah, yes, the eight o’clock Mass ... but did you realize that would be the Tridentine Mass, the ‘Old Latin Mass’?”

“Oh yes, George and I always prefer that, when we can find it. Mariya also prefers it.”

“It has surprised me to note that the younger people do seem to be so easily drawn to tradition. Here the Tridentine Mass is usually celebrated by Father Vladimir, one of our young, recently ordained priests. Nowadays, they all study the old rite in their training at Mary Queen of Apostles Seminary in Saint Petersburg. They don’t need to have my permission any longer, of course. Whichever form of the Roman Rite Mass they say is now entirely up to the individual priest.”

“Your Excellency, we have been hoping to close the music festival next week with a solemn high Tridentine Mass, with small orchestra and chorus. Is there any chance you would consider celebrating the Mass for us?”

She smiled at him with a warm, pleading smile, the countenance of a

young daughter pleading with her beloved father for a very special favor. Her eyes twinkled with amusement, knowing she was putting him on the spot.

“I suppose ... it would be a good way to put the great music of the Western tradition into its historical perspective ... for the students ... before they return to their various schools across Russia. Yes, Professor Fyodovsky ... Yes, I will do it ... Mind you, it may raise some curial eyebrows in Rome. But then, I don't have to ask Rome's permission any longer either. And anyway, how could I say 'No' to such a famous and talented daughter of Russia, who has come all the way across the ocean to encourage our young sacred music students? They need to experience the old Tridentine Mass of the Roman Rite, for which all this great music was written!”

“Thank you! Thank you, Your Excellency! We are thinking of doing Mozart's 'Coronation Mass in C.' There are plenty of talented singers and string players here in the city, who can be ready within a few days' notice. And the De Boni Arte Foundation is able to cover the expenses for the orchestra. So we don't think it will be any problem.”

“Yes, the real problem is whether you have an Archbishop who can get himself ready so soon ... But we have to do it! I'll simply make it my Master of Ceremonies' problem,” he smiled. “I've been too easy on him lately.”

“Your Excellency, George and I have been hoping for a conversation with you about developments in Russia. Might we host you for dinner, as our guest, one evening this week?”

“Consider it done. I can't pass up an opportunity to share perspective and hope with one of Russia's most famous daughters. Let's plan on Thursday.”

The Archbishop took his leave to prepare for Mass. Katarina switched off the organ, and gathered her music in preparation for descending from the organ loft. She concealed her Organmaster suede-soled shoes beneath a chair, and hesitated at the balcony rail to look down the long nave of the church, just as the morning sun, in glorious red and yellow hues, shone suddenly through the cathedral windows and bathed the statue of Mary, to the left of the sanctuary, in beams of golden light. From such a vast distance, Katarina could not see any detail; but she felt suddenly touched by an insight, as if the Blessed Mother of God Herself were infusing a kind of foreknowledge into her soul. In that moment, Katarina was given to understand that she had been brought to Russia for an even more important mission than the propagation of the greatest music of Western civilization. This talented daughter of Holy Mother Russia had been brought home to help set in motion a series of events that would transform the future of Russia and the world. Through these brilliant sunbeams on this Monday morning in May, Mary seemed to be promising that a new dawn was going to come: first in Russia, and then in all the world.

In the cool, dark quiet of an upper-floor hotel suite at the towering

landmark Hilton Moscow Leningradskaya, an electric alarm clock suddenly blared gratingly. To George Peterson, M.D., Professor of Psychiatry at Wayne State University in Detroit, it seemed to be the middle of the night. After momentarily feeling irritated at this outrage – his late-teenage daughter Mariya's idea of a prank, no doubt – he remembered he was halfway around the globe, in Moscow, and this was the morning he was going to meet his beloved wife and best friend, Katarina, for breakfast. How did she do it, he wondered – getting up in the middle of the night in unfamiliar cities, to go practicing on famous instruments when all was quiet and she would not be disturbed? Unlike surgeons, psychiatrists weren't really required to get up very much in the middle of the night – not once they made it past medical school and residency training – and George liked it that way.

He struggled out of bed to reach the screaming box on the desk, where he had moved it to force himself to have to get up. Even though Katarina had laughed that he was wrong, George had insisted that these 220-volt Russian alarm clocks had to be at least twice as loud as the 120-volt clocks back home. He stretched, pulled on his luxurious Hilton robe, threw open the lightproof drapery, and was suddenly awed by the golden glow of the city of Moscow in the magical light of the morning sunrise. In such a moment, the vast metropolis appeared to be a place of peace and security, no longer the surging cauldron of cruelty and godlessness which could describe any contemporary cosmopolitan city.

Would the world ever change, he wondered? Would the civility and decency and devotion of former Christendom, of which his Ukrainian grandparents had often reminisced, ever be seen again on this planet? As the sunlight seemed to intensify, from the early golden glow to the beginnings of a brilliant cloudless day, George had a sense in his soul that perhaps there would yet be a new sunrise of justice and Faith over this modern Russia, and maybe even over all the world.

George Peterson had grown up in a Detroit suburb in a Ukrainian/Russian ethnic neighborhood, where everyone he knew worked in the automobile factories. His parents had come from Ukraine and had brought both sets of grandparents with them, so George had grown up speaking Russian at home and English in school. George stood six feet two inches, and was trim, muscular, and boyishly handsome even as gray hairs began to crown his temples. His black hair had never receded in front at all, and his strong chin, dark pupils, and light yet almost swarthy skin had always attracted women, of whom he had always been terrified – until he met Katarina. Despite looking like a natural playboy, his heart was as boyish and pure as his good looks, and he had waited for the one love of his life, even though he had been a stubbornly agnostic scientist until Katarina converted him.

George knelt by his bed to begin his morning offering, the prayers and meditation by which he would dedicate this day to God. Before long, in the other bedroom of the suite, another loud electric clarion sounded. But it

was abruptly silenced, almost immediately. Mariya Fyodovsky Peterson, age eighteen, had accompanied her parents. This was Mariya's first trip to Russia, her mother's native land and her father's ancestral home, as his Ukrainian forefathers had once lived within the great Russian empire. Mariya, George mused, was by nature an early riser, and had probably been lying awake waiting for the alarm to sound. She would jump up, cheerful even before coffee, complete her ablutions and a few calisthenics and her morning offering, and be ready in twenty minutes.

Mariya Peterson had inherited her mother's red hair and blue eyes, and her handsome father's facial features. Tall like both of her parents, she stood five feet ten inches. Mariya was physically disciplined, trim, and in excellent aerobic condition. She moved with the gracefulness of a ballerina, and when she smiled her perfectly straight teeth – natural, not the product of orthodontics – gleamed like diamonds. Like her father, she had a strong chin and the exceptional facial symmetry characteristic of models and movie stars. Her elegant long neck and well-proportioned figure had enticed professors in the university art department to ask her to pose for painting and sculpture classes, a flattering offer which her Catholic modesty had caused her to decline.

Mariya had just completed her junior year at Wayne State University, where she planned a major in organ performance with a minor in piano. She had lived on the edge of campus in her parents' condominium all throughout high school, and had been homeschooled using a traditional Roman Catholic curriculum provided and proctored by Our Lady of Victory Home School, graduating with high honors at age fifteen. But she was a uniquely well-rounded young woman: throughout her high school years she had participated in the Detroit suburbs' Home School Athletic League, competing in tennis, track, and swimming. She had also studied piano and organ privately.

After her graduation, Mariya had attended the Detroit Home School Senior Prom aboard a riverboat that departed from the Detroit Renaissance Center dock. Mark Szczypiorski had been her date, in a group of some thirty young people from the Cova parish. She and Mark had grown up together in the parish, and had been best friends for as long as she could remember. Now they were both students at Wayne State, and often they would go running together, and then sit and talk for hours. Though she dearly loved him as a brother and talented fellow artist (and could easily love him romantically if she decided it were right for them), she prayed that he might truly discern whether he had a vocation to the priesthood. She knew that he considered it often, though his wild side (which often delighted and amused her) rebelled against it, and she did not want to encourage any premature romantic attachment.

Mariya had also participated in the Wednesday homeschool enrichment program at the Cova, where her parents were active parishioners and Latin Mass Choir members. The academic year just ending had been Mariya's first year as the rehearsal accompanist and organist for the Latin Mass

choir at the Cova, a very demanding job under the renowned conductor and composer, Father Kiril Romanov, who was also their pastor. She had succeeded Mark in this role, as he became increasingly busy building organs with Vladimir Romanov. She was secretly grateful for a brief break from the hard work at the university and at the Cova, and was excited to explore Moscow as a tourist for one more day before the *Soli Deo Gloria* Festival would begin. Ever her talented mother's protégé, Mariya was going to be performing her own organ composition in the young people's competition.

Sometimes Mariya lamented being an only child. Her mother had experienced an unusual medical complication during Mariya's birth, and an emergency hysterectomy had been required to stop the hemorrhaging. George and Katarina had pondered adopting other children, but after prayer and spiritual direction had concluded that their personal vocations lay in ministering to others through their professional work. They had both adjusted their professional work schedules so that they could actively participate in homeschooling Mariya. At the Cova parish it had been easy to develop a co-op plan with other homeschooling families who also needed flexibility in scheduling, and both George and Katarina had enjoyed serving as formal tutors in the homeschool enrichment program at the Cova. George had lectured in science and math, and Katarina had offered private lessons in piano, organ, and voice, and had conducted the homeschool choir. They both loved thus helping to educate and mentor many other children, and continued to tutor even though Mariya had graduated from high school three years previously.

On this Monday, Mariya was joining her parents – whose company she increasingly enjoyed as she matured – for morning Mass followed by breakfast at a café in the historic landmark GUM²⁷ shopping center, built in the 1890's and fronting on Red Square.²⁸ They would then take a guided tour of the Kremlin churches and palaces. After the eight o'clock Tridentine Mass at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, a subway ride through Moscow's elegant Metro underground took George, Katarina, and Mariya to a Metro station decorated like a palace, with chandeliers, statues, mosaics, and stained-glass windows. An escalator brought them to street level in Red Square, and soon they were seated in a pleasant café in the GUM.

Mariya was only beginning to understand that to explore the history of Russia anytime prior to 1917 meant to explore the history of a profoundly Christian empire. Outside the Kremlin fortress wall, just southeast of the GUM, was the imposing Saint Basil's Cathedral, perhaps the world's most widely recognized Russian building. As they ate, she was fascinated to note the stark contrast between Lenin's Tomb and the series of fortress

²⁷ GUM is an acronym for Russian words which translate as "Main Department Store."

²⁸ In Russian, the word for "red" also means "beautiful." The central city square in Moscow was named for its beauty long before the communists adopted red as a political symbol.

towers and golden church domes arising behind it. In the mausoleum lay the atheistic Communist state's impudent mockery of the miracle of incorrupt saints. In hundreds of cases, the bodies of exceptionally saintly men and women had been noted to remain incorrupt for many years, even centuries, and some still lay in state in glass cases beneath side altars in churches. But Lenin's corpse (or, some said, now only a wax effigy) had been embalmed and artificially preserved, like a museum piece, in this monstrous mausoleum that resembled a pagan temple from ancient Babylon.

Mariya reviewed the names of the towers in the Kremlin fortress wall: the most prominent tower was called the Savior Tower, and another tower was named for the Annunciation. After breakfast, during the family's guided tour inside the Kremlin, Mariya discovered a cathedral square on which fronted three churches: Annunciation Cathedral, the Cathedral of the Archangel, and Assumption Cathedral. Reflecting the old empire's devotion to the Blessed Mother was another smaller church, The Church of the Deposition of the Virgin's Robe. Mariya was also enchanted by the opulence of the Grand Kremlin Palaces. Here, Mariya perceived, the royal courts of the Russian empire had lived in magnificent beauty, high culture, and an atmosphere of Orthodox religion protected and supported by the state.

After the day's tour through the Kremlin, Mariya struggled, realizing (as she never had before) the incongruity of such a profoundly Christian empire having suffered a regicidal revolution – engineered by foreign infiltrators led by Lenin, and having brought the Russian people into economic slavery and cruel spiritual oppression under an atheistic Communist government. Now, she noted, Russia was said to be “free,” but only in the sense of Western democracies: free to pursue business and profit, to believe anything, everything, or nothing; free to promote a declining population through contraception and abortion; free to have free speech including rampant pornography; and free to sell the favors of elected lawmakers to the highest contributors to reelection campaign war-chests. True freedom, Mariya knew, was freedom to do what one ought, not what one might want. That meant freedom to know, love, and serve God in this world, so as to be happy with Him in the next. It meant to love one's neighbor as oneself, for the love of God. And that true freedom, best realized in this imperfect world by living under the benevolent protections of a Christian Confessional State, was no more to be found in the modern Russian Federation than in any modern Western secular democracy.

George and Katarina cautioned Mariya that such an assessment might be typical for a homeschooled scholar trained to think for herself and to analyze everything from the timeless perspective of the Catholic Church; but that most people, conditioned and accustomed to offer unquestioning devotion to the modern secular state religion called ‘democracy,’ would probably be offended. But Mariya understood this all too well, having learned what it takes to survive and prosper in a modern state university. She well understood the need to be wise as a serpent, yet innocent as a

dove.²⁹

The next three days seemed like a whirlwind to Katarina and Mariya, as the *Soli Deo Gloria* organ festival kept them occupied and stimulated in mind and heart. George attended some of the concerts and recitals, but also enjoyed some hours of peace to explore the fine museums of Moscow. By Thursday afternoon, both George and Katarina took a few hours of rest to prepare for their evening dinner-date with the Archbishop. Privacy was needed, and the hotel had agreed to serve dinner in their hotel suite, which included a comfortable living room with a dining table. The service would be as elegant as in the Janus Restaurant off of the hotel lobby, but the press and paparazzi would likely take no notice of the Archbishop's private evening with two Americans. Mariya would be gone on an outing for organ competition contestants, and so there would be ample time to learn about the state of the Catholic Church in Russia in 2015.

By six o'clock, all was ready, and the suite doorbell rang. His Excellency Archbishop Bogmolov arrived, accompanied to the door by his driver and bodyguard, who departed once they saw he was secure in the Peterson's suite. They sat together in the living room, facing a window overlooking the Moscow skyline glittering in the afternoon sun. A collection of soothing Russian classical works, stored on Katarina's iPod, supplied just the right atmosphere for relaxing conversation. George offered a round of drinks from the wet bar, explaining that they planned to have dinner delivered in about half an hour. The Archbishop selected a White Russian, but Katarina and George opted for a Russian Sunrise. Once properly fortified with spirits, they settled into a much-anticipated exchange of insights about the state of the Church in the Russian Federation and abroad.

"Your Excellency," began Katarina, "it is so good of you to devote an evening to visit with us. George and I both come from a Russian heritage, and pray often for the Church in Russia."

"You are too kind," asserted the Archbishop. "I want to ask your opinion about something. I am troubled by the mounting tensions between the Russian government and the government of the United States. In Russia, the Catholic Church tends to be viewed as an intruder, constantly under suspicion, as if every soul we serve has somehow been poached from the Orthodox Church. And every time there is a rise in tensions with the West, the restrictions on our missionary activity seem to be increased."

"But the Cathedral here in Moscow is thriving," countered George. "That doesn't seem like you are very restricted."

"Oh, anything 'cultural' is welcome in Russia nowadays, especially in Moscow. We host about fifty concerts per year at the cathedral, organized by the charitable foundation De Boni Arte, and that does elevate our image in the minds of ordinary Russians, most of whom identify themselves as Orthodox even though they don't practice that Faith. Anything we could

²⁹ Matthew 10:16, DRV.

characterize as ‘social services’ is also welcome. Many Orthodox persons will come by the cathedral seeking help for food or living expenses, and we gladly help them when we can. But openly preaching that people need to be in union with Rome, and subject to the Pope, would be viewed as illegal proselytizing. So any time an individual Russian citizen decides to convert to Catholicism, sparks fly – let me tell you! I get a call from some bureaucrat in the office of the Orthodox Metropolitan, accusing me of stealing sheep!”³⁰

“Why, are your numbers growing?” asked George.

“Not much. We don’t know the exact numbers of Catholics in Russia, but estimates all fall in the range of a few hundred thousand.”

“So, Russia does not have real freedom of religion, as in America?” asked Katarina.

“Russia is officially an Orthodox state,” explained the Archbishop. “It is not exactly a confessional state, but it does seek to help and protect what it views as the one true religion – Orthodoxy – against incursions by what it views as false or foreign religions. In terms of Christianity, the Russian Orthodox Church is accepted, and the Catholic Church is viewed as foreign and fallen into some never precisely defined error.”

“Well, Russia behaves somewhat like Catholic Confessional States did in the days of Christendom,” noted Katarina. “Except that the Orthodox Church is in schism from Rome.”

“Yes, and that adds to the overall tensions between Russia and the modern West, where complete religious freedom is generally viewed as a basic human right.”

“As Americans who place great importance in our Russian heritage,” said George, “Katarina and I naturally feel sad to see the mounting tensions between our nations. To listen to the news given out at home, one would think Russia was an aggressor trying to take away the freedom of neighboring states.”

“Really it is the exact opposite,” said the Archbishop. “The American government has for decades been seeking to establish a permanent military presence in central Asia, under the guise of peacekeeping through NATO. The Russians think the West’s real motivation is to gain control of the incredible natural resources – vast coal deposits; natural gas; uranium, antimony, and gold mines; routes for critical international highways; and rights to air force bases – especially in Kyrgyzstan.”

“A place most Americans don’t even know exists,” ventured George.

“Probably right. Little Kyrgyzstan, half bordering on China and half bordering on three other ‘Stans’, is part of a critical region, sandwiched between China and Russia, that has been emerging as a major geopolitical pivot. It is situated right at the center of the world’s most strategic landmass, Central Asia. Control of the region is naturally coveted by Russia and China, as it is analogous to Mexico and Canada relative to the United States. But unfortunately, the region is now also coveted by

³⁰ Lucas, *The New Cold War*, pages 119-120. See Bibliography.

the world's most aggressively expansionist military empire, the United States.”

“Such a statement would shock the American people,” George observed. “They don’t stop to think how they would feel if Russia was seeking to install military bases and political control in Canada and Mexico. They are told by the American press that Russia keeps interfering as the United States seeks to promote peace in troubled central Asia.”

“Indeed,” replied the Archbishop. “But they probably are not informed about what is really going on over here. Throughout central Asia, beginning in Afghanistan, and until recently even in Kyrgyzstan, the United States has tried to manipulate the installation of puppet rulers who will not directly oppose United States interests. Usually such rulers are bought by ‘economic aid’ that will enrich the ruler and his family and friends through corrupt business practices tied to the local government. Russians believe that the United States will typically supply arms to both sides in a potential conflict – such as both the Taliban and the ‘legitimate’ government in Afghanistan – in order to keep conflicts roiling and thereby justifying continued United States military occupation, euphemistically called ‘peace-keeping missions’, of course.”

“Americans don’t like to see their nation as an aggressor,” noted George. “They like to think of their nation as the ‘savior of the world’ spreading the blessings of peace and freedom to every corner of the globe.”

“Would that it were so,” said the Archbishop. “But I think you two understand that no nation which is not officially guided by the teachings of Christ can spread any true peace. Contemporary Russia is not guided by the Orthodox Church any more than the United States is guided by the Catholic Church. President Polzin and Prime Minister Mikhailov are actively seeking to turn back the NATO encirclement that was attempted by the United States a decade ago with engineered revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine, and then Kyrgyzstan. They believe that central Asia is a natural sphere of interest for Russia and China, and that the United States should simply mind its own business on the far shores of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.”

“Many of us Americans also believe we would be better off to follow the advice of our founding fathers, and avoid foreign entanglements as much as possible,” said George. “But big-money interests seem to have other ideas.”

“The Catholic Church suffers here in Russia, of course, because we are identified with the West. Since the great schism a thousand years ago, the Orthodox have permitted themselves to become very nationalistic, viewing the Pope as a foreign power wanting to intrude where he has no business. Before the Russian revolution, the Orthodox Church in each nation was under the control of the monarch – a practice known as ‘caesaropapism.’ In Russia nowadays, we no longer have a Tsar officially acknowledged as the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, but the President still holds *de facto* power over the Church. The Church has no external authority

to which it may appeal for justice against inappropriate governmental interference. Only in the West is there such a power, which should be above all nations: the papacy.”

“Well,” said Katarina, “since the changes which followed Vatican II, it has seemed to me that the power of the Pope has been vastly diminished, both within and outside of the Church. Sometimes I think that Our Lady of Fatima must have been foreseeing all this back in 1917 when She spoke to the little shepherd children.”

“Be careful, my daughter,” cautioned the Archbishop. “In 2000 the Vatican issued a document formally suggesting that the events of Fatima are now a thing of the past. It is the call to conversion and penance, for every Christian, which remains relevant. In today’s world we have to work through modern political channels to try to mend the schism between East and West. Russia is not going to suddenly become Roman Catholic following some ‘magical’ consecration ceremony.”

Katarina sat in silence for a moment, debating whether to risk sharing her heart and convictions with this high-ranking prelate. Remembering the glorious sunrise she had witnessed in the cathedral on Monday morning at the end of her practice session, she decided the truth must be spoken, whether in season or out of season.³¹

“George and I have a dear friend back in Detroit, named Father Nicholas Gottschalk,” she began. “His organization, known as the Fatima Herald, seeks to proclaim the full truth about Fatima.”

The Archbishop frowned, and shifted nervously in his seat. Just then the doorbell rang, signaling the delivery of dinner. A bit of a break from the intense conversation gave the preprandial cocktails just enough extra time to work. Soon the Archbishop offered thanks for the meal, and all three sat at the suite’s dining room table, ready to begin salads and then the main course.

“So,” began the Archbishop, “you have quite an interest in this Fatima business?”

“Well, when the Holy Father visited Fatima back in 2010, he said in his homily that one would be deceived if he thinks the prophetic mission of Fatima is concluded. And he emphasized that the greatest persecution of the Pope and of the Church comes not from outside the Church, but from inside, from the sins of those in the Church.”

“Most people immediately think of the sexual abuse scandals when they hear of sins in the Church,” said the Archbishop.

“But what if those scandals are only the tip of the iceberg?” asked Katarina. “What if Fatima warned, as many now believe, of a great apostasy from the Faith, beginning at the top? What if it warned of an evil council that would come after 1960? What if the warning that many nations would be annihilated has already happened figuratively: the spiritual decimation of much of former Catholic Christendom. In Europe the Faith has largely died out. In the Americas it is slowly dying. People in the Americas still

³¹ II Timothy 4:2.

believe an easy, protestantized version of Catholicism, but not the hard truths about striving to save one's soul through prayer, penance, obedience and sacrifice. They no longer believe in any real danger of going to hell. And most of them no longer believe it matters whether they are Catholic or Protestant.”

“Much of what you say is arguably true, Katarina. But I and most of my brother bishops no longer think that a dramatic public ‘consecration of Russia’ by the Pope and all the bishops is appropriate to modern circumstances. Many would be offended. The Popes have made various other consecrations, as best as they could, approximating what was requested at Fatima. And now Russia is becoming as free as the Western democracies, and has once again become officially Orthodox, so it seems to me that she has in fact converted.”

“But, Your Excellency, Russia is no more a Christian Confessional State than other secular democratic nations. Her population is fast declining because the birth rate is well below the minimum replacement rate. Not only is contraception widely used, but the majority of Russian women still have multiple abortions. There are almost no limits on the production of pornography, and homosexual groups are becoming politically organized. Finally, the Catholic Church is still persecuted by the Russian Orthodox Church, using the Russian government as its strong arm. How can you call this conversion?”

“Conversion takes time, Katarina. All I know is that, with all the other trouble facing me, I can't get involved in any controversy over Fatima. I have to stick to the Vatican party line on that.”

Katarina realized continuing a discussion about Fatima would not be fruitful in this situation. She pondered wistfully how Father Gottschalk in Detroit often spoke about the “Vatican party line,” likening it to the Communist party line that once ruled Russia. There was a certain official position, designed to support a particular political agenda, and one would be ostracized for pointing out facts which contradicted the party line. The more documentation and proof one could offer against the party line, the more severe and ruthless would be the opposition.

“In Western countries, we have seen a vast liquidation of Church property to pay off claims of those who say they were sexually abused by priests,” began the Archbishop, artfully steering the conversation away from Fatima and back to a politically acceptable topic of discussion. “The Orthodox watch all this in amazement, asking how an institution devoted to serving humanity, such as the Catholic Church, could be held accountable for the sins of a small percentage of individual priests. Those historic church properties were acquired and built through the financial sacrifices of countless innocent Church members, who intended their gifts to serve many future generations. If some members of the Church were wrongly victimized by individual priests, how does it bring justice to steal donated property generally used for the benefit of many other Church members? And anyway, how can money make whole a profound spiritual wound

such as sexual abuse?”

“Given the fact that statistics have clearly shown that the sexual abuse of minors is actually more common among Protestant clergy and public school teachers than among Catholic priests, one does get the sense of a direct attack specifically on the Catholic Church,” said George.

“People like to say that if priests could marry, they would not abuse children,” said the Archbishop.

“Available psychiatric literature and studies make clear that is absolutely false,” said George, now assuming his role as Professor of Psychiatry. “The real problem seems to be a political conspiracy among academic and media elites to refuse to openly discuss the truth: that the sexual abuse crisis in the Catholic Church is overwhelmingly a crisis of homosexuals in the priesthood. The vast majority of reported cases have involved not pedophilia but homosexual ephebophilia.”

“It’s true you don’t read about those terms in the press,” said the Archbishop. “May I ask you to elaborate on their meaning and significance?”

“Well,” said George, “pedophilia refers to an abnormal sexual attraction to pre-pubescent children. The term says nothing about the preferred gender of the victims. The prefix ‘ephebo’ refers to adolescents, again not specifying gender. In the Nineteenth Century, for instance, ‘ephebephrenia’ was a term used for schizophrenia that emerged early, during adolescence. What we actually see in the vast majority of sexual abuse cases in the Church is ‘ephebophilia’, abnormal sexual attraction to sexually mature or maturing adolescents; and almost always, it is ‘homosexual ephebophilia.’ This means that the perpetrators are a group of adult men suffering from a disorder of sexual attraction. First, it is disordered because same-sex attraction is objectively disordered, according to the Church. Second, it is disordered because it involves sexual attraction to persons who are not yet adults, or who are young adults in positions of vulnerability relative to their more powerful superiors. American law may state that after age eighteen one is an adult and can consent to sex, but morally and psychologically, adolescence often extends into the mid-twenties, so the reported cases of abuse of young seminarians are essentially the same as the cases involving abuse of junior and senior high school students.”

“Well, that is a much more precise analysis than the news media would give,” said the Archbishop. “Really the Catholic Church always taught that men suffering from same-sex attraction had an objective disorder and were not to be considered as candidates for Holy Orders. Prior to the 1950’s, ‘unmanly’ candidates or those noted to give in to ‘particular friendships’ were rooted out of seminaries.”

“It is now clear that bad science long ago bamboozled many churchmen on such matters,” said George. “For example, we now know that Kinsey’s 1949 book *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* was based on unscientific methods using criminal and deviant populations. Some of his data could not possibly have been obtained without systematic child

abuse. Margaret Mead's work on native sexual practices in Samoa was similarly unscientific, and bordered on fantasy.³² But such bad science, enabled by liberal big money, helped spark a revolution in psychological thinking about sex. In retrospect, it seems likely that many prelates felt they were being up to date and compassionate by quietly permitting some homosexuals into the priesthood."

"As years went by, many such unfit men rose to high positions in the Church, and then began to protect their own," acknowledged the Archbishop.³³ "Some conservatives in the Church have called them the 'Lavender Mafia.' In Russia we have been blessed to have nothing but manly men in the small ranks of our priests. Of course, it takes great courage to be a Catholic priest in Russia. One has to be a real man, ready to face probable persecution, so that affects the caliber of our applicants, I suppose."

"Your Excellency," said George, "I want to offer a personal psychological assessment that may seem shocking. Back in the days before Vatican II the Church was fervently missionary – it openly preached 'one true Church outside of which there is no salvation' – and only males could enter the sanctuary during the liturgy and only the consecrated hands of a priest could handle the Blessed Sacrament. In those days many manly men were attracted to the priesthood.³⁴ But now that the Faith has been dumbed down to become simply a 'nice' religion, taking care to offend no one by standing for almost nothing – except universal social work – men of a less militaristic and more effeminate bent have increasingly found a home in the priesthood."

"I cannot possibly go on record responding to such a comment. It is grossly incorrect, politically."

Suddenly Katarina's cell phone buzzed, indicating she had just received an urgent text message.

"George, Mariya is texting me. It's marked 'Urgent' ... it says 'Crisis at Presidential hunting compound in Dubna. Check Channel 5 breaking news. We are all okay, plan to be back by midnight. Love, Mariya.'"

George suggested they all move to the living room to see what the news might be. He switched on Channel Five.

"Good evening to those of you just joining us," said the Russian talking head. "Tonight at the private hunting compound near Dubna, a secure official retreat operated by the Russian Federation government, a terrorist attack took place threatening the lives of President Polzin and Prime Minister Mikhailov. Sources close to the scene report that two civilian American consultants, guests at the compound, were also targeted. The attack occurred as dignitaries were exiting the main building

³² Wiker, Benjamin, *Ten Books that Screwed Up the World; and Five Others That Didn't Help*. See Bibliography.

³³ Rose, Michael, *Goodbye, Good Men*. See Bibliography. See also Father Rueda, *The Homosexual Network*.

³⁴ McLucas, Fr. James, "The Emasculation of the Priesthood," *Latin Mass Magazine*, Spring 1998.

following a state dinner. FSB secret service agents were able to apprehend all four assailants. The most recent word is that two are dead and two are wounded but in stable condition and expected to be able to cooperate with federal authorities. The President and Prime Minister are shaken but safe. President Polzin was grazed by a bullet on his left ear, a superficial wound which is expected to heal rapidly without any complication. The government has so far declined to provide any identification of, or information about, the two American guests, except to say that they are also stunned but unharmed. However, civilian sources, who insist upon remaining anonymous, have given their names as Kathleen Houston Matches and Patrick O'Malley. Kathleen Matches is known for her radical economic ideas, seeking to restore financial power and control to the common man, from the ground up, through local neighborhood cooperation. Patrick O'Malley is generally considered to be a proponent of a return to a gold-backed currency. Why they are visiting with the leaders of the Russian nation is open to speculation, but both are connected with radical right wing gun rights groups in the United States and are said to be avid wild game hunters. Stay with us on Channel Five all evening for updates as information becomes available."

George muted the sound. The Archbishop was completing a brief text message on his phone.

"The President and Prime Minister are nearly killed while associating with American visitors, and here I am with Americans too!" quipped the Archbishop. "Do you know anything about these people?"

"We don't know them, but we have read some of their financial columns. On the internet, mind you. The mainstream press won't publish them."

"All the same, my good friends, I must take my leave. I have just called for my driver. With a national crisis unfolding, it's best if I am back at the diocesan headquarters at the cathedral. Please accept my profound thanks for your kind hospitality."

As the Archbishop arose, George and Katarina fell to their knees.

"Your Excellency," said George, "will you bless us before you go?"

The Archbishop stopped, smiled warmly, and lifted his right hand to make the sign of the cross over them, as he spoke the ancient and venerable words of blessing.

After the Archbishop had left, George and Katarina un-muted the television.

"An update on the Presidential hunting compound crisis. Authorities now reveal that Kathleen Matches, the civilian American consultant, was briefly abducted from an FSB vehicle when being transported three days ago from the Russian White House to the Moscow Hilton Leningradskaya. Her assailants, all masked, pretended they were going to torture her, but she now believes they must have scanned her fingerprints in the process, and used those bio-identifiers to break through the state-of-the-art security at the hunting compound. Kathleen Matches had been deeply concerned about the fate of the young Russian officer who drove her FSB vehicle.

Tonight President Polzin revealed that he crawled to safety, just before their SUV exploded in flames, and managed to return to FSB headquarters to make a full report. The President commended him for his professionalism and courage, and announced his immediate promotion within the FSB. Stay tuned to Channel Five News for more updates.”

As George again muted the television, the suite doorbell rang. Through the peephole George could see a uniformed hotel staff member holding a silver tray containing an envelope. He opened the door, tipped the messenger, and noted that the envelope was richly embossed with a gold image of the Cathedral of Christ Our Savior. The imprinted return address in Russian indicated it was from the office of His Excellency Filaret III, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church. Handwritten beneath the return address was “Reverend Father Rafael Popov.” In the center of the envelope was handwritten “To Professor Doctor George Peterson and Professor Doctor Katarina Fyodovsky Peterson, Moscow Hilton Leningradskaya.”

“George dear, what is it?” asked Katarina anxiously. “It looks ... ominous.”

“No, I think it will be friendly. It’s from some higher-up in the Russian Orthodox Church named Father Popov.”

They sat together on the couch, and George began to read:

Dear Professor Doctors:

My name is Father Rafael Popov. I am personal secretary to His Excellency Patriarch Filaret III of Moscow and all the Russias. He has asked me to meet with you to determine if you can assist him with a very important matter concerning the Catholic Church. I am in the bar off the hotel lobby. I will wait for one hour. Please join me if you can.

God be with you,
Father Rafael Popov

“Do you think it’s legitimate?” asked Katarina. The envelope was embossed with a gold image of the cathedral, and the note card bore a full color image of the official crest of the Metropolitan of Moscow. Someone at least had access to official stationery.

“I’ll go online and Google this guy and see if his name jives with the Cathedral staff,” said George.

After a few clicks, the name at least was verified. Another click or two and a news article from *The Moscow Times* appeared, complete with a photo of Metropolitan Filaret and his secretary, the Reverend Father Rafael Popov. A second article from *The Herald Tribune* showed the same two men in a different photo.

“Well, if we go to meet him downstairs, at least we’ll probably be able to tell if it’s really him,” said Katarina. “I feel a little nervous after hearing about the Presidential attack. And I hope our dear Mariya is safe out there at night in this huge metropolis.”

“Katarina,” said George, “you’re the one who taught me about trusting God, back when I was a dull agnostic shrink and you swept me off my feet with the spirituality of your music and your soul.”

“Why thank you, sweetheart,” she blushed. “Okay, let’s trust God and head downstairs.”

As George and Katarina stepped off the elevator, a long-haired, long-bearded figure dressed in a black cassock, with a prominent cross on a chain about his neck, arose from a distant chair, smiled at them, and moved across the lobby to greet them. He was about five and a half feet tall, with dark brown hair and brown eyes. His face was round, and neither handsome nor homely. He was perhaps ten pounds too heavy, and his teeth were noticeably irregular. But his smile was warm and genuine, as he looked up at his tall American new friends.

“Good evening, Professor Doctors. I am Father Popov. Thank you so much for respecting my invitation. The hotel has arranged for us to have drinks together in a little private room off the lobby bar. Please come with me.”

Soon they were seated at a small table, in comfortable upholstered chairs, beside a crackling fireplace. After a toast with shots of top-shelf vodka, Father Popov ordered a round of Russian Sunrise drinks. In Moscow these orange juice cocktails didn’t seem to be just for breakfast.

“Let me get right to the point, friends. I have come as an emissary from Filaret, the Orthodox Metropolitan Archbishop of Moscow. He would like to consult with you in private about the 1917 apparitions at Fatima. He is becoming convinced that these may hold the key to the salvation of our beloved Russian homeland. But of course most of the Orthodox world would be arrayed against him. He needs to find a trustworthy pair of messengers to go in secret to the Holy Father in Rome and beg in his name for the consecration of Russia. He cannot write or call the Pope or it would be intercepted both here and in Rome. Filaret had been wavering about this for several months, but tonight he had a call from President Polzin, after the attack at the hunting compound. The President feels it was a warning from Heaven regarding how much fury from hell will be unleashed if he attempts to launch a program of true social justice based on Christ’s teachings.”

George and Katarina sat silent for a moment, dumbfounded.

“But who are we, to be asked to undertake such an important mission?”

“You are a daughter of Russia, Katarina. And our research indicates you are of royal descent, so you are called to serve the people.”

“What!?”

“Your parents were fearful because of the Soviet programs to hunt down and eliminate those with past claims to royal positions in Russia. You were probably not informed, as a way of protecting you. But we have traced you back through three generations, on both sides, to a Grand Duke and Duchess.”

“I always said you were a lot like the fussy little girl in ‘The Princess and the Pea’, didn’t I?” George laughed.

Father Popov smiled knowingly, while Katarina scowled.

“You are not exactly of common descent either, George.”

“But I’m not really Russian. My grandparents came from Ukraine.”

“True, but in the days of your great grandparents Ukraine was part of the Russian empire. It was a situation just like your wife’s – relatives hiding your royal heritage to protect you from the anti-Christian Communist terrorists. Your great grandparents were also a Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of the Russian empire.”

Father Popov opened his briefcase, and handed them three reports, printed on official government stationery, and bearing the official seal of the Genealogical Institute of the Russian Federation: one for George, one for Katarina, and one for Mariya.

“But why is this even relevant?” persisted George.

“Because you are friends of Father Nicholas Gottschalk in Detroit.”

“You know about him? In Russia?”

“Of course. He is without doubt the world’s best-known Fatima advocate. Metropolitan Filaret would like to meet with you in a day or two. He will clear his schedule to accommodate you.”

“We would be profoundly honored,” said George.

“Indeed we would,” seconded Katarina. “Tomorrow noon I have to give an organ recital for the music festival, but after about two o’clock I could be free.”

“Thank you! Thank you so much!” said Father Popov. “We will send a driver to pick you up at the Catholic cathedral, tomorrow afternoon at two o’clock. You will meet with the Archbishop at half past two o’clock, and he will block out the rest of the afternoon for you. This matter is now his highest priority.”

Father Popov signaled the waiter for another round of vodka, and a parting toast was proposed.

“To Holy Mother Russia, Protectorate of Mary,” said George. “May she enjoy the special blessing of Our Lady of Fatima.”

Father Popov did not hesitate to drink to that toast.

“Under no previous Metropolitan of Moscow would any Orthodox priest – much less the Metropolitan’s personal secretary - have dared to drink to such a toast,” asserted Father Popov. “But times are changing. The whole world is facing potential disaster, and, short of divine intervention, the Metropolitan can see no hope, either for Russia or for the world.”

Father Popov bid goodnight to his American guests, signed the bill, and disappeared out the front door of the hotel into a waiting black sedan.

Back in their room, George and Katarina laughed in joyous wonder at what had transpired. Apparently they were going to be asked to help fulfill what Father Gottschalk had been working for his entire career: the consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. If done according to Our Lady’s specific request, the consecration would bring the conversion of Russia, and a certain period of peace to the world. Moreover, they had been informed of their personal royal heritage, by a

source most probably unimpeachable. Based on what Father Popov had told them, their daughter Mariya was in fact a real Russian princess of full royal blood.

“What do you suppose Mariya will say when we tell her?” asked Katarina.

“She’ll say, ‘SHUT . . . UP!’ – just like the young girl in *The Princess Diaries* movie,” laughed George.

As it happened, Mariya arrived home to their hotel suite at ten o’clock that evening. She was upbeat about the students’ outing. They had visited two museums, and she had especially enjoyed the Kremlin Armory, where they had viewed the Romanov royal jewels: crown, scepter, and orb.

“Just imagine the elegance and excitement of real royalty,” she said. “We Americans never get to meet anyone royal.”

“I’m afraid that changed this evening, my dear,” smiled George. “What if we told you that the Russian Orthodox Metropolitan of Moscow informed us tonight that we are both full European royalty. Our parents and grandparents kept it a secret from us. The Metropolitan’s personal secretary met with us this very evening, in the hotel bar, to disclose this to us.”

“Dad, shut up!” she chuckled, playfully. “That’s really a ridiculous story! Whatever did you two have to drink down there?”

“No, it’s true, Mariya,” smiled Katarina, showing Mariya the three official reports. “I know it sounds like a silly prank, but you are actually a full Russian princess of royal blood. So if you ever married a royal prince, your children could inherit a throne.”

“I’ve never imagined marrying anyone except maybe Mark. Nobody back home even cares about royalty. I’m going to go call Mark right now and prove it!”

She shut her bedroom door behind her, but in less than a minute she opened the door and emerged, holding a tiny white rounded stone and scowling at her father. George admitted that he had placed the pea-sized stone in her bed as a test of her true royalty: only a real princess would complain about such a tiny annoyance. Scowling, she shut her bedroom door and called her best friend back in the states, where it was the lunch hour. Mark laughed, saying he had been right all along in thinking she seemed like a princess, but that it wouldn’t change anything between them. He’d still love her just the same. As she drifted off to sleep, Mariya felt just slightly unnerved. She hoped Mark was right. In America, being a princess was a completely private matter. It didn’t have to change anything at all.

The next day Katarina once again arose very early, to practice on the great Kuhn pipe organ at the Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception before morning Masses would begin. Then at noon, she played a glorious recital for the *Soli Deo Gratia* organ festival. Standing ovations brought forth two encores. She and George had no time to collect their

thoughts before the car arrived to take them to meet Metropolitan Filaret at the Orthodox Cathedral of Christ the Savior. From the underground garage at the new Cathedral complex, a private elevator took them directly to the offices of the Metropolitan. When the elevator doors opened, they were greeted immediately by a tall man of perhaps sixty-five years, attired in a black Russian Orthodox cassock, a golden pectoral cross, and on his head a white patriarch's mitre. He smiled warmly, and his extended arms signaled peace and welcome.

"Welcome, Professor Doctors Peterson and Fyodovsky! Welcome, American Catholic friends! I am Filaret, Metropolitan Archbishop of Moscow."

"Your Excellency, we are honored by your welcome."

"I know that as Catholics, religious protocol forbids you to bow and ask my blessing, or to kiss my hand."

"May the day come when all that changes, when there is no longer any separation between our Churches," said Katarina graciously.

Metropolitan Filaret was a handsome man with blue eyes, a symmetrical face, and a noble brow. His hairline was obscured by his bishop's hat, but his dark hair flowed from the sides and joined his full, waist-length beard. His shoulders were broad and it was evident even through his robes that he was a muscular man still well-proportioned for his age. He stood just shy of six feet tall, and his bass voice was musical.

"Please, come into my office and be seated," said Filaret. "One of my assistants will bring us refreshments. Normally I would ring for Father Popov to join us, but unfortunately he is in the hospital today."

"But ... we just saw him last evening, and he appeared to be fine," said George.

"Yes, but apparently certain men in high places were displeased that he met with you. His car was run off the road shortly after he left your hotel, and he was beaten quite severely and left alongside the road, half naked, stripped of his religious icons, and with his priestly beard cut short."

"But why?" said Katarina. "He didn't do anything wrong."

"No, not from Heaven's perspective," said the Metropolitan. "But you must understand that the same dark forces that attacked the President and Prime Minister at the hunting compound last night would be enraged if there were any steps taken toward reconciliation between the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches."

"Perhaps they think the Church is much weaker as long as it remains divided?" asked George. "Less able to challenge their hegemony through the money power?"

"Exactly. Now, I realize you two must have been surprised at this invitation, and we are meeting on very short notice precisely because I believe time is very short."

"You have called us here because of your interest in the message of Fatima?" asked Katarina.

"Yes, that's it. But first, let me lay out some background. I became

Metropolitan of Moscow and All Russia three years ago. My public opposition to any doctrinal or liturgical changes in the Russian Orthodox Church won me the confidence of my brethren who elected me to the Russian Patriarchal throne. President Polzin and Prime Minister Mikhailov attended my enthronement ceremony during a Mass at this very Cathedral. The next day they hosted a banquet for all the Russian Orthodox bishops, in my honor, in the Grand Kremlin Palace. I spoke to Polzin and Mikhailov about my belief that the relations between the Church and the government should be like a symphony, making harmony for the joy and good of the people. Polzin said he agreed, but Mikhailov said it is no longer appropriate. But we compromised by saying it is more difficult in a modern democracy than was the case under a Christian monarch.”

“You are well respected by the Russian people, according to the news media,” noted George. “What is your current opinion about the Catholic Church?”

“In a world which has turned its back on God and His Christ, there is absolutely no excuse for the only two truly orthodox branches of Christianity to remain separated. While the world rushes headlong into hell, we continue to fight over contrived doctrinal differences that have no substance and only serve to justify our separation.”

“Would they still elect you if they heard that?” asked Katarina.

“I daresay they would not!” laughed Filaret. “But I believe there is a certain grace which comes with the office of a bishop, perhaps more so an Archbishop, and so it becomes possible to see things from a more eternal perspective. You understand that our Holy Orders are valid in the eyes of the Catholic Church, even though we are considered illicit. So our sacraments are valid, and in an emergency when no Catholic priest can be found, a Catholic may avail himself of our sacraments. And, if we are abroad and have no access to an Orthodox priest, we may receive Holy Communion in a Catholic Church providing we have been to confession. That is the teaching of our two Churches. And that is why you may believe there is real grace attached to my office.”

“I remember reading that you were publicly interested in ecumenical dialog with the Catholic Church. But when you were confronted by the Orthodox bishops, you seemingly recanted that interest and made clear there could be no doctrinal compromise with the Catholic Church. Was that just politics, Your Eminence?”

“Well, I could say ‘Yes,’ but that was what your Thomistic theologians would call a ‘mental reservation.’ I knew it was likely to be interpreted as meaning that the Orthodox Church would never change its interpretation of those few issues where doctrinal differences with the Catholic Church have been alleged.

“You know the arguments: you say the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son; we say we do not know about the procession from the Son. You say the Holy Mother of God was Immaculate from the moment of Her conception; we say that we do not know, but that She is

now All-Holy and All-Immaculate. You say that the Bishop of Rome has monarchical authority over all other bishops; we say that the occupant of Peter's throne is the first among equals, but that it is a collegial relationship between bishops.

"But what I really meant was that the Orthodox interpretations are the compromises, and that they have existed for a thousand years due to politics and not due to theology. I have some very revered companions in that stance: Saint John Chrysostom, whose liturgy we still celebrate; Patriarch Filaret I of Moscow, father of the Romanov dynasty; and our most respected modern Orthodox theologian, Vladimir Soloviev, who died a Roman Catholic while still considering himself to be truly Orthodox. He said it plainly: all these great men said it plainly: to be truly Orthodox is to be in union with the Vicar of Christ in Rome who occupies the Chair of Saint Peter."

"Wow! That's not what we expected to hear from you today!" exclaimed Katarina.

"Well, if you study history, it becomes plain that the Eastern Church has long been poisoned by nationalism and caesaropapism. In the early centuries the Byzantine emperors repeatedly sided with proponents of heresy and persecuted those who stood for true orthodoxy. Eventually, each emerging nation wanted to have its own national church, subject to the power of the monarch or emperor. A habit of suspicion developed toward the 'foreign power' in Rome. For a long time the Patriarch of Constantinople considered his city to be a 'second Rome.' After that See fell to the Turkish Muslims, Moscow began to call itself the 'third Rome.' The Romanov dynasty was founded by a Bishop, Filaret I of Moscow, who fathered the first Romanov Tsar. Unlike the West, where even kings were subject to the independent and superior authority of the Vicar of Christ, in the East, the church was subject to the monarch. I believe it was the very lack of an external religious authority that rendered Russia so vulnerable to the anti-Christian Bolshevik revolution."

"So you think all Christians should be subject to the Pope in Rome?" asked George.

"Well, it is obvious that that is exactly how Christ established His Church," said Filaret. "But national and denominational politics have made such a discussion impossible."

"Do you think that is changing?" asked George.

"Oh, absolutely. Look at the Church of England and its foreign branch, the Episcopal Church. After the Pope issued that masterstroke document allowing them to come back into union with Rome while retaining their own liturgy and customs, almost half their church members have become Anglican Use Catholics. The ones who had kept the traditional Anglican doctrines hardly had to change at all. As far as the modernists who wanted to change everything Christ taught – they wanted female and homosexual priests, easy divorce, contraception, and denial of the real presence of Christ in the consecrated bread and wine – well, the true Church is better off

if such rebellious people are formally outside, where they will not be able to mislead those inside. And just last year England was forced to repeal the law which forbade their monarch to be or to marry a Roman Catholic. With the English Queen now ninety, and her eldest son having abdicated in favor of his very popular son James, a crisis arose when James and his wife elected to become Anglican Use Catholics. The Archbishop of Canterbury resigned in protest, but the Queen said that you can no longer outlaw one religion while saying any other religion would be acceptable. So now it is expected that the next King of England will be Catholic. Imagine that!"

"So the Anglican Use option really has your interest, does it?" asked George.

"Oh, yes. It shows us what can potentially happen for true Orthodox believers, who are motivated by spiritual concerns and are not captives of mere human politics."

"But are there any others in the Orthodox world who could talk like this?" asked George.

"There are a few. There are many more who are afraid to think this way, but who could quickly come to see it if they were set free from fear."

"Do you think Russia will convert, like part of the Anglican Church did?" asked George.

"Not by human means. Think about it. England hasn't converted either, just some of her people. Mainstream British culture remains as decadent as ever, like all modern democracies. Like Russia. No, for a whole nation to convert, there would have to be a miraculous intervention by Heaven. And that brings us to the issue of Fatima, and my reason for inviting you here tonight."

"What has been the mainstream Orthodox opinion about Fatima?" asked George. "I would assume it would be negative."

"Yes, quite so.³⁵ As soon as a Russian Orthodox believer hears about a prophecy, supposedly from the Mother of God, that Russia will one day convert – he says that is an insult, and obviously this cannot be from Heaven. After all, he says, it is the Catholics who need to convert to the one true Orthodox Faith preserved only in the East since the schism."

"Isn't that a bit illogical, since the Pope is Catholic and in the West, and the Orthodox have no Pope, no continuity with Peter?" asked George.

"Well, of course, it's illogical. Jesus founded the Church on Peter the rock, and the Bible screams at us that Peter was appointed by Jesus to be the ultimate authority in the Church; but over the past millennium the Orthodox have grown accustomed to thinking that each national Church can be run by its own bishop and not have to be subject to any external authority. But in another way, Catholics also need to convert. They have lost their evangelical fervor, and no longer dare claim to be the one true Church founded by Christ, outside of which there is no salvation. We Orthodox have looked on in horror while you Catholics threw out

³⁵ See Catherine Pearson's article, "Now Is the Time: Consecrating Russia Will Help, Not Harm, Catholic-Orthodox Dialogue", *The Fatima Crusader*, Issue 91, February 2009.

the Mass of the ages and substituted a modern, fabricated liturgy that seems designed to hide as much distinctly Catholic doctrine as possible. The new Mass seems to reflect the idea that if you stand for very little doctrinally, then you will offend very few people. But as soon as you make religion inoffensive, you also make it irrelevant. Our Lord offended many people by speaking the hard truths. He said He came not to bring peace but a sword, to divide people and families. Because in the end, the only thing worth fighting for is religion, that is, truth. Nothing else matters, ultimately.

“The modernist revolution in the Catholic Church after Vatican II has been repulsive to us Orthodox, for we have kept our ancient traditions. The fruits of your new Mass have been a massive decline in religious practice in the West, a widespread loss of belief in the real presence of Christ in the Holy Mysteries – what you call the Eucharist – and a growing laxity about morals, and loss of any real fear of losing one’s soul and going to hell for all eternity. We Orthodox have kept our ancient liturgy, and our ancient liturgical languages; but the practice of the Faith has also largely declined among us, and moral decadence is rampant in the East just as in the West. Because, I now believe, as goes the ‘Barque of Peter,’³⁶ the Roman Catholic Church, so goes the whole world. And the truth is that *both* East and West need to convert back to taking very seriously ‘the Faith once delivered to the saints.’”

“What you are saying is remarkable. So what is your understanding about Fatima, Your Excellency?” asked Katarina.

“Well, back in 2010 some groups of tradition-oriented Catholics offered to the Pope a spiritual bouquet of more than nineteen million Rosaries which had been offered for the intention of the Pope consecrating Russia as requested by Our Lady of Fatima. And they have added at least twelve million Rosaries every year since. Now we Orthodox have no tradition of the Rosary, but it is a prayer very much in the spirit of our deep devotion to the Mother of God. So far we do not see much evidence of how those millions of Rosaries may have impacted the Holy Father. But, I believe, they have impacted me, and my spiritual son, President Vasily Polzin, in a most profound manner. We have each experienced a kind of spiritual awakening – a vision in our souls, if you will – of what could be, and what must be, in order to save Russia and the world from self-destruction. And so Vasily and I have been moved to intensively study the whole story of Fatima, and here is what we have learned:

“Back in 1917, three illiterate young shepherd children in rural Portugal experienced a series of visitations by the Mother of God, on the thirteenth day of several consecutive months beginning in May. A distinct message from Heaven was infused into their souls, concerning future events in the Church and a call to penance and conversion of heart. The authenticity of the apparitions was conclusively proven by a so-called “miracle of the

³⁶ An ancient symbol for the Church, inspired by Luke 8:22-25, but also by the ‘Dream of the Two Columns’ reported by Saint Don Bosco.

sun,” which was witnessed by more than seventy thousand people, and was widely reported even by agnostic journalists who were present. It was the most public miracle in history.

“In the First Secret, the young shepherd children were shown a vision of hell, and told that in order to save souls, God wanted to spread in the world devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary’s Immaculate Heart.

“In the Second Secret, they were told that God wanted to bring great peace to the world by means of the consecration of Russia to Her Immaculate Heart, and through the practice of the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturday of each month. Our Lady said that She would return one day to ask for the consecration of Russia by the Holy Father and all the bishops of the world. She warned that, otherwise, Russia would continue to spread her errors throughout the world, causing many souls to be lost.

“There was also a Third Secret, which was not permitted to be revealed until much later. Two of the children, Jacinta and Francisco, died young; but the third, Lucy, became well educated, spent her life as a nun, and eventually wrote down the details of a vision they were given, and on a separate piece of paper the actual words of the Mother of God, explaining the vision. These two writings became known as the Third Secret, and Sister Lucy wrote on the two envelopes in which they were sealed that Our Lady had told her the secret was to be released in 1960, because then it would be more clear.

“On June 13, 1929, Mary appeared again to Sister Lucy, as She had promised, in her convent in Tuy, Spain, and announced that the time had come for the Holy Father, in union with all the bishops in the world, to consecrate Russia to Her Immaculate Heart. But the consecration was not done. Various Popes invented excuses why they could not comply with Heaven’s request. Consecrations by the pope alone, without all the bishops, or consecrations of the world not mentioning Russia specifically by name, were tried.

“In 1931, in Rianjo, Jesus complained to Sister Lucy that His ministers were delaying in carrying out His Mother’s request. He warned that, just as the Kings of France had delayed for a hundred years in carrying out His 1689 command that France be consecrated to His Sacred Heart, and so fell into misfortune exactly one hundred years later, in the French Revolution of 1789; so the Popes would suffer misfortune if they continued to delay carrying out the consecration of Russia requested by His Mother at Fatima in 1917 and again in 1929 at Tuy. One can speculate that Heaven’s hundred-year deadline for the consecration of Russia would thus be 2017, only two years from now; or, if based on the 1929 request, then at the latest the deadline would seem to be 2029, just fourteen years from now.

“The Third Secret was written down on two separate papers, after Sister Lucy’s bishop became concerned that she might die before it was revealed. She agreed to do so under obedience to her bishop, but then faced a tremendous spiritual battle for months before she was able to commit the Secret to handwriting. One of the handwritten papers described a vision of a bishop dressed in white, and this was released by

the Vatican back in 2000. But the actual words of the Blessed Virgin Mary, explaining the vision, were written on a separate paper, and there has been great controversy as powerful Vatican officials have sought to suppress and deny the existence of this text.

“Yet various others, who have read it, though sworn to secrecy, have each revealed a little bit. When we compile all the small hints given out over the decades, we can gather the following: the still-hidden words of Our Lady of Fatima,³⁷ written down by Sister Lucy, must indicate that after 1960 there would be a great apostasy in the Church, beginning at the top. Numerous clergy would fall away from their vocations, and drag many souls with them into hell. Various nations would be annihilated. Finally, the Secret apparently warned about the suicide of altering the Faith in the liturgy.

“So, we can conclude that we have most likely been living through the evil times that were predicted: denial of many timeless Catholic teachings, rampant sexual abuse scandals involving the clergy, massive loss of the Faith throughout most of former Christendom, and a modernized Mass (which was forced on all the faithful, rather than being offered as a new option). Religious orders were decimated, and religious indifferentism became widespread as the Church lost her fervor to evangelize and seek converts. ‘The errors of Russia’ probably refers in general to things typical of Communist and other post-Christian modern societies: official atheism or agnosticism; the replacement of Christian monarchs with secular humanist governments; the denial of the supernatural and the elevation of tentative scientific theories to the sacrosanct dogmas of a new secular religion; and the assertion of the rights of man at the expense of the rights of God.”

“Do you believe that the Vatican is still hiding the actual words of Our Lady, written down by Sister Lucy?” asked George.

“Yes. It’s the only explanation that makes sense to anyone who studies all the facts. And the motivation for keeping Her words hidden is obvious: they condemn the modernist revolution that decimated the Catholic Church following Vatican II.”

“That is the same conclusion promoted by our friend in Detroit, Father Nicholas Gottschalk,” noted George. “Which is why he has been persecuted for decades by powerful men in the Church hierarchy.”

“Truth is seldom welcome in this world,” noted Filaret. “Only those who undergo a conversion of heart can comfortably face the truth.”

“What would it actually mean, in practical terms, for Russia to be ‘converted’?” asked Katarina. “Converted in such a way that the whole world would *know* that it was a triumph of Mary’s Immaculate Heart.”

“It would have to mean sudden massive conversions of the vast majority of Russians, to embrace the Faith both in belief and in practice, and in union with the Pope. I believe the Orthodox would remain Orthodox, like the converted Anglicans, but they would become an ‘Orthodox Use Rite’ within the Catholic Church and would formally submit to the authority

³⁷ Ferrara, Christopher, *The Secret Still Hidden*. See Bibliography.

of the Pope. But a nation which has become devoutly Christian by overwhelming majority is going to demand a truly Christian government, and is going to demand that its laws be consistent with the teachings of Christ. This would require a total re-design of the economy, the money system, education, employment and wealth distribution, and form of government. Defense of human life from conception to natural death, and protection of the traditional family, would also be essential. Christian monarchy is the best form of government for a people who are truly Christian, as it acknowledges that Christ, not ‘the people’, is the Lawgiver. I believe a converted Russia would move rapidly to restore her Christian monarchy. And I believe that in time her prosperity, social justice, and true freedom would make her a shining city set on a hill, which other nations would then seek to emulate. Her conversion would gradually beget the conversion of other nations, until the whole world would begin to enjoy an unprecedented period of peace. The peace of Christ in the reign of Christ, with the whole world knowing that it was brought about through the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. That is the promise of Fatima as Vasily and I have come to understand it. And I believe we may live to see at least the beginning stages of its fulfillment.”

“Wow! That’s an exciting vision, Your Excellency. Let’s do it!” said George.

“Ah, but that’s the problem. It is not up to us. It is up to the Holy Father in Rome. Even when he finds out – through you two – that the Russian Orthodox Patriarch is pleading with him to do the consecration, he will continue to face enormous opposition within Vatican circles of power. The devil is not stupid; and we are no match for him. There is a reason why, ever since Mary returned to Sister Lucy in 1929, the popes have not been able to perform the consecration exactly as She requested. The devil knows all too well what will happen when the consecration takes place as requested, and all hell is bent on preventing it. The Holy Father will have to ‘wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual wickedness in high places.’³⁸ If you two agree to undertake my mission, you must understand that you also will be declaring war on hell itself.”

“Yes, Father Gottschalk has taught us well, and we understand exactly what you mean. Of course we will do what we can,” said Katarina, as George nodded agreement.

Filaret fumbled in his bookcase for a moment, and disclosed a wall safe hidden behind a panel of false books. He opened it and withdrew a small envelope, labeled simply “Nicholas.”

“Here is a document I have drafted for the Pope. It was done in secret consultation with President Polzin, who shares my views. We agreed on the wording just this morning, the day after the attempt on the President’s life up in Dubna. That disturbing event seems to have given us both a heightened sense of urgency. Prime Minister Mikhailov will have nothing to do with it, and may even prove to be somewhat of an adversary. We

³⁸ Ephesians 6:12.

anticipate that men in the Vatican opposed to the consecration will identify him as an ally within the Kremlin.”

“But the President and the Prime Minister are good friends, are they not?” asked George.

“Humanly speaking, yes. But remember that nothing divides men like the true religion. It’s the one thing that really matters, the one thing concerning which there can be no negotiation and no compromise.”

George and Katarina began to examine the document. They removed an inner envelope, on which was printed the following:

Date: Wednesday, May 13, 2015
To: His Holiness Pope Nicholas VI, Vatican City
From: Filaret III, Patriarch of Moscow & All Russia &
Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church
Vasily Alexandrovich Polzin, President of the
Russian Federation
Status: Eyes Only: Absolutely confidential
Timing: Extremely urgent
Topic: The Consecration of Russia to the Immaculate
Heart of Mary

Inside the inner envelope was a two-page computer-printed letter, bearing original signatures of Patriarch Filaret and President Polzin:

Your Holiness:

Please accept this private communication, which we are delivering through trusted private hands directly to you personally. We know there are numerous powerful forces surrounding us and surrounding you, who would stop at nothing to prevent the fulfillment of this communication.

We have been moved by Heaven’s grace to understand and believe the message of Our Lady of Fatima, who requested through Sister Lucy in 1917, and specifically in 1929, that the Holy Father consecrate Russia to Her Immaculate Heart in a ceremony to be performed in union with all the Catholic bishops of the world. She promised that, when that is done, Russia will convert, and a period of peace will be granted to the world. For various reasons – not least being a desire to avoid offending the Russian Orthodox Church – the popes since 1929 have seen fit to delay fulfilling this specific request. As a result, Russia has not converted, and the errors of Russia continue to spread throughout the world. These errors include practical atheism, secular government, dishonest monetary and military policies (the end justifies the means), oppressive government regulation and taxes, social

engineering (survival of the fittest), attacks on Christian family life (contraception, abortion, euthanasia, easy divorce, legalized homosexuality and pre-marital cohabitation, secular government-controlled education, plunging real wages pushing many women into the workplace and children into daycare), and the enforced toleration of all religious traditions except orthodox Christianity, the only religion which is true.

The world is engaged in a great spiritual battle, and human efforts to reunite the Christian Churches through politics and dialog have not been fruitful. If anything, Catholic attempts at dialog have tended to compromise the one true Faith, until those outside the Church see even less reason to think about converting.

Heaven has given the means and the instructions for saving the world by first saving Russia. Jesus warned Sister Lucy in 1931 that, if His ministers (the Popes) should continue to delay in fulfilling Heaven's request for the consecration of Russia, then they will suffer misfortune like the Kings of France, who delayed for one hundred years in consecrating France to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. We are now just two years away from the centennial of the apparition of Our Lady of Fatima, and just fourteen years away from the centennial of her 1929 request for the consecration of Russia to be performed.

Holy Father, we implore you, for the sake of Your Self, the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church, and all humanity: please do not delay any longer! Please consecrate Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, in a public ceremony in union with all the Catholic bishops of the world. Please do so as soon as possible.

You may say the bishops will not obey you. Some, perhaps a good number, will no doubt refuse. This is Heaven's call for you to sit gloriously upon the Throne of Peter and to show forth the power of the Keys of the Kingdom, given to you alone by Christ: those Catholic bishops who refuse to obey you in performing the consecration will, by virtue of that disobedience, excommunicate themselves. You must so decree. Otherwise you cannot hope to fulfill Heaven's specific request.

We Orthodox bishops are powerless against the world, because we lack the leadership of the Vicar of Christ and we do not hold the Keys of the Kingdom. You are Peter. Just as the Blessed Apostle denied Christ three times, but then served Him faithfully even unto death, so you may have denied the relevance of the Third Secret of Fatima message in your youth and middle age. But now, in the fullness of your days, you will, please God, cooperate with Heaven's request, ignoring human criticism, and do the consecration to save the world by first saving Russia.

You may think that to perform such a consecration of Russia will offend the Russians. Holy Mother Russia was the first great Christian empire to fall under the darkness of atheistic Communism. Russia spent seventy years exporting her Communistic errors to all nations in the world: secular government (rejecting the kingship of Christ and the derivative blessings of Christian monarchy), freedom of religion (which in practice equates with atheism), bureaucratization (in place of subsidiary and local rule), scientism (first evolution and now global climate change as pseudo-scientific dogmas, broad genetic engineering through contraception, abortion, and euthanasia), acceptance of dishonest money (gold standard replaced by fiat currencies, designed to rob the common people through endless inflation) and usury (debt-based banking systems that must keep endlessly inflating to cover the infinite interest owed to the central banks), and ruthless nationalism (“survival of the fittest” as the true state religion.)

As a result of such evils, the Twentieth Century brought the most horrible sufferings which mankind has ever imposed upon itself, and the early Twenty-first Century has been marred by continuing senseless wars and a severe Global Financial Crisis threatening world peace and stability.

Through the message of Fatima, Heaven has offered to Russia a unique blessing: the opportunity to become the first modern nation to be restored to Christianity, to become once again a Christian Confessional State, and to lead the world, by example, back from the abyss of demonic disorientation and toward the glory of a restored Christendom and consequent world peace. How could any true Russian patriot, apprised of the facts, ever take offense at this?

For a short time the consecration of Russia might incur the wrath of mid-level Orthodox prelates, precisely those who do not understand the facts. But Filaret – the spiritual head of the Russian Orthodox Church which comprises ninety-five percent of the world’s Orthodox believers – will be with you. Filaret, assisted in prayer by President Polzin, will be joining with you in the act of consecration.

But we must do so in private, out of practical necessity. At the present time, the majority of men in high positions of power in the Russian state would believe it to be their patriotic duty to seek our immediate deaths if they read the contents of this letter. Once the miracle of Russia’s true national conversion unfolds, the wrath of the Orthodox will be turned into rejoicing.

As the Psalmist noted: “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.” [Psalm 30:5]

Please communicate through our trusted private messengers,

at your earliest convenience, what are your thoughts and intentions on this matter. Meanwhile, please know that we are fervently praying for you, and would ask that you also pray for us.

Yours in Christ Jesus Our Lord,

(original signature)
Patriarch Filaret III of Moscow

(original signature)
President Vasily Alexandrovich Polzin

“What do you think?” asked Filaret eagerly. “Can you take it to Rome for me and present it to the Holy Father?”

“We have no connections there,” said George. “The Holy Father doesn’t know us.”

“But I *do* have connections in Rome. As you know, the Moscow charitable foundation De Boni Arte sponsors young musicians, such as in the *Soli Deo Gloria* organ festival this week. The Holy Father is himself a talented musician, who could have been a concert pianist and composer except for his vocation to the priesthood. For his birthday, coming up in ten days, we are arranging for a contingent of young pianists from Russia to go to the Vatican to play and sing for Pope Nicholas. The Holy Father will reciprocate by playing, for the students, one of his favorite Russian works for piano.

“Your daughter Mariya will be one of the students, performing on piano. Her instructors at the festival are informing her today. And you, Professor Doctors Peterson and Fyodovsky, will go as the faculty chaperones for the group, and so naturally you will meet the Holy Father. Because you are a world-famous musician, Professor Fyodovsky, the Holy Father will grant you and your husband an informal private audience after the birthday concert.

“I have arranged this through my good friend, Father John Herald, an independent Catholic priest who reports directly to the Holy Father. He is based part time in America, I believe, where he tries to teach the true Catholic Faith, contrary to all the modernist ideas. In the past he was spiritual director to some famous saints in the making, including Mother Teresa of Calcutta and Padre Pio. Currently – but this is confidential, mind you – he is spiritual advisor to James, Prince of Wales, who is now an Anglican Use Catholic and the next King of England.”

“Yes, we know Father Herald,” said George. “He is often in residence at the Cova, our Catholic parish in Detroit.”

“How small the world seems to become, when one begins working with Heaven against the powers of hell,” commented Filaret.

“What will we tell the Holy Father when we meet him?” asked Katarina.

“He will want to talk with you about classical music, which is his

personal hobby and the means by which he finds a bit of much-needed relaxation. But you will present him with this document, and explain that I have personally asked you to deliver it directly into his hands. He will comprehend at once why the usual diplomatic channels could not be trusted.”

“Will he read it while we are present?”

“He may. Or he may place it in his pocket, and read it later. If he does, be sure to mention that you are from the same parish in Detroit as Father John Herald, and then the Holy Father will know how to find you discreetly if he needs you to serve as return messengers to me.”

“We are amazed to see history in the making today. May we have your permission to inform Father Gottschalk in private and in strict confidence about this development? So he can be praying for you and the Holy Father?”

“No, considering the attacks last night on our President, Prime Minister, and Father Popov, I think it best that we trust no one just yet. Father Gottschalk will be rewarded abundantly by Heaven for all he has done. His apostolate has provided most of the educational materials about Fatima upon which President Polzin and I have relied. Someday, I can speculate, he will be decorated as a hero of Russia.”

“Do you want us to take your letter tonight?” asked George.

“No, you will be going back to America, and then you will return here to Moscow to meet up with the music students for their flight to Rome on the Pope’s birthday. I will give you the letter at that time. Otherwise, the dark forces may seek to steal it from you.”

Filaret again signaled for his young assistant, who brought in another round of vodka for a parting toast. Knowing now that Filaret was already a spiritual Catholic, yet still solidly Orthodox, they knelt and received his blessing. As they rode back to their hotel in the Metropolitan’s car, Moscow seemed to them a different city.

Despite the sinister events of the previous day, it seemed to George and Katarina that they were now seeing into the future, seeing Moscow as still Orthodox and yet now the first bastion of Tradition to be reerected, the first fortress outpost of Christendom reborn. The light on the buildings seemed brighter and more intense, and the blue of the sky seemed like Our Lady’s protective mantle.

Chapter Five

Wednesday, May 13, 2015.

Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Doctor Mike, as Mikhail Romanov was known, was feeling the pressure of a busy Internal Medicine office at four-thirty in the afternoon. The clinic was scheduled to close at five o'clock, but there were still three patients waiting to be seen. Nazareth, Michigan might be a sleepy little town, but it was just on the edge of the Kalamazoo metropolitan area; and the Romanov Clinic was just up the road from Borgess Medical Center, a regional trauma center and a teaching hospital for Michigan State University. Luke and Monica, his medical students, were beginning to learn that, in the trenches, practicing medicine was often far from glamorous. It was work. On many days, Doctor Mike would not care if he did not leave work until seven o'clock in the evening. But today was different: he planned on attending a special concert at Miller Auditorium on the campus of Western Michigan University. A young woman from Detroit would be performing a piano and organ recital, the repeat of a performance for which she had won an award in Moscow, Russia, just a few days earlier. Father Kiril, the doctor's brother who was pastor of the Cova in Detroit, had recommended to Mikhail that he attend. The young woman was a Cova parishioner; and her mother, Katarina Fyodovsky, was a world-famous organist and Chair of the Organ Department at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

Doctor Mike finally managed to arrive at the auditorium just ten minutes before the program. On the stage was a Steinway concert grand piano, and the auditorium's unique movable pipe organ, housed in four huge cabinets on rollers and connected by cables to the three-manual drawknob-style console. Bouquets of flowers provided a feminine touch to the setting. At exactly eight o'clock, a disembodied bass voice began to emanate from the auditorium sound system.

"Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to Miller Auditorium. Tonight's performance is a repeat of an award-winning recital performed one week ago in Moscow, Russia, by guest piano and organ scholar Mariya Peterson. In Moscow, at the Ninth Annual *Soli Deo Gloria* International Festival-Contest of Young Organists, Miss Peterson received the highest award in the category of combined piano and organ performance. At age eighteen, she is the youngest performer ever to win an award at the distinguished Moscow competition. Miss Peterson is currently a student at Wayne State University School of Music, pursuing a dual major in Organ and Piano Performance. Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming to the Miller Auditorium stage Miss Mariya Peterson."

Mikhail was glad to be seated in the tenth row, to the left of center, where he would have a good view of both the piano and organ keyboards. Mariya

entered from stage right, walking briskly with a confidence surprising for her young age. She was dressed in an elegant yet modest shimmering red evening gown. Her red long hair, worn up in a traditional style that added to the maturity of her presence, perfectly crowned her beautifully sculpted face with its engaging blue eyes. Her upper chest and back were completely covered by a cotton shell beneath her gown, accenting her golden crucifix and miraculous medal. Only her lower legs were revealed, and her feet wore a tastefully feminine version of Organmaster shoes, also in red, designed for ease of playing the pipe organ's pedal keyboard. She was obviously an athlete, Mikhail noted, probably a runner. She smiled engagingly at the audience, took her welcoming bow, and then walked to the floor microphone.

“Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I am honored to be visiting Western Michigan University, and it is my delight to share with you several celebrated works which I prepared for the recent international organ competition in Moscow. My first piece, on the organ, will be ‘*Tu Es Petra*’ by Henri Mulet. The title is best translated as ‘Thou Art Peter.’ On Mulet’s manuscript he wrote, as a subtitle, ‘Thou art a rock, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.’ This showpiece toccata begins with urgent, pulsating chords, while a sturdy theme in the pedal undergirds them. The work builds in complexity until it climaxes with a stunning and glorious finale. To me it suggests the Church, beginning like a small mustard seed, and growing over the centuries until it fills the whole world with the blessings brought forth in Western and Eastern Christendom. Henri Mulet was born in Paris in 1878, and entered the *Conservatoire de Paris* at the young age of twelve. His father had been music director at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart – ‘*Sacré Coeur*’, *en français* – in the Montmartre district of Paris, so from a young age his soul was infused with the magnificent beauty of high Catholic culture.”

With that, she turned, mounted the organ bench, and without hesitation struck the opening chords.

Mikhail was no novice when it came to the pipe organ. He was as discerning as anyone in attendance that night. And what he was discerning was a very attractive young woman, who carried herself with dignity and poise and yet with striking modesty. Clearly she was not ashamed to proclaim truths about her Catholic Faith, even to a West Michigan audience that would be at most minimally Catholic. As she played, he felt his soul transported into lofty realms, where the glory of right order – hierarchy – was reflected in the very cosmos itself.

As soon as the rousing final chords of the Mulet masterpiece were ended, the audience leapt to its feet, offering a standing ovation, unusual for an opening work. Mariya smiled with animation and bowed with poise, yet her body language telegraphed a profound humility which Mikhail found powerfully attractive. She gave a similar introduction to each of the works she played, alternating between organ and piano. The audience was treated to a Tchaikovsky piano sonata, J.S. Bach’s monumental Toccata

and Fugue in D Minor for organ, and a Rachmaninoff piano sonata. The audience went wild with applause, demanding an encore. Mariya returned to the stage microphone and began to speak.

“Ladies and gentlemen, thank you so very much for your enthusiastic applause. I am humbled, and so I will share my heart with you. There is one more work which I have prepared, Jehan Alain’s brilliant organ work entitled ‘Litanies.’ Jehan Alain was the son of an organ-builder, and grew up in a family of very talented musicians, including his famous youngest sister, Marie-Claire Alain. Jehan was a prize-winning student of organ at the Paris Conservatory. He began composing at age eighteen, and his compositions were among the most brilliant of the Twentieth Century. Unfortunately, in 1940, his promising career was cut short by his untimely death, as a decorated war hero, at the age of only twenty-nine years. We Twenty-first Century young people look back on the sacrifice of much of Europe’s youth, on the altar of so-called modern progress in World Wars I and II, and wonder in amazement at the horror of it all. But then, when we consider the holocaust of abortion in our own time, we have to wonder yet again how many Alain’s, Bach’s, Beethoven’s, and Tchaikovsky’s have been sacrificed on the altar of modern human selfishness called ‘a woman’s right to choose.’ ‘Litanies’ is a prayer in music, and I have committed to memory what young Jehan wrote on the manuscript: ‘When, in its distress, the Christian soul can find no more words to implore the mercy of God, it repeats, times without end, the same prayer of fervent faith. Reason reaches its limits, and only belief can chase its flight’.”

As she played the tentative opening phrases, and then progressed through the mounting grandeur of Alain’s work to the stunning conclusion of impossibly beautiful discord, Mikhail’s own musical soul was spellbound. He entertained the intriguing intuition that this young woman might be a potential soul mate. He had to meet her. He had to know her. He had to figure out a way.

After the resounding applause died away, the same disembodied bass voice that had welcomed the audience was heard once again, announcing that there would be a reception for Miss Peterson in the second floor foyer, and all were invited to meet the performer. She would be autographing copies of her first organ compact disc, available for purchase, which had been recorded on the W.K. Kellogg Auditorium’s unaltered 1932 romantic masterpiece Aeolian-Skinner pipe organ in nearby Battle Creek, and released on the Detroit classical label of Cova Productions.³⁹

Mikhail not only decided to attend the reception, but to make a point of being the last person in line.

About twenty people lined up to meet her, and most of them purchased a compact disc. Mikhail watched as she demonstrated remarkable maturity for age eighteen, handling the crowd with innate consummate skill. He could sense that she was exhausted, and yet was made of determination to fulfill her obligation to personally engage each person who wanted to

³⁹ In real life, a similar compact disc, featuring former Assumption Grotto Latin Mass choir organist Stephanie Nofar, was produced by Grotto Productions in Detroit. See “Nofar” in Discography.

meet her. Such character was rare in the modern world, he thought. It was a characteristic of old-world royalty who understood that their positions combined privilege with duty to serve selflessly. If this were Nineteenth-Century Europe rather than modern secular America, Mikhail mused, it would not be unreasonable to wonder if she might secretly be a princess.

Suddenly the last couple greeting Mariya began moving away. Just as she began to push back her chair, and sighed with relief, Mikhail rushed up to the table.

“Excuse me, Miss Peterson. Is it too late for one last admirer to meet you?”

“Of course not,” she smiled, though he could tell the smile was forced through her exhaustion.

“My name is Mikhail Nicholaevich Romanov. I am a Professor of Medicine for Michigan State.”

“I am honored, Professor. So you are from East Lansing?”

“No, I teach medical students at Borgess Medical Center here in Kalamazoo. My office is out east of the medical center, in Nazareth. Miss Peterson, I have been altogether enthralled this evening by the musicality of your playing. Especially the Alain.”

“Why thank you!” she smiled.

“But I was also intrigued by your soulful rendition of the Tchaikovsky piano sonata. There is no possibility that you could actually *be* part Russian, is there?”

“You flatter me, Professor. But yes, my mother is Russian and my father is of Ukrainian descent. No doubt you are active in music, as well as medicine?”

“Yes, a bit. I sing ... and play, some. But medicine consumes entirely too much of my time these days, and in years past my military career demanded nearly all of my time. Alas, I have never even found time for courtship and marriage.”

“I don’t believe we have ever met, Professor. And yet somehow I almost feel as if I should know you,” she ventured.

“Well, I have a brother in Detroit who is a priest, and a highly respected composer and conductor. On occasion I have been the bass soloist in some of his choral productions.”

“Oh, of course! That would be my family’s pastor, Father Romanov! So then you come from a very musical family, something like the family of Jehan Alain. Which instrument do you play?”

“Organ mainly, and piano secondarily. And of course some harpsichord now and then.”

“Oh dear! Then you probably recognized all my wrong notes! And the haste with which I had to throw together the registrations.”

“I believe I counted a total of two wrong notes. Three at the most. As for the stop selections ... I have played this organ a few times myself, so I know its particular challenges ... and I thought your registrations were masterful. Quite creative, really.”

Mariya blushed. Something about this strikingly handsome athletic

bearded man with an intelligent artistic mind was threatening to sweep her off her feet.

“Your ring bearing a double-headed eagle intrigues me, Professor,” she ventured. “Isn’t that the crest of the Romanov dynasty?”

“Why, yes.”

“Last week in Moscow, I noticed that the Romanov crest seems to be making a rapid resurgence, popping up everywhere in the Russian Federation.”

“It’s a family tradition to wear this ring, to show respect for our family heritage. And it opens conversations with intelligent persons who know their history.”

“So ... are you one of *the* Romanov’s?” she asked.

“Well, yes. That’s what they tell me. But then I tell them that that, plus \$1.99, will get me a medium coffee at Biggby’s.”

She smiled, which encouraged him. And her eyes sparkled, which thrilled him.

“I suppose it had simply never occurred to me, that our dear Father Romanov might actually be a *real* Romanov. But then, he doesn’t wear the Romanov ring.”

“No, priests don’t. And Kiril is clean-shaven, so he looks different than the famous Romanov men of old. Whereas I do have this full beard, useful to hide behind when beautiful young women make me blush.”

“Nevertheless I can certainly see the resemblance between you and our beloved Father Romanov. But you know, Professor ... you actually do bear quite a striking resemblance to Nicholas II, the last Tsar of Russia. Has anyone ever told you that?”

“Since I grew this full beard two years ago, it has been mentioned more than once, when people well-versed in Russian history notice my surname. But more often, people will say I look like George V, the former king of England.”

“Yes, but King George V was a first cousin to Tsar Nicholas II. People often mistook them for brothers, if not identical twins!”

“May I purchase one of your compact discs?” asked Mikhail, seeking to divert her attention away from himself. “And have it autographed?”

“Of course ... oh, but I just sold the last one, right before you came to the table. So I’ll send you one. There are plenty more at Cova Productions, in Detroit. Father Romanov assisted me with the production. So for his brother, it’s free.”

“But then can I still have it autographed?”

“Alright, free and autographed too! Do you have your business card, so I can know where to send it?”

“Of course.”

As Mikhail fished in his pocket for a card, he took a deep breath, and, against his better judgment, decided to take the plunge.

“Uh, Miss Peterson, would you care to go out for refreshments? Somewhere nearby? I know you must be exhausted, but I have so enjoyed making your acquaintance.”

Mariya was momentarily conflicted. It was true she was exhausted. She had planned to drive just ten minutes to her hotel downtown, sleep soundly, and then drive back to Detroit in the morning. Her parents, having heard her perform the very same program in Moscow, and having just returned to work after their trip abroad, had not accompanied her on this overnight trip. So they were not here to chaperone her. But she did not want to leave the presence of this fascinating – and attractive – Romanov gentleman. A professor he might be, but he had a striking military bearing, and a remarkable presence, almost like ... a king.

“Well, to be honest, I am tired.”

Mikhail’s heart sank.

“But I would be so pleased to visit with you longer.”

Suddenly his spirit soared, taking flight like the heart of an adolescent boy in love for the first time.

“I am staying at the Radisson downtown,” she continued, “and I believe there is an all-night café off the lobby. If we could go there, I would feel ... settled. In my own place.”

But she might *never* feel settled again, she feared, after having met this mysteriously unsettling man. And what if being with him should turn out to *be* her place ... for a very long time? How could she even be *thinking* such outrageous thoughts?

The ten minute drive in separate cars, from the Western Michigan University campus to the Radisson in downtown Kalamazoo, took Mikhail and Mariya down Michigan Avenue, past Saint Augustine Cathedral where Mikhail was bass soloist in the Latin Mass Choir and occasional assistant organist. The old Casavant pipe organ in the rear gallery had been rebuilt a decade ago, and now was an up-to-date three-manual instrument of fifty-eight ranks. Mikhail exulted when playing it, as its glorious sound reverberated thrillingly down the vast stone nave.

But the much more important updating, thanks to the forward-looking vision of the new bishop, had been the restoration of the traditional sanctuary at the front of the cathedral. This had entailed the removal of a stark modern wooden screen that had been built, sometime after Vatican II, to hide the magnificent old high altar which graced the front of this 1951 edifice. A huge marbled bishop’s chair had for many years thereafter stood in the rear center of the sanctuary, in front of the wooden screen and behind the modern new table-style altar. This arrangement had essentially put the throne of man in the very location where, since ancient times, the faithful had looked to find and adore the Blessed Sacrament, reserved on the high altar. Some said that the modern arrangement had made the sanctuary eerily reminiscent of a Masonic temple. The elegant gold-plated Tabernacle had been moved from the center of the old high altar to a side chapel, where it was obscured from view for much of the congregation behind a huge stone column.

Now, with the revival of the Mass of all time under Pope Nicholas (the “Tridentine” Mass), the Tabernacle was back on the center of the old high altar; a communion rail with kneelers was restored; and the bishop’s chair

was moved to a dignified position at the side of the sanctuary, allowing Christ (rather than man) to take the central place of honor. Mass could once again be offered “*ad orientum*,” with the priest and people together facing toward God, in the mystical East. The faithful could once again receive communion on their tongues, while kneeling at the altar rail, from the consecrated hands of a priest. And no matter where they sat in the cathedral, they could once again see and adore Jesus, in the Blessed Sacrament, reserved in the gold Tabernacle positioned prominently, front and center, on the old high altar.

The revival of traditional Catholic liturgy, adorned by the treasures of great polyphonic music spanning many centuries and the timeless beauty of Gregorian chant, had drawn a lively community of young and middle-aged people from the university and the city. The Sunday morning high “Tridentine” Mass at the cathedral was now the most-attended Mass in the city. Just as at the Cova parish in Detroit and Saint Thomas More parish in Chicago, orchestral Masses by the great Catholic composers were performed on high feast days a few times per year, sometimes celebrated by the bishop himself.

Mikhail knew that Miss Peterson, a parishioner at the Cova and herself a consummate musician, would be impressed by this progress. He would have to invite her to visit Saint Augustine’s the next time he was to sing the bass solo parts in an orchestral Mass. But wait: he hardly knew her. And already he was assuming he would be seeing her again. And again. He reminded himself that he was Doctor Mike the bachelor, who was accustomed to telling people that he didn’t even know how to date!

They parked side by side in the hotel garage, and walked together through the glass skywalk over the street. They quickly found a corner booth in the quiet wood-paneled café, which overlooked the lobby fountains from the second floor.

“If we were in Europe,” Mikhail began, “I would offer you dessert and a proper drink.”

“Yes. I have to remind myself I am no longer in Europe,” she said. “Here they say I am too young. But I’ll be content with decaf coffee and a rich dessert,” smiled the trim and gorgeous young lady.

“I’ll have the same. But still, a Russian man finds it awkward not to toast new friendship with even one shot of vodka.”

“No doubt. But being out late and un-chaperoned with an older man, it’s best if I remain sober, so that I can keep my wits about me.”

“You should know you have nothing to fear from me, Miss Peterson. It is the shy bachelor like me who trembles when encountering such feminine grace and beauty.”

She blushed, elegantly.

“May I inquire why such a charming gentleman as yourself has never married?”

Mikhail recounted the story of his military service, which had ended only two years ago. It had caused him to postpone any considerations of family life, and now it seemed that most women his age were already

married. And if they were single, all too often they had been divorced, so that he, as a devout traditional Catholic, could not consider marrying them. Mikhail was already thirty-five, and he didn't want to be accused of robbing the cradle. So he figured it was up to God to find him a wife, if He so willed.

"When a young traditional Catholic woman imagines marrying, she naturally thinks about raising a large family, as many children as God sees fit to give. She would rather have a husband who is mature and well established, who can offer security in a lifelong commitment to marriage and children. For us Catholics, romantic love is an added blessing, but not the essence, of the vocation of marriage. So you should never think that younger Catholic women of good character would not find you attractive, Professor."

"Then I may need that shot of vodka after all. Alcohol is quite effective as an anti-panic potion. But ... you are a beautiful young woman, Mariya. Surely you must have a young man whom you admire?"

"Well, I do have one dear friend, Mark, who was a child prodigy on piano and organ, and who is one of your brother's musical protégés at the Cova. He is a few years older than me, and is pursuing a Master's Degree in organ and piano performance at Wayne State, and is my running partner. We've grown up together at the Cova parish, and I love him as my best friend. I am an only child, and Mark and his five siblings have made up for that in my life. But I suspect he may actually have a vocation to the priesthood, though he never admits it to me. So I have not allowed our precious friendship to become a real romance. Nor do I want him to fall prey to the many young women at the university who would steal him away from me in a minute, if they could. He is very handsome and gregarious, with a certain wild streak, and many a young woman would like to snare him and quench any thoughts he might have about the religious life. Then too, I want the young men at school to leave me in peace until I clearly discern my own vocation. So our friendship has been very good for both of us. I believe Mark and I will remain dear friends in some manner all our lives, no matter where God may lead each of us."

"Alas, perhaps I should have been more like this Mark, and sought out a beautiful young woman like you while I still had my youth."

Mariya reached out and took his hand. He felt a thrill, mingled with terror.

"May I call you Mikhail, Professor?"

"Yes, please. Or Mike."

"Well then, I'll call you 'Misha.' The Russian nickname for Michael."

She looked into his eyes and smiled.

"Misha, I do not believe that we are meeting by chance this evening. Each of us carries within us a special grace: a European royal heritage."

"You too? Please, do tell me about it."

"Well, when we were in Russia last week, my parents had a private meeting with the Orthodox Metropolitan of Moscow. He had ordered research on their genealogy beforehand, and determined that my mother

is actually a Russian royal princess, and my father is a Ukrainian royal prince. Neither of them had ever realized that. They actually received an official Russian government report proving that I am full-fledged European princess of royal blood. Imagine that!”

I already did, Mikhail thought to himself, amazed at his previous perceptivity. Perhaps the grace of royalty *was* really real.

“I am not surprised at all,” he responded. “As I watched how you charmed the crowd at the reception, despite being exhausted, I thought to myself that only a princess could handle herself with such poise and grace under pressure, at the age of eighteen. I even imagined that you were a secret princess, posing as a commoner.”

“Oh, you did, did you? Well, I was thinking that you have a royal presence about you ... something like a ... king.”

Mikhail then told her the complex story of his Romanov lineage, just as he had recounted it a few days earlier to his summer term medical students, Luke and Monica, at his clinic in Nazareth.

“So then,” Mariya summarized, “you are the only living male descendant of a Russian emperor, by a direct male line uncompromised by anymorganatic marriage? And by Romanov dynastic law that would make you the first in line for the Russian throne?”

“Yes. Except there is no throne anymore in Russia. It’s a democracy. I consider all that Romanov family squabbling over royal titles and potential positions to be unimportant. It is irrelevant in the contemporary world.”

“That’s probably just what they thought in Judea in the time of King Herod,” retorted Mariya. “Think about the story of Jesus, Misha. The Jewish nation had been conquered by Rome, and no longer had a reigning king of its own. But the royal line had continued, and both Mary and Joseph were of the house and lineage of King David. Tradition tells us that Jesus was in fact the heir to the throne, under the rules of dynastic succession in Israel. So it was true not only spiritually but literally that Jesus was born to be King of the Jews. The Holy Family were the forgotten royal family, in internal exile due to the Roman occupation of their homeland. They appeared to be only a humble carpenter in Nazareth, and his pregnant young wife, who were forced to travel to Joseph’s hometown, the City of David, called Bethlehem, because of a Roman census. The world took no notice of the extraordinary grace of the Incarnation by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Immaculate Virgin Mother, any more than it took note of the Holy Family’s true royal status. By divine Providence, they were brought to Bethlehem just in time for the birth of the Son of David in the City of David. So, while the birth of rightful kings may go unnoticed by the world, royal heirs are not forgotten in Heaven.”

“Well, some people on earth did notice,” said Mikhail. “The Magi came from the East, following a star which, according to the astrological wisdom of the time, announced the birth of the King of the Jews in Bethlehem. We modern scientists have trouble understanding that sort of story.”

“Nonsense, Misha! God set the stars in the heavens from the beginning,

just as He saw fit. And if He chose to write poetry in their positions and relative motions, which would make sense only at a specific time and place on planet Earth, then He certainly could have done so. That's not so hard to believe."⁴⁰

"Well, the man in power, King Herod, didn't like hearing about any newborn kings. He ordered the murder of all possible contenders, the Slaughter of the Innocents in Bethlehem. Apparently it can be very dangerous to inherit power by birth."

"Yes, and Heaven can protect its own chosen rulers. Remember how Joseph was warned by an angel? So the Holy Family escaped into Egypt, their travels financed by the gold brought to them by the Magi."

"True. And then an angel told Joseph when it was safe to go back home to Nazareth, after King Herod had died. But think about what Saint John wrote: 'He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.' The Jewish nation of that day, except for a small remnant who became the first Catholics, rejected their King. Modern Russia is never going to accept a king, either."

"Not unless Russia converts."

"What?"

"Like in the Fatima promise. Do you know about that?"

"Not much. Didn't the Vatican issue some document saying that Fatima is now all in the past?"

"Oh, certain Vatican officials tried hard to create that impression, back in 2000. But a famous Italian journalist, who started out assuming those Vatican officials were telling the truth, performed a thorough investigation and ended up completely changing his mind.⁴¹ He exposed the Vatican 'party line' (that Fatima is all in the past) as an outright lie. Many of us traditional Catholics still think Heaven awaits the Consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, by the Pope in union with all the Catholic bishops in the world. Mary promised that eventually it will happen. She said the Holy Father will finally do the consecration as requested, though it will be late, and then Russia will convert and a period of peace will be granted to the world."

"Why can't God just convert Russia any time He wants?"

"He could. But Jesus explained that He wants the whole world to know that Russia's miraculous conversion was brought about through Mary's Immaculate Heart. He wants the world to place devotion to Her Immaculate Heart alongside its devotion to His Sacred Heart."

"Truly that would be remarkable, to see Russia become a devout Christian nation. Yes, Holy Mother Russia might then begin to think about restoring her Christian monarchy. But for now I just think it seems safer to be living in a modern democracy, where no one cares whether I was born to be a king. Nobody in modern America is likely to threaten me because

⁴⁰ Seiss, Joseph Augustus. *The Gospel in the Stars*. (General Books LLC: 2009) 178 pages. Also see *The Star of Bethlehem*, DVD from Stephen McEveety (producer of *The Passion of the Christ*) with presenter Frederick Larson, Genius Entertainment, 65 minutes.

⁴¹ Socci, Antonio, *The Fourth Secret of Fatima*. See Bibliography.

I claim to be the Russian crown prince. No one even cares. No one except a few Romanov cousins, who might imagine that I want to stand in their way of claiming the fictional Russian throne for themselves.”

“Why, what do they say to you?”

“Nothing. I don’t even know them. They have an annual Romanov Ball in New York City, but I never go. I’m not at all active in those circles. They’re all at least nominally Orthodox, of course, and if I did go to the ball they would reject me as a possible heir to the throne.”

“You mean because you’re Catholic?”

“No, because I’m not Russian Orthodox. The Tsar *had* to be Russian Orthodox. Not Catholic, not even Greek Orthodox. In the Russian empire, the Tsar was the head of the national church. The bishops took orders from him. ‘Tsar’ means ‘Caesar,’ and Caesar was also pope.”

“But imagine how different that would be if Russia converted, to come back in union with Rome. I think you should go to the next Romanov Ball, and proudly hold your head up high as a Roman Catholic.”

“Perhaps your faith is greater than mine, Mariya.”

“No, it has been easy for me. I was born and raised Catholic, by two good Catholic parents. You must tell me all about your conversion, Misha. Next time we meet.”

“Next time?” asked Mikhail.

“Well, if you did ever want to see me again, there is a very good chance that I might say ‘Yes.’ You could come down to Detroit. Assuming my parents would approve, that is.”

“They’d never approve.”

“Don’t be silly. I can’t imagine them having any problem with Father Romanov’s very own brother.”

“Ah, but wait until they find out what an old man I am. Kiril is younger than me, remember.”

“You must come visit me, Misha. But now it is late, and I must say good night. I have to drive back to Wayne State early in the morning.”

A look of sadness crept across Mikhail’s countenance. Mariya squeezed his hand, and her eyes twinkled.

“Mikhail Nicholaevich, you know what people would ask about you, don’t you? I mean, if they knew you were born to be the crown prince of Russia.”

“No.”

“Why, the very same question they asked about Our Lord: ‘Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?’”⁴²

Mikhail laughed heartily, gave Mariya a chaste squeeze on the shoulders and a light kiss on the forehead, and bowed elegantly in the old world fashion.

“Good night, fair princess. Go with God, until we meet again.”

⁴² John 1:46.

Chapter Six

Wednesday, May 13, 2015.

Apostolic Palace, Vatican City.

Pope Nicholas VI was the first German pope, and only the third non-Italian pope, in several hundred years. In his youth he had been a respected theologian and had been an active *peritus* (expert) during the Second Vatican Council in the 1960's. Prior to his election as Pope, he had served in the Vatican Curia for decades, and had become increasingly tagged as an "ultra conservative." In actuality, he had simply stayed put where he had been in his youth, while the Church and the world had moved continually further away from Tradition. The same man who had seemed to be an avant-garde liberal in his youth was now accused of being almost reactionary, and yet he could not see that he had changed his positions much at all. Upon his election, he had chosen the name of Nicholas VI. The previous Pope of that name, Nicholas V, who reigned from 1447-1455, had not only brought the Western Schism involving an antipope to an end, but had promoted high culture and arts in the Church and in the world. Likewise, Nicholas VI had a personal dream, beginning early in his career, to bring an end to the Great Schism of 1054 between the Eastern and Western Churches. He had pushed for compromises in the documents at Vatican II, believing that if Rome showed increased respect for the Eastern churches, they would reciprocate. He had devoted much of his career to Ostpolitik – a policy of the Vatican which was popularly understood to be an attempt to foster reconciliation between Eastern and Western Europe, and by extension between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, through human politics.

Pope Nicholas was a slight man, standing five feet eight inches tall, with pure white hair covering most of his head, and a round, clean-shaven face that was still remarkably handsome despite his advanced age. His teeth were naturally straight and in good repair, and his warm smile was universally engaging. His eyes were dark brown, and his complexion was almost pale. His baritone voice still retained its power. He was trim and still quite active physically, and enjoyed stable health for his age. Like many octogenarians he had hypertension, hypothyroidism, and some mild arthritis.

Jacob Ritter, the future Pope Nicholas VI, had grown up in Bavaria, where he and his identical twin brother Frederick had been talented pianists and composers. They had both studied on talent-based scholarships at an elite music conservatory throughout their undergraduate years, and Jacob's professors judged that he could easily have had a career as an international concert pianist and composer. But Jacob and Frederick had both gone to seminary and had become Catholic priests. Jacob's outstanding academic achievements won him a series of professorships in German universities, until ultimately he was made a German bishop, then an Archbishop, and finally a Cardinal called to serve in the Vatican Curia.

Throughout much of his life Cardinal Ritter had believed all the

doctrines of the Church with his intellect, but had tended to operate strictly in the natural world. He applied human wisdom to problem solving, and did not ever really expect miraculous results in response to fervent prayer. Even as Pope Nicholas VI, he had initially depended upon ecumenism and Ostpolitik to try to reconcile the “separated brethren” with the Catholic Church. On May 1, 2011 he had succumbed to immense pressure exerted by the cult of personal popularity surrounding his predecessor, and, based on reports of a subjective medical miracle not susceptible to truly objective scientific verification, had beatified Pope Leo Alexander II before an adoring world. This had been the most rapid beatification process in the entire history of the Church, and produced a groundswell of renewed public adulation for the late Pope. Many began calling for a celebration to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of Pope Leo Alexander II’s first pan-religious prayer meeting in Assisi back in October 1986.

So, in October 2011, Pope Nicholas VI hosted yet another pan-religious gathering at Assisi, arguing that it would be just a friendly meeting and not really an ecumenical prayer service. As Cardinal Ritter, he had refused to attend that first 1986 Assisi prayer meeting. He had argued that it could cause confusion in the minds of the faithful, since it could seem to imply that followers of non-Christian religions believe in and pray to the same Triune God, when in fact they do not.⁴³ Cardinal Ritter had courageously spoken out, noting that very great caution must be exercised, lest such meetings should undermine the Church’s missionary mandate to proclaim Christ unreservedly to all men and nations.⁴⁴

As if to confirm Cardinal Ritter’s point, in September 1997, an earthquake had caused the roof of the Eleventh-Century Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi to collapse, and many traditional Catholics felt this was a sign of God’s displeasure with the whole idea of pan-religious prayer meetings. But Pope Leo Alexander II issued a public statement, formally denying that this natural disaster could be interpreted as a sign of divine judgment. As if to emphasize this position, in 2002 Pope Leo Alexander II repeated the pan-religious prayer meeting, and forced Cardinal Ritter, under obedience, to attend.

In October 2011, Pope Nicholas VI’s tragic third papal promotion of religious indifferentism in the re-roofed basilica at Assisi proceeded unremarkably as far as the world press could discern. But in private it proved to be a crisis that profoundly changed Pope Nicholas’ perspective forever. Since there were to be no public prayers offered by non-Catholics during this ceremonial meeting, the Pope decided the Blessed Sacrament did not have to be removed from the tabernacle. During the previous pan-religious gatherings, which were formal ecumenical prayer meetings, the Blessed Sacrament had been removed from the tabernacle, which was left open and obviously empty. Even Pope Leo Alexander II had feared that, otherwise, the spectacle of so many non-Catholic and non-Christian religious leaders praying in the Catholic sanctuary might appear

⁴³ I Corinthians 10:20; Psalm 96:5.

⁴⁴ Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15.

to the devout Catholic faithful as a form of casual disrespect for the Real Presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When the 2011 pan-religious meeting ceremony had ended, Pope Nicholas remained to privately greet the various world religious leaders as they milled about, just inside the altar rail. During this time, the basilica's young parochial vicar came out from the sacristy, and opened the tabernacle, where the consecrated Hosts were reposed. Intending to take Holy Communion to a parishioner in the local hospital, the young priest opened the tabernacle, and took out the ciborium to obtain a consecrated Host to place in his pyx. Immediately upon removing the cover, the young priest found that all the Hosts in the ciborium appeared to be bleeding.

In disbelief, he quickly replaced the ciborium, locked the tabernacle, and immediately but quietly informed the Holy Father that it was urgent to speak with him in private in the sacristy. Soon, the priest brought the ciborium to Pope Nicholas in the locked sacristy. Upon beholding these bleeding Hosts, Nicholas fell on his knees and wept. He understood at once what the Lord Jesus was telling him: by holding yet another pan-religious meeting in the Catholic sanctuary, he had publicly crucified Jesus Christ all over again. By acting as if Jesus is not necessarily King of Kings and Lord of Lords for all men and nations, but rather only one among many possible gods, Pope Nicholas had allowed Him to be publicly mocked in the Catholic sanctuary the same as He had been mocked by his Roman executioners. Pope Nicholas realized at once that he was privately witnessing a Eucharistic miracle,⁴⁵ an act of Divine Mercy warning him to turn himself and the Church back from the path of spiritual self-destruction, and this miracle profoundly changed his mind – and his heart.

Nicholas ordered that this miraculous event be kept secret, lest the miracle should come to be misinterpreted by some as a confirmation of the pan-religious meeting. He had the Hosts taken back to Rome by the young priest, who was sworn to secrecy. The Hosts were analyzed in the medical laboratory at the Agostino Gemelli Medical School, by Catholic scientists who knew how to properly respect Consecrated Hosts. The scientists were not informed of the specific place where the Hosts had been consecrated. The “red substance” was confirmed as “fresh human blood,” and DNA analysis indicated that it belonged to “a healthy adult Jewish male with ancestry in the Middle East.”

Thereafter, Nicholas had understood that the real power to change the world resided not in human politics and negotiation, but in the supernatural realm. Prayer was not intended to serve as a pleasant public ceremony to gloss over error, or to make excuses for spiritual blindness. True prayer invoked the Hosts of Heaven to do battle against the powers of darkness, against spiritual wickedness in high places. True prayer did not hesitate to call for the triumph of Truth over falsehood, and dared to desire the unhesitating proclamation of the one Religion which is true over all false creeds. True prayer reflected the very supplication of the Lord Jesus Christ:

⁴⁵ For a review of this subject, the author recommends Cruz, Joan Carroll, *Eucharistic Miracles and Eucharistic Phenomena in the Lives of Saints*, (TAN Books; Rockford, Illinois: 2009) 305 pages.

“*Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.*”

Prior to his election as Pope, His Eminence Jacob Cardinal Ritter had ultimately served as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, where he had tried to place limits on the most radical theologians and liturgical reformers in the post-conciliar Church. His predecessor in the Chair of Peter, Pope Leo Alexander II, had been a man who desired to lead by example, and who was unusually reluctant to enforce any sort of formal discipline against dissenters. It seemed to Cardinal Ritter that the only discipline meted out by Leo Alexander was against those who resisted the undermining of Tradition. But, being wise as a serpent and innocent as a dove, he had bided his time.

Now, as the Pope, he had begun to shock the entrenched liberals and chronic miscreants in high places in the Church by forcing confrontation with truth. The prominent leader of a worldwide Catholic movement had finally been exposed, under Pope Nicholas, as an incorrigible sexual predator of both sexes and all ages, who had fathered illegitimate children, kept secret wives, sexually abused various seminarians he met, and forced his followers to vow not only the usual promises of poverty, chastity, and obedience, but also a fourth vow to never criticize their leader.

Similarly, Cardinal Ritter had struggled for years to try to uncover the infestation of the Church by rings of homosexual predators in high places, who enabled similar misbehavior in their subordinate clergy in exchange for cover. As Pope, Nicholas had allowed a wide and open discussion of this problem, but had been horrified as the extent of the corruption became evident. He recalled that one English churchman,⁴⁶ a convert to the Catholic Faith, had written about the plague of locusts arising from the bottomless pit in the Apocalypse, and had ventured that these might represent swarms of priests possessed of an unnatural lust. The cloud of locusts caused the sun to be darkened, and the churchman had noted that this might represent the resultant obscuring of the Pope’s visibility and credibility as the world’s moral leader. There had been frenzied efforts by the anti-Catholic mainstream world press to link Nicholas himself to the scandals, but he had led an exemplary moral life and had managed to link the scandals with the general lack of enforced discipline characteristic of his predecessor’s pontificate.

Of particular interest to Nicholas the theologian had been the process of formal theological discussions with the Society of Saint Pius X, a Catholic Priestly Fraternity that preserved Catholic Tradition in doctrine, liturgy, and priesthood. They had challenged him to re-think the liberal ideas of his youth, so that he was tending to doubt the wisdom of human politics as a solution to religious schism. Truth was truth, they argued, and you can’t negotiate it. Dialog accomplishes nothing but compromise on the part of those who already have the truth. The Deposit of Faith was complete with the death of the last apostle, Saint John, and the Great Commission given to the Church at Christ’s Ascension was to go into all the world and teach all things which He had commanded. It was not to continue seeking the

⁴⁶ Abraham Woodhead, *Apocalyps Paraphras’d*; cited in *New Oxford Review*, June 2010.

truth, but rather to proclaim to all the ends of the earth the truth which had already been delivered to the Church through the apostles.

This morning in May was the monthly meeting of the Pope's security council, a group comprised of Cardinals, priests, and lay political experts. Like any independent nation, the State of Vatican City had formal political relations with most nations in the world, and the Pope found it necessary to keep himself current on religious, political, military, financial, and social developments throughout the world. The meeting began promptly at ten o'clock, with an opening prayer offered by the Holy Father.

The first item on the agenda was the growing instability in central Asia. The Vatican's political expert stated that the past decade had seen a pattern of intentional destabilizations in small central Asian nations sandwiched between Iran, Russia, and China. Hostilities between rival groups seemed to be fomented by special agents from the United States. Typically, both sides in a potential conflict would be supplied with weapons and tactical assistance, one side by the United States and the other side by United States subordinates. The civilian populations would be caught in the middle of the exaggerated conflict, and innocent men, women, and children routinely suffered terribly, while armed guerillas engaged in a limited civil war. This emergency would then justify a United States "peace-keeping mission," which amounted to an American military incursion and *de facto* occupation in order to "save" the poor civilian victims of the whole nefarious process. Military occupation was typically followed by the installation of a puppet regime, which would be permitted a liberal amount of personal corruption provided that they publicly supported the installation of United States military bases on their soil.

The expert concluded by observing that this pattern of empire building was hardly new, having been employed successfully by the British Empire in the previous century. Both China and the Russian Federation were showing increasing displeasure with the military presence of the United States in a part of the world that was their natural sphere of influence. The expert questioned how long the United States would remain silent if Russia or China were creating minor skirmishes and installing military bases in Mexico or Canada. The relentless pursuit of hegemony in central Asia by the United States was placing the world at risk for a major war. There was a growing likelihood that China and Russia, in league together, would consider a sudden and preemptive strike against the mainland United States, if diplomatic efforts to limit United States incursions into central Asia continued to fail.

Pope Nicholas lamented the utter lack of moral restraint which had characterized the secularized governments in the Twentieth Century. The complete secularization of once-Catholic European governments, which resulted from the two World Wars, had unleashed upon the world a spirit of "might makes right." The Darwinian theory of "survival of the fittest" had been hijacked to justify this idea, most horrifically in Nazi Germany where social and genetic engineering were openly employed to try to create a superior race designed to rule the world.

World War I had brought an end to a number of great Christian monarchies which for centuries had kept warfare limited and bound by rules to protect civilians. World War II had ended with a mandate to set up secular democracies designed to keep religion out of the sphere of public debate, and subjected Eastern Europe, the heart of the former Hapsburg Catholic empire, to enslavement under the brutal atheistic tyranny of Joseph Stalin. Despite extensive infiltration by Freemasons and modernists, the Catholic Hapsburgs had emphasized the right to local rule for more than one hundred ethnic groups comprising their empire, and had sought to keep peace and ensure local freedom among them all. But the monstrous Soviet Union imposed a rigid uniformity of thought and behavior. The Communists pretended to grant freedom of religion but punished most of those who practiced the Faith.

In the West, the remaining moral capital, inherited by Protestants from former Catholic Christendom, preserved a modicum of moral order and restraint until the cultural revolution of the 1970's. The United States saw itself as the policeman of the world, and continually increased its broad military commitments until it was financially stretched far beyond the ability of any empire to survive. As a result, it faced bankruptcy by 1971, when President Nixon had no choice but to renege on the promise which undergirded and stabilized the entire world financial system: that the dollar, the reserve currency behind every other currency, would be convertible into gold at a fixed ratio. It had seemed to the Holy Father that this historically unprecedented fundamental dishonesty – imposing upon the whole world a system of currencies that had no intrinsic value at all – in turn had unleashed a mushrooming plague of other dishonesties in public policy. It was almost as if, once money became truly worthless, it was coveted and worshipped as an end in itself like never before. Mammon became the new god of the West. Former Christendom suffered a loss of any eternal perspective. No longer was there a sense of shock and shame if the ratio in wages between the highest paid and lowest paid persons in a society exceeded a ratio of about ten or twelve to one. Recent statistics from the United States had shown a ratio of more than five thousand to one, and the ratio in Western Europe was more than four thousand to one.

Fundamental dishonesties now pervaded the culture of the modern world, until it was even pretended that creation – obviously designed and very finely engineered – had resulted from random processes, contrary to the very laws of science and statistics. It was pretended that human personhood did not begin at conception, but only at birth, or even later in the case of birth defects. It was pretended that man could with impunity choose the hour and method of his own death. It was pretended that nature herself did not proclaim the perversity of the practice of unnatural lust. And it was pretended that the sexes were the same, rather than complementary but different. Equality now meant enforced sameness, and a profound impoverishment of the culture through the rejection of most natural hierarchies. The Holy Father speculated that the world dominance of the English language, with its lack of gender for most inanimate objects, had added fuel to the radical feminist movement, causing them to demand

gender-neutral terminologies that would simply seem bizarre in most other languages.

“If even one Catholic Confessional State should appear again on the world stage,” Nicholas ventured, “I suppose it would have far-reaching effects on many nations. There was a time when many Christian kings feared lest their actions appear unjust before the judgment seat of Christ, the King of Kings. Now, politicians seem to be motivated primarily by what shortsighted program may help purchase sufficient votes to survive the next media-managed democratic election.”

“Plato predicted back in the days of ancient Greece that democracy would never work,” said another expert. “He foresaw that as soon as a small majority discovered that they could plunder their neighbor’s wealth by majority vote, they would not hesitate to do so.”

“Heaven is a monarchy,” continued Nicholas, “the only perfectly benevolent monarchy. All human rulers are subject to imperfection and error, and yet they are called to look to Christ the King as their model and guide. In the history of the West there have been not a few monarchs who proved to be saints. The real tyrants, by and large, either pre-dated Catholic Christendom or arose after the Protestant revolt. But in the contemporary world no one wants to see that. They all believe in democracy as the new state religion, replacing the one Religion which is true.”

Yet another expert pointed out that there had been noble attempts at reestablishing Christian states. Garcia Moreno had succeeded admirably for a while in Ecuador, in the mid-Nineteenth Century.⁴⁷ Salazar had made a serious effort in Portugal in the mid-Twentieth Century.⁴⁸ Some Vatican political observers felt that the action of Portugal’s bishops, consecrating Portugal to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in the spirit of Our Lady of Fatima’s request for the consecration of Russia, had brought great blessings upon the nation. It was spared from World War II, and enjoyed great peace and prosperity.

“We must never cease to proclaim the Gospel of Christ,” said Nicholas, “and pray that world leaders will hear His voice and consider the eternal consequences of the actions they take.”

The second item on the agenda was the mounting Global Financial Crisis. A Vatican financial adviser noted that a fundamentally unjust world financial system, set up by the United States after World War II, gave the American empire an unfair advantage over all other nations through its special status as the issuer of the world’s reserve currency. The world’s financial corruption really began to snowball after 1971 when the United States reneged on its pledge to redeem dollars, the world reserve currency, for gold. That marked the end of any genuine honesty in financial transactions, and set the world adrift at the mercy of monetary lies and obfuscations. The past fifty years had marked the only time in world history when money was not representative of a commodity of intrinsic worth, such as gold or silver. The financial greed which engendered the

⁴⁷ Berthe, Augustine, *Garcia Moreno*, (BookSurge Publishing: 2006) 412 pages.

⁴⁸ De Meneses, Filipe, *Salazar: A Political Biography*, (Enigma Books: 2009) 544 pages.

Global Financial Crisis was made possible only when there were no longer any natural constraints on the quantities of money that could be issued. And this process of continual inflation of the money supply, causing continual devaluation of its purchasing power, had tended to progressively impoverish the poor and enrich the rich.

“The naiveté of most Americans is lamentable,” suggested Nicholas. “Because they have never had an open revolution since their founding, they tend to confuse unquestioning support for one’s current ruling regime with patriotism. They do not like to hear some of the hard realities we have been discussing today. Now, love of one’s fatherland is a great virtue. But unquestioning love of one’s ruling regime, and refusal to recognize its moral corruption, is potentially a form of idolatry. That is why the Church down through history has stood above and separate from all secular governments. America was founded by men suspicious of the Catholic Church, and possessed of the illusion that they could craft an ideal state while excluding the Social Kingship of Christ. Until recent decades, America was carried along by the unusual moral goodness of her people, but now she is ruled by a secular socialist elite who intend to give no place at all to Christ and His Church.”

“We Europeans live in ancient nations that have seen governments come and go,” said an expert. “It is the nation, which is the people and not the government, that endures. We Europeans understand better that honor is due to the office of the ruler, whereas the current holder of the office may or may not be worthy of the office. The European Union seems to have been devised by socialists precisely to ensure that Europe’s true heritage as a Christian continent remains buried in the past.”

“Again I say,” said Pope Nicholas, “if even one major Catholic Confessional State were to reemerge on the world scene in these tumultuous times, what a profound effect it might have on the course of world events. Sometimes I think that is what Our Lady of Fatima was foreseeing back in 1917. She warned of the annihilation of nations, and we always assumed that meant a nuclear war. But something very terrible has already occurred: the almost complete spiritual annihilation of the nations comprising former Christendom, in both East and West. Only a tiny percentage of people still attend church, and of those who do, most have lost their faith in the Real Presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, the need for regular sacramental confession, and the real possibility of eternal damnation. Most no longer consider the Faith the most important part of their lives.”

“But Your Holiness,” interjected the Vatican Secretary of State, “you know as well as I do that Fatima is now part of the past, as was made clear fifteen years ago in the document issued by the Vatican back in 2000. After all, the apparitions occurred in 1917, and it was in 1929 that Sister Lucy felt the Blessed Virgin returned to her to ask for the consecration of Russia. It has been eighty-six years since then, and surely the time is far past when such a public spectacle could ever hope to change the course of world politics.”

“Yes, yes, I know,” scowled the Holy Father. “But still I wonder ...

what if?"

The Secretary of State, an Italian man of ample girth and a round, pock-marked face framing flushed cheeks and a red nose, was widely reputed to be a high-functioning alcoholic. His hair was dark and often appeared to be greasy, while his face was clean-shaven. His dark pupils darted about constantly, especially when young men were present, causing some to wonder if he had ever been taught to practice "the custody of the eyes." Some said that the Swiss guards protected him in two ways – they kept the Secretary of State safe from potential harm by others, and they also kept the Vatican's adolescent altar boys and young adult seminarians "out of the Secretary's way." He was an aficionado of the best restaurants in Rome, and most evenings had no difficulty finding some well-placed personages to buy him the best entrée and wine on the menu.

"We have followed the wise policy of Ostpolitik with the Eastern nations," continued the Secretary, "pursuing dialog with the Orthodox Churches and fostering the understanding that we will not offend them by implying they must convert. We are far past the time when the Church can engage in triumphalism, claiming to be the one true Church founded by Christ, outside of which there is no salvation!"

"Your Eminence!" shouted the Holy Father. "What you have just said would be condemned as heresy according to many sainted Fathers of the Church! Have we gone so far astray that we now talk this way without hesitation?"

"But Your Holiness, at Vatican II things changed ..."

"Let me be blunt: increasingly I wonder whether my predecessors decades ago, back when most bishops were actually obedient to the Pope, should not have obeyed Heaven's request and performed the consecration of Russia exactly as requested by Our Lady of Fatima. Some Popes consecrated Russia. Some Popes consecrated the world. Some Popes included many bishops, but not all of them. But no Pope obeyed Our Lady's specific request: for the Holy Father, together with all the Catholic bishops in the world, to consecrate Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. That was never done. And the promise was that, if it were done, Russia would be converted, and a period of peace would be granted to the world."

"Holy Father," the Secretary of State anxiously interjected, "this can never be done now. The bishops would not obey. The Russians would be deeply offended, and move further away from us. The world would mock us for being so naïve and superstitious. We could lose face before the world."

"Assuming we have any face left to lose, after the scandals of the sexual abuse of youth by clergy, and of widespread liturgical and catechetical abuses."

"Well, it's simply not an option anymore. Dark and very powerful forces would be enraged. The consecration of Russia is not going to happen."

"That will be for Heaven, and not for you, to decide," retorted the Pope.

Chapter Seven

May 2015.

Waldorf=Astoria Hotel, New York City.

Although the new Waldorf=Astoria⁴⁹ Hotel on Park Avenue in New York City was not built until 1931, the grandeur of old world elegance remains much in evidence throughout the famous landmark edifice. The current hotel, and its 1890's Victorian predecessor which was razed to make way for the Empire State Building, have long served as the preferred temporary New York residence for world politicians, celebrities, and royalty. Its magnificent décor and furnishings, reminiscent of a European royal palace, always provided the ideal setting for any New York meeting concerned with the history and restoration of monarchy. Among Romanov nobility living in exile in the West, it had been a tradition for decades to assemble once a year in May, at the storied hotel, as the Romanov Nobility Organization. The agenda included an annual update of the official records of the Romanov family, and the finalizing of arrangements for the annual Romanov Nobility Ball which was held each June in the Waldorf=Astoria Grand Ballroom, following a nobility dinner in the Grand Dining Room. The annual ball was open only to recognized members of the Romanov nobility, spouses of members, and a few unmarried guests of single members. Such guests had to be of documented royal lineage, and had to be approved by the organization prior to the ball. Reporters and news photographers from major world news organizations were allowed, of course, since the family valued the publicity created by the event. It was hoped that the annual Romanov Ball – much like the occasional state visit by a British monarch – could help to revive public nostalgia for the high culture of old world nobility.

On Saturday morning at ten o'clock, a series of exceptionally dignified ladies and gentlemen began to assemble in a private parlor at the hotel. Some stepped off the elevators, coming from their rooms upstairs. Most of these had flown in on Friday from major cities in Europe and the Americas. A few were arriving in chauffeured limousines, from residences in greater New York City. But the majority arrived in middle class style, in taxis or airport vans, since most of the Romanov nobility were no longer possessed of any great wealth. What they did possess was a priceless lineage: each of them could trace their genealogy through unbroken royalty, in each successive generation, back to the Romanov dynasty which ruled the Russian Empire for more than three hundred and fifty years. All of them, with one officially documented exception, had to admit to morganatic marriages in their past. Such unions, between a royal person and a commoner, permitted the retention of royal titles and certain social privileges, but resulted in the forfeiture of any potential claim to the Russian throne.

Each year the Romanov Nobility Organization meeting was chaired by

⁴⁹ This venerable hotel uses an = sign instead of a hyphen in its two-word name.

those members accepted as having the highest royal rank. For nearly two decades, the accepted trustee of the vacant throne was Marina Mikhailovna Romanov. She had been born in exile in Spain, and her father had been the only publicly known male dynast of the Russian throne to contract an equal (non-morganatic) marriage after 1917. Since he had been unaware of any other credible pretender, he had designated Marina as the official heir. At age 16, according to dynastic law, Marina Mikhailovna had taken the oath of loyalty to the Russian Fatherland, and had become Trustee of the Russian Imperial Throne. Later, she had entered into an equal marriage with a Prussian royal prince, who converted to the Orthodox Faith and became an official member of the Russian Imperial House, with the title of Grand Duke, prior to the wedding. Marina had studied at Oxford University, and was fluent not only in Russian, but also in English, French, and Spanish. She was conversant as well in German, Italian, and Arabic. Since Russia had become a free republic, she had been giving speeches indicating her readiness to respond to a call from the Russian people, but that she would never wish to impose monarchy on the Russian people against their will.

Marina's son Grigory Mikhailovich had also been born in exile in Spain. His baptism, in the Russian Orthodox Church in Spain, had been attended by the kings and queens of Spain and Bulgaria, with the king of Greece as his godfather. Grigory spent his childhood in France, became well grounded in the Orthodox Faith, and completed college in Madrid. He then studied at Oxford. An athlete and avid game hunter, Grigory had visited Russia many times, and took great interest in the Russian military. At age sixteen, he had taken the dynastic oath before the Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem.

Grigory was accepted as Marina's heir apparent, and as long as he avoided a morganatic marriage, there would be no known impediment to his inheriting, upon Marina's eventual death, the position of trustee of the throne. Most people in the modern world considered such concerns irrelevant, since the Romanov dynasty was swept from power in the inferno of the Bolshevik revolution in 1917. But until 1991, no one had believed that the amoral and atheistic Communist regime in the Soviet Union would suddenly yield up its power, without a war, and formally dissolve itself on December 25, Christmas Day in the West. The Russian Federation had suddenly been born in peace, and efforts to gradually create a modern democratic state were well underway. Now there was emerging discussion, in various Russian circles both internally and abroad, of one day restoring the monarchy. Generally, it was expected that any new Tsar would serve as a moral and cultural leader, under a democratic constitution much like the monarch of Great Britain. So, with each passing year, the exercises beginning on this Saturday morning, concerned with preserving the integrity of the Romanov dynasty, seemed to be increasingly relevant. In December 2010, Marina and Grigory had made a five-day pilgrimage to Rome to visit historic Orthodox churches. While there they had met with Pope Nicholas VI and discussed the need for Catholic and Orthodox

Christians to cooperate in the face of threats from modern-day secularism. The pope had praised the Russian Imperial House for its efforts to foster a spiritual revival in Russia, just as he had been calling out for a spiritual revival in once-Catholic, now-largely-secular Europe.

Marina Mikhailovna's jet black hair, fair complexion, and striking blue eyes had made her beautiful in her youth. She had once stood five feet eight inches tall, and had been trim and erect when she married her prince. Now in her seventies, she struggled against the obesity that was a familial trait in her branch of the royal line, and her posture had become slightly stooped. She tended to wear loose-flowing gowns that would hide her actual figure, and tonight she was dressed in a red and white dress, very full, and white shoes.

Grigory also had thick and curly jet black hair, and retained a youthful visage because his hair line showed no sign of receding at all. He too had blue eyes, and a dark heavy beard though he kept his face clean-shaven. Like his mother, he struggled against the familial tendency toward obesity. In his twenties he had been trim and athletic, but now in early middle age genetics had triumphed, and his profile revealed a substantial girth. Nevertheless he was a handsome man with immense self-confidence, and easily displayed the social graces expected of royalty.

The usual order of business began with a quick review of new membership applications, and a voice vote of approval for the lot. This would be followed by a similarly hasty review of any new applications to attend the ball, or to bring suitable guests, with another voice vote approving them all. Then, after a coffee break, there would follow a long discussion of ideas for the theme and arrangements for the upcoming dinner and ball.

Normally, new applications for membership were more than welcome, since the burden of proof of eligibility rested with the applicant, and the moderate annual membership dues were much needed for the operation of the organization. Also, sales of Romanov Ball tickets generated more than twice the revenue needed to cover the cost of the event, and the excess was remitted to popular charities in order to build public goodwill for the family. New members attending the ball tended to improve the charitable ratio substantially, since the operating costs were largely fixed.

Normally, then, the annual meeting was more social than political. But this was not to be a normal year. The family leaders had been acutely aware for the past two years of the existence of one additional man who could be a potential legitimate pretender to the Russian throne. He had come to their attention when he was discharged from the United States Marines with a Purple Heart, and when questioned had acknowledged to the media that his Romanov family name was indeed that of *the* Romanovs. Until this year he had expressed no personal interest in participating in the Romanov Nobility Organization. But just two days before the meeting, Marina Mikhailovna had received an overnight letter from him, expressing his desire to attend this year's Romanov Ball, and to bring as his guest a young woman whom he reported to be a royal Russian princess in exile.

This letter had shocked Marina, who had imagined that her son Grigory's role as crown prince was forever undisputed and uncontestable. There were several other new applications, and a voice vote approved them all. Then, instead of moving on to applicants for the ball, Marina announced that an unusual matter of great importance had to be addressed. She asked that the lights be dimmed, and started a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Mikhail Nicholaevich Romanov."

"Dear distinguished members of the noble Romanov family," she began, "this year we have encountered an ordinary request with potentially extraordinary ramifications. Therefore I find it necessary to apprise you fully of the facts in great detail."

The next slide showed a picture of Mikhail, in full military dress, receiving a Purple Heart award as he shook the hand of the United States President.

"Doctor Romanov, the new applicant you see here, grew up in Detroit, Michigan, under the family name of Petrov. The family spoke Russian at home and English in public, so he is completely bilingual. When he was sixteen, he graduated from high school – a *Catholic* school, mind you – as valedictorian. Up until that year his family had used the last name of Petrov, which had been adopted by their ancestors after the 1917 revolution as a protection against enemies of the nobility. But when he was sixteen, Mikhail's parents legally changed the family name back to Romanov. Mikhail then went to Wayne State University, where he earned a music degree in piano, organ, voice, and composition, with high honors. By age twenty he entered medical school on a full scholarship at the United States military health sciences university in Bethesda, and by age twenty-six he was a medical officer in the United States Marines. He also trained as a Marine special operative, and served two three-year tours of duty in war zones, one in Afghanistan and one in Iraq. Ultimately he was wounded in a serious but non-disabling manner while rescuing others, and was discharged two years ago as a decorated war hero – the scene you see here."

The next slide showed Doctor Mike in his physician's white coat, stethoscope around his neck, smiling with a clean-shaven face.

"This photo was taken from the public relations materials of Borgess Medical Center, a Catholic Hospital in Kalamazoo, Michigan, from two years ago when Doctor Mike Romanov, as he is known, joined the staff as a Professor of Medicine. The medical school at Michigan State University in Lansing sends one fifth of their upper classmen to Borgess for their clinical rotations, and Doctor Romanov is one of the local instructors. He also operates a private medical clinic in the nearby little town of Nazareth, named for a former Catholic girls' college which is now closed."

Next was a slide depicting Doctor Mike with his new full beard, and dressed in a tuxedo.

"This photo was taken from the program booklet for a performance of Mozart's Coronation Mass at Saint Augustine Roman Catholic Cathedral in Kalamazoo, in which Doctor Romanov was the featured bass soloist.

You will not fail to notice, now that he has grown a full beard, that he bears a striking resemblance to our last Romanov Tsar, Nicholas II, as well as to the Tsar's first cousin, King George V of England."

Murmuring began to sweep through the meeting hall, and continued to escalate until Marina was forced to slam her gavel on the podium and call for order.

"Dear family, your concern is well founded. What you are looking at may indeed be a problem for us. Reportedly this man is able to prove by professional genealogical research that he is the only living male direct descendant of a Romanov emperor. His family carefully guarded their identity in each generation, but he can show that, through amazing twists of fate, there have been no morganatic marriages which would undermine his potential claim to the throne."

"Perhaps we are not talking about fate, but rather divine Providence," suggested Father Oleg, an elderly bearded Romanov who was an Orthodox priest.

"No," countered Marina, appearing not a little flustered, "because at age sixteen he changed not only his name but his religion. He and his parents apostatized from the Orthodox Faith of our fathers and converted to the schismatic Roman Catholic Church. For this reason, we suggest that he has forfeited any rights to the Russian throne, for the Tsar *must* be Russian Orthodox."

Father Oleg raised his hand, but was ignored.

"In addition," added Marina's son Grigory, "this Doctor Romanov has served in the United States military. Because of the increasingly belligerent incursions of the United States military into central Asia, seeking to establish puppet governments and permanent military bases, most Russians would be highly suspicious of such a man."

A middle aged family member raised his hand, and was acknowledged by the chair.

"Good morning. I am also known as 'Doctor Romanov,' and I practice medicine at the Moscow Polyclinic. I know this man. For the past two years, he has come to Russia three times per year at his own expense, for an entire month each time, organizing medical teams and then going into the remotest areas of Russia where he and his team provide care to Russia's most neglected and impoverished citizens. He has also become distinguished as a uniquely effective guest lecturer in the medical colleges both in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. I imagine that kind of dedication to our fatherland would sit well with most Russians."

"All the more reason why he is dangerous to our cause," retorted Marina. "The devil himself can appear as an angel of light.⁵⁰ Some will vehemently oppose him and others will focus on his superficially impressive achievements. A controversial man of this sort could easily throw the delicately emerging interest in restoration of the monarchy into complete disarray. Many will begin to say this kind of controversy is

⁵⁰ 2 Corinthians 11:14.

precisely why hereditary monarchy is best left relegated to the past. I will therefore open the floor for discussion about how this organization might best proceed, given these difficult circumstances.”

Three hands shot up at once, in three corners of the room. Some older family members, who had attended the Romanov Nobility Organization meetings for many years, recognized these first three eager commentators as close associates of Grigory. All three men expressed, one after another, variations on the opinion that Mikhail Nicholaevich Romanov posed a serious threat to the interests of the Romanov Nobility Organization and to the ideal future of Holy Mother Russia as an Orthodox monarchy. Essentially, each one suggested that it was expedient that this one man should be disqualified by formal vote of the Romanov Nobility Organization, so that the Russian monarchy should not perish forever. Then others began to take their cue from these first speakers, and a mounting consensus seemed to be developing. It was suggested that the future of the monarchy would be best protected if this new pretender should be declared permanently ineligible for the Russian throne. Finally, it seemed to Marina that more than enough comments had been heard, and that it was time for a vote. Her gavel came down on the podium, and the meeting was brought to order.

“Dear family, the time for open discussion is hereby ended. Now it is time for us to follow established custom, and put this momentous decision to a vote. My son Grigory will now review the rules for voting.”

“Good morning,” began Grigory. “This ballot will be secret. A ‘Yes’ vote will indicate that the voting member agrees as follows: for the good of the beloved motherland, the family, and the future monarchy, this new pretender shall be ruled forever ineligible for the Russian throne. A ‘No’ vote, should any be cast, would be against taking any definitive action now to defend the future of the Russian monarchy. The ballots are being distributed. Once they have been marked, they are to be folded twice and deposited in the ballot box in the front of the room. Please do not put your name or any other identifier on your ballot.”

“Excuse me!” shouted Father Oleg, the elderly Orthodox priest, rising to his feet. “It is never permitted to do evil, even if we think that good may result.”

Grigory glared at him, a shocked look on his face.

“Father, perhaps you did not hear? The chair has closed any further discussion of this matter!”

“I stand here to speak for a Higher Authority than the honorable chair,” retorted Father Oleg. “It is Heaven’s prerogative to choose, through the previously established Romanov laws of dynastic succession, who shall be God’s next anointed ruler of Holy Mother Russia. The evil of illegal interference in the process will bring down God’s wrath upon this noble family. Most modern Europeans and Americans subscribe to the made-up modern belief that power comes up from the people, by means of an imaginary ‘social contract.’ But that is actually a demonic idea, because it turns things upside down from God’s real order. No, in reality power descends from the throne of God, through His chosen ruler, and then to the

people. The method of selecting the ruler could be a democratic vote, or it could be hereditary monarchy as in imperial Russia. But whatever law of selection is in force for a dynasty must be followed until it is properly altered by the next ruler. And note this well: once in power – and thus vested with the divine mandate to rule according to Christ’s law and teaching – the ruler must answer to God first, and only then to the people. Therefore, as God’s priest, I warn you: this noble family should fear to intervene in the existing dynastic selection process. Such flouting of both the dynastic law and God’s prerogatives could bring down the House of Romanov forever.”

“You have certainly had your say, Father Oleg,” said Grigory. “In view of your uninvited comments, I find it necessary to ask the chair to reopen discussion, before the actual vote takes place.”

Marina nodded, and several family members stood up and spoke, one after another, in reply to Father Oleg. The oldest members of the family noticed a distinct pattern, which escaped the notice of many younger members: those who defended Grigory’s preference for disqualifying Mikhail Romanov were either divorced and remarried, living together without a marriage vow, practicing homosexuals, or career financiers in the higher echelons of powerful Western banks. The general tone of their comments was that one cannot take religious superstition too seriously, and in today’s world one must be pragmatic. Soon enough the discussion was ended by the chair, and the vote was taken. The ballots were counted three times, and the vote was an exact fifty-fifty split.

“Brothers and sisters,” said Father Oleg, rising to his feet once again without seeking permission from the chair. “The House of Romanov is now perilously close to bringing down the judgment of God against it. But may such a catastrophe never come to pass! As we stand together at the edge of the infernal abyss, I am compelled to suggest a compromise position. Let me suggest that if Mikhail Nicholaevich Romanov will publicly revert to the devout practice of the Orthodox Faith, then there is no reason to eliminate him as a pretender to the throne. It would appear that he has many excellent qualifications to become the new Tsar. Alternatively, if he will publicly and in writing renounce any and all rights to the Russian throne, then he could be left alone to live out his life in America; but it would be best in that case to ban him from ever returning to Russia, lest a faction in his favor should emerge.”

“The chair acknowledges the compromise suggestion, Father Oleg, and agrees to another vote,” said Marina.

“But,” interjected Grigory, “let it be understood that in this ballot, a ‘Yes’ vote agrees that if Mikhail Nicholaevich Romanov refuses both reasonable options – either to revert to Orthodoxy, or to voluntarily and graciously renounce the throne – then he will have shown himself an enemy of Holy Mother Russia, and for the greater good he will be forever disqualified, by consensus of this noble organization, from any eligibility for the Romanov throne.”

A second vote was held, and again the ballots were counted three

times. This time a sixty-percent majority favored the new compromise position, and Marina quickly ruled that a final decision had been reached.

“The chair announces that implementation of the decision will be handled by Grigory Mikhailovich,” said Marina.

“A private emissary will be sent to Mikhail Nicholaevich Romanov,” said Grigory. “The emissary will inform him of the choices this noble organization has seen fit to grant to him. The respective consequences of each choice will also be made clear.”

“Mikhail will be permitted to attend this year’s Romanov Nobility Ball,” said Marina, feeling that she could mitigate the guilt she felt about the emerging plan to strip this man in Michigan of his divine right to the throne. “He will be permitted to bring a suitable guest of proven royal descent. It is to be hoped that during the ball, all of you will seek to impress upon him the collective wisdom of this noble family. By your help perhaps he may be brought to understand the reasonableness of renouncing the throne, or at least of reverting to the Orthodox Faith of our fathers.”

“The deadline for his decision will be set at thirty days after the upcoming ball,” said Grigory. “That will give him time to think. If he cannot come to reason by then, today’s final decision will be announced and implemented, to protect the interests of my – uh, the throne.”

The gavel dropped upon the podium, announcing that it was time for the traditional coffee break before beginning plans for the ball.

During the coffee break, a hurried impromptu meeting was held in a locked hotel room. Three rogue members of the Romanov family declared their conviction that, if Mikhail Romanov rejected both the Orthodox Faith and the opportunity to formally renounce his right to the throne, then he deserved to die. They felt that a mere family declaration that he was ineligible for the throne would still leave the family vulnerable to accusations that Grigory was a usurper.

They felt it was more expedient for one man to die for the nation, rather than for the Romanov dynasty to risk permanent rejection by the Russian people.⁵¹ And so they agreed that, when the private emissary would be sent to Mikhail Romanov in Michigan, he would add one minor detail to the official Romanov family decision. If Mikhail refused either reasonable option – reversion to Orthodoxy or voluntary public and permanent abdication – then he should not be surprised if an unfortunate fatal accident should happen, making his childless existence come to an early and abrupt end. Grigory would then once again be the undisputed heir to Marina’s trusteeship of the Russian throne.

The three members all swore a pact of absolute secrecy, since they knew that neither Marina nor Grigory would ever agree to their murderous plan. One of them suggested an ideal street thug to send as the messenger to Mikhail, and the three agreed to convince Grigory to use this man, without telling Grigory about their death plot.

⁵¹ cf. John 11:50.

Chapter Eight

June 2, 2015.

The State of Vatican City, Inside Rome, Italy.

Part A. Vatican Gardens. Tuesday Afternoon.

It was late afternoon on a brilliant June day in Rome, and Pope Nicholas was enjoying a solitary walk in the enclosed Vatican gardens. Swiss Guards, ready to protect at any moment, stood by at a discreet distance. Birds sang merrily, bees buzzed in the sweet-scented blossoms, and a light breeze sifted through the rustling leaves, blending symphonically with the tinkling waters of two nearby fountains. As he walked, Nicholas looked down at his red shoes, and thought of the terrible responsibility they represented: to be shepherd for the whole world, and one day to answer to Christ for the use he had made of his time in the Chair of Peter the Apostle.

Today, Tuesday, was Nicholas' eighty-fifth birthday. People said he had aged well, and perhaps still had several important years left to rule. His mind was clear, his health was stable, and his energy was remarkable for a man of his age. His full head of snow-white hair, which had never receded, evoked a certain youthfulness in his visage.

Nicholas often sensed that it wasn't how much time one had to spend on earth, but how much real difference one dared to make, that mattered. While the world hurried on unawares, the Church was engaged in a final battle with the devil for the salvation of souls. The modern world was all too comfortable with convenient abstractions, always talking about "peoples" or ethnic "communities," simply new variants on the tired old Marxist fiction of "the people." In reality, only individual souls existed. It was the eternal destiny of each individual soul that, in the end, mattered. Yes, individuals could form communities and nations, and such entities were also bound collectively by the law of God. But to heal a nation spiritually, it was necessary to bring about the conversion of a great majority of the individual souls comprising that nation. That was precisely why Nicholas found it so difficult to imagine that the nation of Russia – or any other modern nation, for that matter – would ever actually convert. Truly, a miraculous intervention by Heaven would be required.

Nicholas thought about the powerful forces entrenched within the Vatican itself that were opposed to Heaven's plan for world peace through the salvation of individual souls on a vast scale. Some of these opponents were slaves to their pride, and wanted the world to think highly of them as intelligent men in tune with these progressive times. They wanted the Catholic Faith to gradually meld into the emerging universal religion of man. They tended not to really believe in the immortality of the soul, eternal judgment, or the life of the world to come. To them the Church was useful as a powerful existing organization, and they were content to enjoy their privileges and the human respect of their positions.

Other highly placed churchmen were slaves to their passions. A few

were womanizers, or lived as if married despite their vow of celibacy. A great many more, it seemed, were afflicted with the disorder of same-sex attraction, which, according to timeless Tradition, should have barred them from holy orders. Most of them had been profoundly wounded through abuse in their own childhood, or had been denied the normal psychological formation of manhood because of isolation and neglect. They should have pursued quiet lives of holiness and chastity in the lay state, accepting their particular cross of unnatural temptation, and carrying it as best they could. But they should not have sought the honor and dignity of the priesthood, which was to be reserved only for normal men of outstanding character. The damage inflicted upon the Church by the infiltration of those who had been unwilling to bow to these age-old ecclesiastical restrictions was incalculable.

Still other men in the Vatican were conscious political infiltrators. He recalled how the former attorney for the Communist Party of America, after her late-life conversion to the Catholic Faith, testified that she had helped place more than one thousand exceptionally talented agents in Catholic seminaries back in the mid-Twentieth Century, and many of them were now at the zenith of their ecclesiastical careers. Such men never did believe in Christ, but only mocked Him by pretending to believe through long years of rapid ascent, due to their exceptional human abilities, into the top echelons of the Church hierarchy. They were saboteurs, all the while waiting for opportunities to undermine the Church's reputation, influence, and clarity of teaching. Nicholas thought of numerous prominent bishops, recently retired, who had been major irritants to him throughout his entire career, and who had persistently flaunted the wishes of their Catholic faithful in the most obnoxious and self-righteous manner. They had stripped magnificent church buildings bare in an iconoclastic fury, promoted subversive sex education programs, and had disciplined none except those few brave clergy still leading lives of holiness and accurately teaching undiluted Catholic doctrine, the Faith once delivered to the saints.

Nicholas remembered how Jesus Himself had chosen twelve, and one of them turned out to be a traitor. Still, he found encouragement in the growing numbers of "traditional Catholics," including many young people, who professed firm and uncompromising belief in what the Church had always held and taught. Many of them had been subjected to decades of unjust persecution within the Church, suffering repressive tactics reminiscent of those used against "refuseniks" in the former Soviet Union. Nicholas was glad that, in recent years, the liberation of the old Tridentine Mass, and the ongoing theological discussions between Vatican officials and certain traditionalist groups, had brought traditional Catholics into wider if still tentative acceptance as a part of the Catholic Church. Nicholas understood that traditionalists had never really been schismatic, since they never denied one tenet of the Faith nor did they ever deny the authority of the Pope. They had simply engaged in the equivalent of civil disobedience against the unjust imposition of certain new rules, such as

the *de facto* banning of the ancient Mass, rules that were not logically reconcilable with Tradition.

As he walked, Nicholas came upon a garden statue of Our Lady of Fatima. This reminded him of the millions of Rosaries which had been presented to him annually beginning in 2010, as a spiritual bouquet, for the intention that the consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary might be done in the precise manner requested at Fatima. The first year, the traditionalists had tallied more than nineteen million Rosaries, and in subsequent years the annual total had never been less than twelve million.

Nicholas had the disconcerting sense that, each year, it was becoming even more clear to him that the prophetic message of Fatima was not all in the past. He knew that the Vatican Secretary of State's document, released in 2000, in which he had been complicit but with reservations, had contained the vision granted to the children at Fatima, but did not include the verbatim words of Our Lady explaining its meaning. Each of his predecessors had found those actual words of Our Lady too terrible to release, because they seemed to foretell a disaster for the Church and the world. They had warned of a great apostasy from the Faith, a diabolical disorientation beginning within the Church and beginning at the top levels, following a confusing, non-doctrinal "pastoral" council that would take place after 1960. Our Lady's words had clearly indicated the unspeakable shame of the widespread molestation of innocent children by consecrated souls. She had also warned of the coming annihilation of many nations.

He remembered how Sister Lucy experienced a visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1929 at Tuy, Spain, where Mary told her to inform the Holy Father that it was now time to proceed with the consecration of Russia, exactly as first indicated on July 13, 1917 at Fatima. Then in 1931, Sister Lucy experienced a visitation of the Lord Jesus in Rianjo, Spain, at which time He warned that the Popes would suffer like the Kings of France, because they tarried too long in carrying out the request of Heaven through His Mother. Nicholas recalled how on June 17, 1689 Jesus had asked the King of France (and his successors) to consecrate their kingdom to His Sacred Heart, but they delayed until June 17, 1789, when Louis XVI was stripped of his legislative powers and could no longer order it to be done precisely as Heaven had requested. Louis XVI tried to do it in desperation from his prison cell, where the French Revolution had put him. But in that place, he could not do the consecration of France with the requested solemnity this ceremony needed.

Nicholas stopped, and performed some mental arithmetic. The consecration of Russia had first been mentioned in 1917, and the request to do it had come in 1929. It was now 2015, ninety-eight years after the Fatima apparitions, and only fourteen years before 2029, the hundred-year deadline of the specific request at Tuy. If not Nicholas, certainly the next Pope would have to obey.

Then Nicholas reminded himself of the little-recognized diminishment of the power of the Holy Father that had followed Vatican II. Prior to the council, the Pope was clearly a monarch, and the heads of all Vatican Congregations reported directly to him. After the council, the Vatican

Secretary of State became a *de facto* prime minister, and all the heads of Vatican Congregations reported to him. He in turn, alone, reported to the Holy Father. It had often seemed to Pope Nicholas that the Vatican Secretary of State actually held the real power, and that he, the Pope, was merely a figurehead who could be disobeyed with impunity just as long as the Secretary of State was complicit in the disobedience. For this reason, the Pope was probably powerless to command a fulfillment of the Fatima request for the consecration of Russia, even if he wished to do so. Perhaps he was already in a hopeless position analogous to Louis XVI after 1789, who from his prison cell was unable to solemnly and publicly consecrate France as Heaven had requested. Nicholas believed that many of his subordinates, the Catholic bishops of the world, would now simply refuse to obey the Holy Father's order to publicly consecrate Russia, and then the Pope would be made to appear foolish and impotent in the eyes of the world. It would become known that he had no real power, and then the world would stop listening to him altogether. He would become irrelevant, a one-time monarch who no longer ruled even his own household. He liked to console himself with the idea that, under these circumstances, surely Heaven could not hold him personally responsible for not consecrating Russia.

A bell in a small campanile sounded, signaling the Holy Father that his time for exercise was ending, and that he must move on to his next obligation. A group of music students from Russia had come to play classical music for him in the reception hall of the Apostolic Palace, in honor of his birthday. Therefore he needed to have an early supper and then get ready to greet them.

Part B. Reception Hall in the Apostolic Palace. Tuesday Evening.

George Peterson and his wife Katarina Fyodovsky had flown back to Moscow on Monday, where the De Boni Artes foundation had arranged a dress rehearsal at the Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. Their trip had proved to be uneventful, and they spent one night back at the comfortable and secure Moscow Hilton Leningradskaya. Father Popov visited them there, late at night, and entrusted them with the letter which they were to deliver in person to the Pope.

However, their recent time back home in Detroit had not been uneventful. While going about their daily routines at work, George and Katarina had each experienced several occasions when, unmistakably, they were being shadowed by evasive men who neither spoke nor clearly showed their faces. Three days before their flight back to Moscow, they had returned after work to their downtown Detroit condominium to find it ransacked. Drawers were emptied on the floor, furniture and rugs were overturned, and mattresses and framed pictures were cut open. Packaged foods were spilled everywhere. Since the entire house had been torn apart, there was reason to believe the intruders did not find what they were

seeking. And the rage expressed by certain “messages” seemed to confirm this conclusion: on the stove, a photo of Katarina was partially incinerated on a burner. Adjacent to this was a twelve-inch hand-carved wooden male figure – of “The Man of La Mancha,” brought to them from Spain by a friend – which had both its legs broken below the knees. In the middle of the entrance foyer was a 1962 Roman Missal, lying open on the floor in a pile of human excrement, with a large kitchen knife thrust through it. All their crucifixes and religious statues had been piled in the fireplace and partially burned. On the walls and window shades, scatological, obscene, and blasphemous words and phrases were spray-painted in black. Metropolitan Filaret had warned them that dark forces might come seeking the letter, so that it was better kept locked in his hidden wall safe at the Cathedral of Christ the Savior until their return to Moscow. As they surveyed their ruined home with sadness, they remembered his warning that, by agreeing to deliver the Russian leaders’ letter of private pleading to the Pope, they would be declaring war on hell itself.

From Moscow, with George and Katarina as chaperones, six of the Russian students who had won high honors in piano and organ in the *Soli Deo Gloria* competition would now travel as a group to Rome, where they would play piano for the Pope’s birthday. Since the pipe organ has never been part of the Orthodox Church’s musical tradition, four of the students were Catholic and planning to take part in the restoration of traditional Catholic liturgy in Russia. Two were Orthodox, and planned to use their organ skills in secular settings. But all were talented pianists, and all were honored to be playing for the Pope.

The group had arrived in Rome at noon by air nonstop from Moscow, and had been transported directly to a music conservatory not far from the Vatican, where several grand pianos were made available for the students to practice. Because it was summer semester, spare dormitory rooms were available for the night, and they had supper in the school cafeteria before the short drive to the Apostolic Palace for their performance. It was now seven o’clock in the evening, and George and Katarina and the six students sat nervously in the reception hall, awaiting the entrance of the Holy Father. None of them had ever met a Pope before, or even seen one in person. As Katarina remembered that the musical performance in honor of the Pope’s birthday was not the main reason why she and George had come, her anxiety increased. They were going to be meeting the Pope in person in private, and were going to deliver to him a letter from Russia which might be exceedingly troubling to him. Everyone who knew anything about Fatima knew that this Pope had long ago been complicit, as a Cardinal, in the Vatican Secretary of State’s 2000 document implying that Fatima was now all in the past.

Suddenly two Swiss Guards appeared through huge double doors, and one announced, in military manner, the arrival of the Pope.

“Ladies and gentlemen, please rise for His Holiness Pope Nicholas VI, reigning monarch of the State of Vatican City, Pontifex Maximus, and Servant of the Servants of God.”

Immediately, Pope Nicholas strode through the doors, his bright red shoes gleaming beneath his white cassock. His face beaming, he stopped before each of the eight guests, beginning with George and Katarina, greeting them in person. Those who were Catholic knelt to kiss his apostolic ring, thus making a public display of their submission to his supreme authority in spiritual matters. Then he raised each one up by grasping both hands, smiling and thanking them for coming to honor him on this special personal day. He then signaled for them all to be seated, while a guard brought up a chair for him, so that he could face the group at an intimate but comfortable distance. The Steinway concert grand piano, which had been a gift to the Apostolic Palace from a group of famous symphony conductors, had been strategically positioned so that the entire group, including the Pope, would be able to enjoy an unobstructed view of the keyboard.

“A few short years ago, students, when I was about your age,” he chuckled, “I fancied myself to be a future concert pianist. My dear brother Frederick and I spent several years studying together at the top music conservatory in our home state of Bavaria. But God had other plans for both of us, and instead we found our way to the seminary where we both became priests. Still, music has always held a special place in my life, and still serves to calm my soul when the pressures of work weigh down upon me. I like to think that those who already know how to make beautiful music will have a bit of a head start if they should someday make it to Heaven, where the angels and saints ever sing to God. So it is a great joy to me, tonight, that some of Russia’s most talented young musicians will grace this wonderful concert grand piano with the youthful passion of their refined playing.”

“And then will you play for us, too, Your Holiness?” asked one nervous but eager student.

“Rumor has it that the Holy Father himself may play a note or two, at the conclusion, but only if you have not played *too* well.” Then he laughed, and his octogenarian eyes sparkled. “Please begin.”

Katarina arose first, went to the piano, and launched into a complex classical rendition of “Happy Birthday,” while the students all sang to His Holiness, in four-part harmony, first in Russian, then in German, then in Italian, and finally in Latin. At the conclusion the Holy Father beamed, and said:

“Thank you, students! Some people will claim that I am fluent in each of those languages. But when I hear Latin then I truly feel at home, for it has been the universal language of the Church since its founding. As we grow old, we find ourselves less impressed by whatever is new, and instead we find ourselves comforted by that which does not change.”

The first performer now arose and moved to the piano bench, as Katarina returned to her seat. His flawless rendition of a Tchaikovsky piano sonata was followed by other students performing works by Beethoven, Liszt, Rheinberger, Rachmaninoff, and, finally, a little-known composer

named Kiril Romanov, performed by Mariya Peterson. The Pope was delighted with the whole program.

“Many thanks to all of you fine young people,” said the Pope, “for sharing your well-developed talent with an aging Pope tonight. Each of the first five composers are among my favorites. Now, the final work was majestic yet hauntingly beautiful, capturing the very soul of Russian music. But I have to confess that its composer is unknown to me. Who was this Kiril Romanov? Perhaps a relative of the Russian royal family?”

“Holy Father,” answered Mariya, “I also have something to confess. Unlike the other performers here tonight, I am Russian, but not really from Russia. My mother was born there, but I have grown up in Detroit, in the United States. And there in Detroit we have a humble and holy priest named Father Kiril Romanov, who is a very talented pianist and composer. It was he who wrote the work you just heard.”

“It was delightful,” responded Nicholas. “You know, I have a personal assistant, Father John Herald, who is from Detroit. We are nearly the same age, and have lived to see many changes. My predecessor released Father Herald from his vows as a member of the Society of Jesus, and now Father Herald spends part of each year here in Rome, assisting me with special projects, and providing spiritual direction to some very prominent religious, people who are probable saints in the making. The rest of the time he stays in Detroit, where he teaches the real Catholic Faith, without compromise, both through live lectures and recordings. He has often mentioned that his parish there has exquisite music, with a Gregorian Chant schola, a very talented young organist, and a Latin Choir offering periodic orchestral Masses by the great Catholic polyphonic composers. I have been impressed to hear that these Masses are offered in the Traditional Roman Rite, for which they were intended. Let me see ... I believe the parish name ... has something to do with Fatima.”

“Yes! That is my home parish, ‘Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Church,’ often known as the ‘Cova’. Father Romanov is both our pastor and our music director.”

“Ah, yes. That is exactly where Father Herald stays. He has often spoken of the parish’s wonderful replica of the little chapel at the Cova da Iria, the very spot where the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to the little shepherds in Portugal. I believe he said it is out in the back of the parish cemetery, right in the middle of the City of Detroit. Father Herald often feels that it is the same to pray there, as if he were at the original shrine in Portugal. And if I were not a virtual prisoner in this ancient palace, being bossed around by the Secretary of State and the other Cardinals, I myself would like to go there someday for a visit – incognito, mind you, like a little church mouse in the corner – and hear one of those orchestral Masses and to pray at that Cova.”

“Holy Father,” asked one of the young Russians, “may we have the privilege now of hearing you play for us?”

“Well, I would be justified in refusing, you know, because I warned

you that if you played *too* well, I would reserve the right not to follow. But, one is permitted a greater number of wrong notes at my age. Some people try to say a Pope should not play concert piano music. But for me, performing on the piano is my human passion, it is what I thought I wanted to do before God called me to the priesthood. And a little bit of it, every now and then, helps to keep an old Pope sane – if that is possible. Now my predecessor used to ski the Alps, during the first few years that he was Pope, and people also frowned on that, one cartoonist even calling it ‘The Schuss of the Fisherman.’ But that was his way of renewing himself athletically and psychologically. In Europe, nearly everyone skis, and it does not have any connotation of being a sport just for the rich. Perhaps these things are not unlike the times when Saint Peter would go fishing again when he was in despair, or when Saint Paul would continue his former craft of making tents even while he was traveling to preach the gospel.”

With that, the Holy Father arose, moved to the piano, and seated himself on the bench. The bright red “Shoes of the Fisherman” gleamed beneath his white cassock, as his right foot found the sustain pedal and the left foot depressed the sostenuto pedal, hinting at a thundering bass beginning. Immediately the students heard a masterful performance of Rachmaninoff’s Piano Sonata Number One in F Sharp Minor, in three movements, lasting altogether almost forty minutes, performed entirely from memory. By the time the Holy Father had finished, various Cardinals, priests, seminarians, and nuns had crept into the back of the room, about fifty in all, so that a thunderous applause and shouts of “Bravo!” erupted after the final chord fell silent.

“Happy birthday, Holy Father!” they all cheered. “Ni-Cho-Las is the Pope for us!”

His Holiness smiled, and nodded to the gathered crowd humbly, and then greeted each of the students again, one by one, thanking them for their special trip to honor him. He invited them to attend Mass the next morning in his private chapel, noting that the Tridentine Mass was his ordinary daily Mass. Finally, he came to George and Katarina, and invited them to come with him into his private office for a personal visit.

Part C. Papal Private Office, Apostolic Palace. Tuesday Late Evening.

The Pope’s private office had two large windows overlooking Saint Peter’s Square. Glassed-in bookshelves occupied a second wall, a marble fireplace graced a third wall, and the fourth wall was covered with a huge mural, dating from the Renaissance, depicting biblical scenes of Saint Peter. In one scene Christ was handing Peter the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; in another scene He glanced in sorrow at Peter, just as a cock crowed; in yet another scene Peter was shown hearing the confession of a penitent; and, lastly, Peter was seen baptizing a Roman soldier and his household. A huge desk of intricate inlaid wood stood before the mural. Out in front of the desk was a comfortable seating area of upholstered

chairs, end tables with lamps, and small ottoman footstools, designed for relaxed conversation in a circle. The Holy Father motioned for George and Katarina to be seated in two of the chairs, facing each other, and he then sat between them, putting his red shoes up on the small ottoman. He rang a small hand bell, and two sisters in full religious habit entered, bringing coffee and a light dessert. Nicholas smiled warmly at his nervous guests, and then began.

“This is the way a private audience works for people whom the Pope feels he already knows, even if we have not met before. You are from Father Herald’s ‘Cova’ parish in Detroit, and your daughter plays wonderfully and speaks Russian like a native. I have two of your organ compact discs, Katarina, and I even heard you perform live once in Rome, at the wonderfully restored pipe organ in the Academic Hall of the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music. Back then I was still a Cardinal, and could go to such things without a lot of hoopla. And you, George, have quite a reputation with the Archbishop of Detroit, for helping him with difficult cases of emotional disturbance in souls pursuing holiness. I am aware of several cases where you helped clear the way for much-needed exorcisms. Quite remarkable for a scientist who, I am told, was once a stubborn agnostic.”

George blushed. But he decided against scowling at his dear wife, who must have somehow spoken of his better-forgotten past to someone, who knew someone, who knew the Pope. Father Herald, no doubt, he decided.

“It is a joy to see how you are working with the youth of Russia to revive and foster great Western music,” said the Pope. “Catholics in Russia have a hard time of it, because the Orthodox are so afraid we are going to steal souls away from them. The Orthodox priests think they have it so hard there, because most Russians do not practice any religion. But it has become just as bad for Catholic priests in formerly Catholic Europe, where hardly anyone goes to church, and those who do are openly mocked at social gatherings. It is not so much that Catholics and Orthodox are competing with each other. It is that the world, the flesh, and the devil are actively competing with the flame of faith in souls.”

“Holy Father,” began George, “Katarina and I have something special to present to you tonight. It is a letter to Your Holiness, from two prominent Russians: Filaret III, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, and Vasily Polzin, the President of the Russian Federation.”

“But this is awkward. Why could they not send it through the usual diplomatic couriers?”

“Your Holiness, the Patriarch explained to us in person that he was afraid to send you this communication through any of the official channels, for fear that it would be intercepted, either in Russia or in the Vatican, by men opposed to the idea it presents. So he asked us to promise to personally deliver it to you this evening.”

Katarina opened her purse, withdrew a sealed envelope bearing the

official seal of the Russian Federation, and handed it to Nicholas. For the first time in this long evening, Katarina thought she detected a slight tremor in the Holy Father's hand as he reached out to grasp the document.

"Judging from the method of delivery, I can predict that this communication will not be consistent with current international politics. So I can assume it will not be consistent with the Church's official policy of Ostpolitik, seeking to build bridges through dialog with the Orthodox Churches."

"Nevertheless we took it to be very good, Your Holiness."

"So you have read it, then?"

"Yes, at the request of Patriarch Filaret, before it was sealed in this envelope in our presence."

"Well, then, you won't mind if you have to wait a few moments while the Pope tries to get up to speed with all you Russians!" Nicholas chuckled.

George and Katarina sat silently while the Pope opened the envelope and read the unsettling letter of supplication inside. When the Pope had finished reading, he sat in silence for several minutes, head bowed, praying.

"Some will say this is the best birthday gift any Pope could wish for. But I am terrified, and a sense of dread is enveloping me. Others will say it is a cruel curse to inflict on an old man of eighty-five. Do you have any idea what this will mean?"

"We suppose it will change the world, Your Holiness."

"Let us hope so. Because if it does not, publicly acting upon this letter could bring great ridicule and scorn down upon the Church and the papacy. I will have to pray fervently to determine if this is still the will of Heaven, after all these decades of delay. The risks of acting as requested in this letter are incalculable."

"Father Gottschalk, who runs the Fatima Herald apostolate in Detroit, says the risks of *not* doing the consecration are incalculable," retorted George.

"Yes, I know quite a bit about Father Gottschalk. He is a holy priest and a good man. Father John Herald speaks well of him. But however well intentioned he might be, for decades he has been a big thorn in the side of the Vatican. Because of him, we have never enjoyed complete peace about our Ostpolitik, or about our project for Christian unity through ecumenical dialog. Father Gottschalk has kept traditional Catholics stirred up, believing the consecration of Russia is the only viable path to world peace, because it is Heaven's mandate. I have to tell you that enormous pressures have been brought upon me, by the Secretary of State and a number of other Cardinals, to defrock him. But he has done nothing wrong. I sometimes wonder if he may actually be the Holy Father's best friend, even though my advisors tell me he is my worst enemy."

"Truth can never be the enemy, can it, Your Holiness?" asked Katarina.

The Pope winced, and then almost groaned with weariness.

"Holy Father," said George, "we know it is getting late, and you must be very tired already. Let us take our leave, so that you will have time to

reflect upon the Russian request.”

The Holy Father nodded, smiling with apparent relief.

“‘The Russian Request,’ you say? Perhaps that is how this unprecedented and unforeseen document will come to be called in the annals of Church history.”

“We will see you at Mass in the morning, and if there is already any private message to take back to Moscow, you can give it to us afterward.”

George and Katarina knelt, and Nicholas blessed them, and then bid them good night.

Part D. Papal Private Chapel, Apostolic Palace.

Late Tuesday Night / Early Wednesday Morning.

Pope Nicholas made his way to his private chapel, suddenly feeling very alone and acutely aware of the weight of the world on his aging frame. He knelt before the Lord Jesus, truly present in the Blessed Sacrament reserved on the altar, to begin to implore Heaven’s guidance. He prayed a *Pater Noster*, an *Ave Maria*, and a *Gloria Patri*. He became aware that he was no longer alone, and he began to adore the Sacred Presence. He thought of how, after Christ’s spiritual agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, angels came and ministered to Him. Nicholas invoked Saint Michael the Archangel, and prayed that the Holy Angels might also be with him in this terrible hour – when Satan must surely be seething with rage and planning to unleash all the powers of hell against this Russian Request. Nicholas scanned through the letter, to collect his thoughts and to prepare to pray more fervently:

Your Holiness: Please accept this private communication ...there are numerous powerful forces surrounding us and surrounding you, who would stop at nothing to prevent the fulfillment of this communication... We have been moved by Heaven’s grace to understand and believe the message of Our Lady of Fatima... the popes since 1929 have seen fit to delay... Russia has not converted, and the errors of Russia continue to spread throughout the world... practical atheism, secular government, dishonest monetary and military policies (the end justifies the means), oppressive government regulation and taxes, social engineering (survival of the fittest), attacks on Christian family life (contraception, abortion, euthanasia, easy divorce, legalized homosexuality and pre-marital cohabitation, secular government-controlled education, plunging real wages pushing many women into the workplace and children into daycare), and the enforced toleration of all religious traditions except Christianity... the world is engaged in a great spiritual battle, and human efforts to reunite the Christian Churches through politics and dialog have not been fruitful... Holy Father, we implore you, for the sake of Your Self, the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church, and all humanity:

please do not delay any longer! Please consecrate Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, in a public ceremony in union with all the bishops of the world... as soon as possible... This is Heaven's call for you to sit gloriously upon the Throne of Peter and to show forth the power of the Keys of the Kingdom, given to you alone by Christ... We Orthodox bishops are powerless against the world, because we lack the leadership of the Vicar of Christ and we do not hold the Keys of the Kingdom... Just as the Apostle Peter denied Christ three times... so you may have denied the relevance of the Third Secret of Fatima in your youth and middle age. But now, in the fullness of your days, you will, please God, cooperate with Heaven's request, ignoring human criticism... You may think that to perform such a consecration of Russia will offend the Russians... Through the message of Fatima, Heaven has offered to Russia a unique blessing: the opportunity to become the first modern nation to be restored to Christianity, to become once again a Christian Confessional State, and to lead the world, by example, back from the abyss of demonic disorientation and toward the glory of a restored Christendom and consequent world peace. How could any true Russian patriot, apprised of the facts, ever take offense at this?... Once the miracle of Russia's true national conversion unfolds, the wrath of the Orthodox will be turned into rejoicing... "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning"... please know that we are fervently praying for you, and would ask that you also pray for us... Yours in Jesus Our Lord... Patriarch Filaret III of Moscow and All Russia... Vasily Alexandrovich Polzin, President of the Russian Federation.

As Nicholas knelt in silent adoration, light flooded into his soul, as if the sun were rising upon a new day, dispelling the darkness. Cobwebs in the deep recesses of his mind were being swept away, and his limbs seemed to be reinvigorated with the manly urge to fight. From his prodigious memory he recited the familiar call to arms in Saint Paul's letter to the Ephesians,⁵² concerning the very sort of spiritual warfare that was now being set in motion:

Brethren, be strengthened in the Lord, and in the might of his power. Put you on the armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and power, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places.

Nicholas then considered the necessary preparation for such a battle:

⁵² Ephesians 6:10-20, DRV.

Therefore take unto you the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of justice, And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace: In all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one. And take unto you the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God).

Lastly, he was reminded of the need to have others praying for him, the Church Militant on earth invoking the aid of the saints, the Church Triumphant in Heaven, to join in interceding with God for help in the spiritual battle:

By all prayer and supplication praying at all times in the spirit; and in the same watching with all instance and supplication for all the saints: And for me, that speech may be given me, that I may open my mouth with confidence, to make known the mystery of the gospel. For which I am an ambassador in a chain, so that therein I may be bold to speak according as I ought.

The Pope thought about how, just as Saint Paul had been a prisoner in chains while awaiting his Roman citizen's right to appeal to Caesar, so Nicholas was essentially a prisoner in the Vatican, not in physical chains but surrounded and in many ways controlled by powerful men who would not believe in or approve of "The Russian Request". The powerful Vatican bureaucracy largely controlled the Pope's public ability to act. Nicholas would need the special grace of office, as the Vicar of Christ, in order to boldly proclaim what Heaven seemed to be asking now. He realized that it would be exceedingly dangerous to plunge ahead alone, as no man, not even a Pope, is any match for the devil. Competent and trustworthy spiritual direction was urgently needed. No doubt it was due to the Providence of Almighty God that Nicholas' most reliable advisor, Father John Herald, was currently in residence in the Vatican. He resolved to rouse him from sleep, if necessary – though Father Herald was accustomed to praying and writing into the wee hours of the morning, often while in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. Nicholas had no doubt that Father Herald's prodigious output of solidly traditional Catholic books and study guides was the product of his accustomed intimacy with the Divine Presence.

Pope Nicholas left his chapel and walked down the quiet corridor of the Apostolic Palace, to the station where two Swiss Guards stood, military-style, at attention.

"At ease, lads," said Pope Nicholas, their Commander-in-Chief.

Both guards, trim and muscular and bursting with the vigor and beauty of disciplined young manhood, knelt at once to display their profound reverence for the Vicar of Christ, whose very life they had vowed to defend

with their own. The Pope blessed them each by name, for he knew them well, and greeted their parents and siblings several times each year at the quarterly picnics held for all the guards.

“Michel, although it is late, the Pope urgently needs to speak face to face with Father Herald. Can you and Jacques please locate him for me, and tell him the Holy Father has need of him, at once, in the Papal Chapel?”

“As you wish, Your Holiness,” they both replied in unison.

They resumed their usual military stance, but one of them spoke to the Swiss Guard central command through a concealed microphone and earpiece mounted in his shiny steel helmet. The Holy Father returned to the chapel, and resumed his agonized prayer, prostrating himself before the Lord Jesus Christ Who was truly present there, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity, under the appearance of consecrated bread, reserved in the Tabernacle on the altar.

In just a few minutes, Nicholas’ troubled heart was gladdened by the familiar voice of his trusted advisor. Father John Herald was eighty-six years old, tall, lean, and bald except for white hair at his temples. He had piercing brown eyes and spoke with a soft tenor voice now having the characteristic tone of an elderly man. There was a slight shuffle in his gait, but his mind was as sharp as in his youth.

“Holy Father, I came as quickly as I could. But neither one of us is getting any younger, and I was all the way over in Saint Peter’s, down in the Confessio, praying at the very tomb of the Blessed Apostle Peter. I had felt strongly moved today that the special intercession of Christ’s first Vicar, for Your Holiness, was going to be needed very soon.”

Nicholas often marveled at how deeply spiritual men, such as Father Herald, seemed to live in a special realm somewhere between Heaven and earth, with continual communication flowing both ways. Often they would foresee important spiritual events. And often they could “read souls” in the confessional, so that habitual sinners would be mercifully delivered from the bad habit of making insincere confessions. But then, wasn’t that sort of supernatural insight simply the reality of the “communion of saints,” mentioned in both the Nicene and Apostles’ Creeds? The two men sat side by side in the back pew of the chapel, as it was not fitting to converse in closer proximity to Christ on the altar.

“My dear Father Herald,” Nicholas began, “an event has transpired this evening which will likely prove to be momentous. I am deeply troubled, but not because I oppose the will of Heaven made resoundingly clear to me. Rather, I sense that an epic battle with the powers of darkness has been enjoined this evening, and I am afraid. Like Peter, I do not know if I can face the mockery and the scorn.”

“You cannot serve God and please this world. All those who are not with Christ are against Him. The Lord Jesus said ‘Blessed are ye, when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for My sake: Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very

great in Heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets that were before you.’”⁵³

“Today is my birthday, and marks still another year spent on the Throne of Peter without achieving world peace through Christian unity. Naturally I have been praying fervently for such peace. And today my prayer seems to have been answered, but in a manner I least expected.”

“But didn’t you always expect world peace to come through the Immaculate Heart of Mary?”

Again, Nicholas was amazed by Father Herald’s supernatural insight.

“But can you imagine that those whom I supposed were most against Christian unity have come to me pleading to help them convert?”

“There were Russians here tonight. I managed to sneak into the back of the Reception Hall for part of their performance. Do you mean the Russians?”

“Yes. Not the students who were here. It was their chaperones, an American couple from Detroit who have deep roots in former Imperial Russia. They came to me tonight as personal secret emissaries from Patriarch Filaret of Moscow and President Polzin of Russia.”

“Really! Can you possibly mean George and Katarina? I know them. They sing in Father Romanov’s choir at the ‘Cova.’”

“Yes. They brought me a personal letter from the Russian leaders, pleading with me to please fulfill the request of Our Lady of Fatima and consecrate Russia to Her Immaculate Heart in union with all the Catholic bishops in the world – and to please do so as soon as possible.”

“Mother of God, the angels shall sing your praise forever!” exclaimed Father Herald. “The Blessed Virgin told Sister Lucy that in the end the Holy Father would do it, but it would be late. She did not say exactly what it would be that would move the Holy Father to finally act in accordance with her request. But, I think now we know.”

“Please read this letter, Father, and then join me in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. I need you to watch with me one hour. And then I will need your spiritual direction. The devil is going to try to trip me up any and every way he can.”

It was midnight when Father Herald took his place on the kneeler next to the Holy Father. To a church mouse in the back corner, it would have appeared that nothing much happened for the next hour, as the two men, one in a white cassock and one in a black cassock, knelt in silent prayer before the Tabernacle. But in the heart of each man, a tempest was raging, as the powers of hell unleashed their fury of rage and hatred against the All-Immaculate Mother of God and these Her faithful sons. When the hour was ended, both were resigned to the immediate storm which was about to come upon the world. And both could see beyond it, to the magnificent Russian sunrise that was expected to follow. They retreated from the chapel to the Pope’s private office, where they settled into comfortable chairs, removed their shoes, and put their weary feet up

⁵³ Matthew 5:11-12, DRV.

on the little ottomans. The Pope had obtained a bottle of cold water for each of them, from a small refrigerator behind his desk.

“You have to get away from here for a spiritual retreat, Holy Father. You are going to do battle against spiritual wickedness in high places. And there is no higher place in the Church than Vatican City. If you stay here, you will be targeted – spiritually at least, and possibly physically. It may be that the whole world will need to know of your intention to do the consecration before you can safely return to Rome.”

“But where could I go? The Holy Father cannot go anywhere without creating a spectacle, which in itself becomes a spiritual distraction.”

“To me the answer is obvious. You must come with me to the Cova in Detroit. You will travel in disguise, of course. Only a handful of holy and trustworthy people will know your identity. The great men of the world will never think of looking for the Holy Father in the midst of the tragic urban wasteland of inner city Detroit. At the Cova, you can pray in peace, and be as close to Our Lady of Fatima as if you went to the shrine in Portugal. Probably even closer, since the shrine at Fatima has been co-opted by modernists in the Church as an ecumenical meeting place for all the world’s religions.”⁵⁴

“But Father Herald, it takes months, even years, to plan a papal trip. We do not have the time.”

“Do not worry, Your Holiness. I have many connections in Detroit, and I will be able to have it all arranged in two days. But I will need your help in arranging a decoy, to keep the press at bay. You will need to call your identical twin brother, Father Frederick. Tell him to prepare to come to Rome at once, as quietly as possible, and with absolutely no public announcement. I will arrange private transportation for him, so he will not be noticed by the paparazzi.”

Father Herald seemed inspired. He had known of “The Russian Request” for only an hour, and yet he was taking charge as if he had spent months working out a complex plan covering every contingency. Most likely he *was* being inspired, by saints and angels who so freely communicated with him from the realms of glory.

“Holy Father, we will announce to the world that you are going on a spiritual retreat for several days to an undisclosed location outside of Rome. In reality, we will dress Father Frederick in your papal cassock – you are of course the same size – and send him off to a quiet abbey in the mountains, where there is a trustworthy and holy abbot. Father Frederick will spend his days alone in a private wing, where only the abbot will have any personal contact with him. The press will be told the Pope is going to one of six or seven such abbeys and monasteries, so they will keep themselves busy for a while figuring out which one is the Pope’s true destination. Then, once they spot Father Frederick through their telescopes, they will think they have “beaten the system” and will be satisfied. They will publish exclusive stories in the tabloids that they have found the Holy Father’s secret location. The “Pope” will be seen to

⁵⁴ Maehlmann *et. al.* article. See Bibliography.

exercise daily, in the private walled garden, and the paparazzi will publish “exclusive” and “secret” telephoto pictures of him. The Secretary of State will be beside himself with joy because he will be able to run things in your absence, and pretend he is Pope.”

“He pretends that every day anyway,” chuckled Nicholas. “But what about transportation? How do you smuggle a Pope out of this place?”

“I have a good friend in Detroit, a holy and devout man who is a wealthy Catholic businessman. He is completely trustworthy, and will rejoice at an opportunity to be of service to Your Holiness. If I tell you his story, then you will understand why this plan can work. Don Brown is a self-made billionaire. He grew up poor in Washington, D.C., but was a gifted athlete who starred in college basketball and went on to become the number-one draft pick in the American NBA.

“He came to Detroit to play for the Pistons and used his earnings to found a manufacturing firm in the decaying inner city of Detroit, that gave honest employment to many desperate young men. The firm developed a tuition-free in-house private school to help young men from the inner city complete high school, develop trade skills, and most importantly learn how to be responsible husbands and fathers. In just a few years, the Brown Group was the major supplier of custom auto parts to the Big Three automakers in Detroit, and Don Brown became a billionaire. But he did not rest.

“When the mayor of Detroit was charged with fiscal and moral corruption and was run out of office in disgrace, Don Brown was selected by the city council to step in and complete the remainder of the mayor’s term in office. His competent and benevolent leadership won him a resounding victory at the next election, and he stayed in office for two more terms. Now he is retired from being mayor, has subordinates to run his auto parts business, and spends his time developing a system of tuition-free private Catholic schools in strategic locations throughout inner city Detroit.”

“Was he always Catholic?” asked Nicholas. “I have the impression that most African-Americans are Protestant.”

“They are, but Don Brown’s good work is rapidly changing that in Detroit, where many are converting to the Catholic Faith.”

“Well, was this Don Brown blessed to be a cradle Catholic?”

“No. Don Brown was nominally Baptist in his youth. When he was in college at Georgetown, his roommate and fellow basketball star was a devout young Catholic boy who had been homeschooled, and for many years had served as an altar boy at Old Saint Mary’s parish in Washington, D.C.”

“I know that parish! That’s where two of the United States Supreme Court Justices used to attend the Tridentine Mass every week, and thereby infuriate the liberal bishop – though of course the bishop knew better than to complain about it to me. I thanked God when the opportunity to replace him came along.”

Father Herald smiled knowingly.

“Anyway, Don Brown was converted through his four-year friendship with the Catholic boy, and by the end of college Don was also serving as an altar boy at Old Saint Mary’s. He underwent a profound conversion, and as much as possible has been a daily communicant who avails himself of frequent confession, and spends his spare time joyfully carrying out spiritual and corporal works of mercy.

“He has understood his unusual success in professional sports, business, and politics, as gifts from God to be used in the service of others. He has a character of natural nobility, and is not ashamed to live well but to also share his gracious lifestyle with as many others as possible.”

“Such a noble character,” said Nicholas, “calls to mind the writings of Brazil’s devoutly Catholic philosopher and social crusader, Professor Corrêa de Oliveira. In his book *Nobility and Analogous Traditional Elites*, which I used to require my university students to read, the learned professor demonstrated that in every society there are natural nobles, men and women who rise to the top of society and become leaders because of their God-given gifts of exceptional character and ability.

“He therefore argued that traditional societies, with their ruling nobility, simply reflected the natural hierarchy that God put into His creation. When I hear the story of a man like Don Brown, I am inclined to believe that the professor was correct.”

“I would agree, Your Holiness. Don Brown lives in a stately mansion on Belle Isle in the Detroit River, where he employs many domestic servants whom he treats with the utmost respect and dignity. They reciprocate with true loyalty, and most of them, like Don, are parishioners at the Cova. He owns by far the largest yacht in Detroit, but uses it mainly to entertain those whom he needs to lobby for the good of his business and charitable enterprises. He also uses it to reward those who have shown dedicated and selfless service to the Church or to the City of Detroit, sending them on romantic cruises around the Great Lakes.

“It is named the ‘Standart,’ and was inspired by the royal yacht of the same name designed and sailed by Nicholas II, the last Tsar of Russia. Some say the Standart, like its Russian namesake that no longer exists, is the greatest private yacht ever launched. Don also owns a private jet, which he keeps at the Detroit City Airport, just a short distance down Gratiot Avenue from the Cova.

“He has his own private staff of pilots, flight attendants, and mechanics. Since he routinely trusts his life and the lives of his family to these flight crews, they are of impeccable quality and character. They are the very sort of people we can trust to fly the Holy Father in secret from Rome to Detroit. And on their way to Rome to meet us, they will stop off in Munich and fly the Pope’s twin brother to Rome.”

“But how many can travel in a private jet? Can I take my guards?”

“The jet will hold six persons, plus the two pilots and one flight attendant. Our party will include Your Holiness, myself, and four Swiss Guards. You will be dressed as a simple parish priest, and the guards will wear civilian clothing for the journey. During the trip, and whenever

you are in public at the Cova, you will wear a wig and a false beard and mustache, so that Your Holiness will not be recognized. Do you have any preferences regarding the Swiss Guards?"

"Well, of course I would select Michel and Jacques, my palace guards, and ask them to select the two others. But – will that be sufficient security – in Detroit?"

"Don Brown has a large contingent of professional security guards who are accustomed to Detroit, and they will provide all the security you will need. They will know how to stay out of the way, and blend in so that people do not suspect a world leader is in their midst."

"And where will we stay?"

"The Cova has a large brick rectory of three stories, built solidly in old-world fashion, and has several extra bedrooms. Visiting priests commonly come and go, because the parish has a wide reputation among tradition-oriented priests.

"No one will think it unusual for a European priest to be visiting for a week. You and Father Romanov are both outstanding musicians and will enjoy each other's company. He has two grand pianos in the rectory and you can play music together. The guards will sleep in shifts in the rectory basement."

"This is to be a retreat, to ponder the future of the Church and the world. What about quiet places to pray?"

"There is a private chapel in the rectory, of course, and a public adoration chapel in the convent across the grounds. The main church has to be locked at night, so you could have it to yourself with guards posted all around. Finally, there is the cemetery, with outdoor stations of the cross, a replica of the chapel at Cova da Iria in Fatima, and, on the rear hill, is a Calvary. All these will be suitable places for you to pray, Holy Father."

Pope Nicholas felt a sense of peace about these plans. This was not an ordinary way for the Pope to conduct his business, but neither was there anything ordinary about "The Russian Request". As his long birthday drew to a close, Nicholas decided that a birthday was a good time to be reborn, in the sense of starting a new trajectory in life.

In his youth he had been an avant-garde expert at Vatican II; in his middle age he had remained the same while the Church and the world kept moving further and further away from all that was traditional. And now, in the twilight of his years, he would be decisive. Ostpolitik and ecumenism had borne no good fruit, and much that was bad. It was time to listen to Heaven after all, and to boldly obey, trusting Heaven for a miracle. But any failure of the miracle to materialize as promised, would bring down unimaginable ridicule and scorn upon both the Pope and the Church.

Chapter Nine

Wednesday, June 3, 2015.

Romanov Medical Clinic, Nazareth, Michigan.

It was late afternoon on a busy Wednesday in June at the Romanov Medical Clinic in Nazareth, Michigan. Doctor Mike had been getting somewhat bogged down, because his medical students, Luke and Monica, despite their eagerness to help, actually doubled the time it took to get each patient seen. That was the price of good medical education. On his computer, Doctor Mike scanned the remaining patients. The next one was a new male patient, who would probably take forty-five minutes. There would be a discussion of his chief complaint, and then a review of his medical history while performing a general physical exam. Blood tests would be ordered, but then the nurse would take over and Doctor Mike could begin his charting. He decided to excuse the students from this last new patient, despite the fact they would learn a lot by attending. Instead, he would assign each of them to see one of the two remaining follow up cases. That way, each student would only have to write up one easier patient, and there would still be hope of getting out of the clinic by six o'clock.

Doctor Mike picked up the chart from the wall pocket outside the door of Exam Room Three. Doctor Alexander Petrovich Kuznetsov, the new patient, was a forty-one year old married Caucasian male, newly arrived in Kalamazoo, with a Ph.D. in Russian history, who was planning to teach at Western Michigan University. He needed ongoing care for his mild hypertension, and had been referred to the clinic by word of mouth. A simple and straightforward case like this would not take long. So Doctor Mike entered the room confidently. Seated on the exam table was a dark haired, trim and fit Caucasian male who appeared to be about forty years old, unusually muscular, with prominent scars across his left cheek and right forearm. There was a diamond stud in his left ear lobe. Doctor Mike thought he looked more like a Russian mafia thug than a professor of history. Strange world.

“Good afternoon, Professor Kuznetsov. Говорите ли вы русский язык? (Do you speak Russian?)”

“Да, но я предпочел бы английский. (Yes, but I would prefer English.)”

“Okay, then. I am Doctor Mike Romanov, a specialist in Internal Medicine. I don't believe we've met before.”

“No.”

“And you've come to see about your blood pressure?”

“Yes, and one other matter.”

“Okay, but let's take one thing at a time. The nurse checked your pressure a few minutes ago, and it was 108 over 70. That's pretty good control, especially for being in a new clinic. Let's see ... your weight is ideal for your height with a muscular build, you don't smoke, you only

drink socially, and you exercise daily. That's all good. You take lisinopril 20 mg and hydrochlorothiazide 25 mg each morning, correct?"

"Yeah."

"Well, then, your medicine is working well for you. Any side effects?"

"Only a little dizziness, if I get up too quickly after I bend over."

"You've learned to live with that?"

"Yeah. It's no big deal."

"Great. I'll order a battery of blood tests to make sure your system is tolerating the medication without problems. Complete blood count with differential, chemistry panel, and cardiac lipid profile. But you'll need to be fasting for fourteen hours in order for some of those tests to be accurate. Can you fast after supper tonight, and come back tomorrow morning before you eat anything?"

"Sure, doc."

"Good. And what other matter concerns you today?"

"Your future."

"What?"

"You are in great danger, Mikhail Nicholaevich Romanov. I have been instructed to warn you."

Doctor Mike suddenly felt as if he had been punched in the abdomen. Memories of desperate moments in the war zones momentarily flashed through his mind. But almost immediately, his special forces training brought him back into complete self-control.

"Perhaps you are not really a professor of history, sir?"

"Not at the university, no. But I could tell you some real interesting history. About what happened to other men who refused to show respect for my employers."

"Yeah, well let me tell *you* something, punk. Up until two years ago I was a special operations Marine with classified training in martial arts and self-defense. You think you are strong, but I can take you down off that table and in ten seconds have you permanently disabled."

"Hey, doc, cool down, man. I never said *I* was going to hurt you. I'm just here to pass along a warning. From some very important people. People who don't like to get their hands dirty, and don't like to get their names in the news connected with anything shady."

"Okay, I know what this is about. When I was in Afghanistan I turned in those three Air Force pilots who were running drugs back to the mainland, using body bags and coffins stolen out of the back of my field hospital. You probably work for some politicians who get paid off to protect the dealers those pilots were supplying. Right?"

"Wrong. This has nothing to do with drugs."

"What, then?"

"Dancing. And religion."

"Look don't mess with me, punk. I'm in automatic attack mode right at the moment."

"It's a message from the Romanov Nobility Organization. Uh, just

certain members, actually. The organization wants you to know you are welcome to attend the upcoming ball in New York, and to bring your lady friend and her parents too. A lot of them want to meet you.”

“Okay, so they sent you?”

“Well, let’s just say certain members sent me, on their own. Ones who have a better than average understanding of what it takes to defend a dynasty. See, they don’t like it that you are Catholic.”

“What business is that of theirs?”

“They know all the details about how you could claim to be the first in line for the Russian throne. But the trouble is you are not Orthodox anymore. That could do real damage to the Romanov family reputation over in Russia. The Tsar *has* to be Orthodox.”

“Well you can tell them I haven’t been planning to claim any thrones anytime soon.”

“Well, that’s good, as a matter of fact, ‘cause the family voted that if you just wanted to forever renounce any claim to the Russian throne, publicly and in writing, then you can be left alone. But you can never go back to Russia again, either. The family can’t risk having people over there getting to know and like you any better.”

“And if I refuse?”

“Then you have to become Orthodox again, in case the throne gets reinstated and people start to say you are first in line.”

“And if I also refuse that?”

“Then the family will strip you of any rights to the Russian throne. They just held a vote on that. But certain family members want you to know that you should be very worried. You never know when a person is going to have an unfortunate accident, and wind up dead.”

“Wow.”

“So what’ll it be, doc? I have to tell something to the people who sent me.”

“Tell them I will humbly accept their gracious invitation to attend the Romanov Nobility Ball, and to invite the young lady, and her parents, whom I named in my recent letter to the organization. Naturally, I can’t say yet whether they will agree to go. As for the rest, that will take some time to decide.”

“Yeah, well, they said you’d probably need some time. You’ll get up to thirty days after the ball to tell them your final decision.”

“I’ll be talking with many of the Romanov’s face to face at the ball. So tell those ‘certain members’ of the family that they don’t need to send any more punks posing as patients.”

“If they have to send any more punks, doc, it won’t be to talk to you.”

After the clinic closed and the medical students were sent on their way, Doctor Mikhail Romanov telephoned his little brother, Father Kiril Romanov, at the Cova down in Detroit.

“Kiril, this is Mike. I think I’m going to need some advice from a

good priest.”

“I’m always here, Mike. Listen, why don’t you come down to Detroit this weekend? I’ll talk with you all you need, but I also need your help. We’re doing Haydn’s ‘Mass in Time of War’ this coming Sunday, and we already had the dress rehearsal with the orchestra, and now my bass soloist has to back out due to a personal emergency.”

“I’ll do it for you, little brother. We did the same Mass at Saint Augustine’s not more than a year ago, so I can brush up on the bass solos pretty easily.”

“Mike, what’s going on?”

“I heard Mariya Peterson play here in Kalamazoo a few nights ago. She is incredibly talented for her young age. And beautiful.”

“Mike, we wouldn’t be thinking about robbing the cradle, now would we?” Kiril chuckled.

“Like I said, Kiril, I need to talk with a good priest. I’ll come down Saturday morning.”

“Meet me Saturday noon for lunch at my office in the rectory, Mike, and we can talk all you want.”

Mikhail figured he’d save the news concerning the threat until he was actually with his brother.

Chapter Ten

Thursday, June 4, 2015.

Our Lady of Fatima Church (“Cova”),

Detroit, Michigan.

By Thursday afternoon, in just one and a half days, Father Herald had managed to orchestrate the arrangements for Pope Nicholas’ trip to Detroit with everything confirmed exactly as he had proposed on the night the Pope received “The Russian Request”. Don Brown had been thrilled by such an opportunity to drop everything and be of personal service to His Holiness, and had deferred in every way to Father Herald’s specific requests. Father Frederick Ritter had been flown from Munich to Rome in the Brown Group’s private jet, just as planned, and had already been dressed in his twin brother’s papal garb and successfully installed at a quiet abbey as a decoy for the paparazzi. The Pope, Father Herald, and four Swiss guards had then flown non-stop from Rome to Michigan in the same private jet, arriving at Detroit City Airport on Friday morning. They had flown “under the radar” over Lake Huron, landing at a remote field in rural northeast Michigan. Then, as they approached Detroit from the north, it appeared as if they were arriving on a domestic flight from northern Michigan, so they were not required to pass through customs. At the airport three large SUV’s, each of a different color and model, were ready for the motorcade up Gratiot Avenue to the Cova. The Swiss guards, dressed as civilians, and the Pope, dressed as a European parish priest in a black cassock and disguised with a wig and false beard, rode in the middle vehicle with Father Herald. The twelve Brown Group security experts, dressed in plain street clothes typical for the inner city, occupied the SUV’s preceding and following the Pope.

Upon arrival, two priests in black cassocks could be seen entering the rectory, an entirely ordinary event at the Cova. Once inside, they were immediately ushered into Father Kiril’s office. In a few minutes, Father Kiril arrived from the morning Mass. As Father Kiril entered his own office, he trembled, knelt before the Holy Father, and kissed the Fisherman’s ring (which Nicholas brought out of his pocket for the occasion, and then concealed once again). The office door was closed, and conversation began. The Holy Father was on retreat, explained Father Herald, and would be spending much time in prayer. Once the church was locked for the night, guards would be posted, and Pope Nicholas would spend time in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. Next the Pope was introduced to Father Ivan Belarus, who had grown up in the Cova parish, and had said his first Mass there in the Extraordinary Rite. Father Belarus was short, stocky, and had a full beard, neatly trimmed, framing brown eyes and a face which was neither handsome nor homely. In public he always wore a black cassock. Father Herald was recommending him to Pope Nicholas, as a personal assistant for this retreat. In public, Father Belarus would

always accompany the Pope, and would do most of the talking, implying that “Father Jacob” had very limited English. In this way, others would not be likely to recognize the Holy Father by his speech. On Sunday morning, Father Belarus and “Father Jacob” would attend the orchestral Mass, but they would not be participating in the liturgy. The Pope would value the opportunity to thus pray quietly, without distraction, while the glorious music of Haydn would help to lift his soul toward Heaven.

So on Friday evening, the church was locked at nine o’clock as usual, and Pope Nicholas entered to begin his private prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. No one else was to be allowed in the church, except Father Belarus, who would stay in the back with a security radio and be ready if the Pope should require assistance in any way. Swiss guards and Brown Group security personnel guarded the church and parish grounds. A three-quarter moon shone through a cloudless sky, and the city was mostly quiet.

Inside the church, the lights were off except for spotlights illuminating the high altar. The red sanctuary lamp, announcing the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle on the altar, flickered quietly. Pope Nicholas prostrated himself before the high altar, and again sought the advice and consolation of Jesus in this hour of terrible trial. He begged forgiveness for himself, and for all his predecessors since 1929, who had delayed, out of human respect, from fulfilling the simple request made by His Blessed Mother. He foresaw the rage and ridicule that would come from the world if he announced a plan to perform the public consecration of Russia. Minutes passed, perhaps hours, and the Pope remained deep in prayer. After some time Nicholas moved from the main altar to kneel at a side altar where stood a traditional statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

“Nicholas,” said a deep, thrilling voice, musical in its beauty.

“Here I am, Lord.” He knew it was the voice of Jesus, speaking to his heart.

“In 1917 My Blessed Mother appeared to the children at Fatima, and told them She would come back to request the consecration of Russia, by the Pope in union with all the Catholic bishops in the world, to Her Immaculate Heart. In 1929 She came back as She had promised, to Sister Lucy in Tuy, and instructed Lucy to tell the Holy Father that it was now time to do the consecration. But it was not done. In 1931 I appeared to Sister Lucy in Rianjo, and expressed My dismay with the Pope’s delay in performing the consecration of Russia. I warned that, if the Popes delayed too long, they would fall into misfortune like the Kings of France, who delayed fulfilling another specific request for a hundred years, and then suffered destruction. This year is 2015. In two years it will be one hundred years since My Mother announced Her request. Now is the time, Nicholas. Heaven has now offered you the extraordinary grace of “The Russian Request”. This was obtained through My Mother’s intercession, in response to tens of millions of Rosaries offered by the faithful for the consecration of Russia. If you do the consecration, Russia will be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world. If you do

not do it, World War III will soon break out, and terrible destruction and the loss of many souls will be the result.”

“But Lord, do we not have until 2029, one hundred years after Your Mother came back to Sister Lucy in Tuy to make the actual request?”

“Strictly speaking, yes. But My Mother first announced Her request in 1917. I am asking you to do the consecration before 2017. Two years, Nicholas. Do not delay. If you do, the devil will find ways to make it ever more difficult, until your successor finds himself trapped, like King Louis XVI of France, who in prison was no longer able to precisely follow the mandate of Heaven.”

“Lord, I believe in You,” said Nicholas. “O Jesus, help my unbelief!⁵⁵ I am afraid of the world, that they will mock the Church and despise Your Vicar, if I do the consecration and then Russia does not convert.”

“In acting as My Mother has requested, you will come to believe completely that Russia will convert. Do not be afraid of men, who after they have killed your body have no more evil that they can do to you. Rather, fear Him Who is able to kill both body and soul, in hell.”⁵⁶

“Lord, You know that not all the bishops will obey me, if I publicly order them to participate in the public consecration of Russia.”

“The majority of them will obey, some begrudgingly. A minority will not obey. You must use the Keys of the Kingdom, which I first entrusted to Peter, and the power of binding and loosing. Those bishops who refuse to obey must forfeit their office as bishop. They must be told they are in mortal sin, reserved to the Holy Father alone to absolve should they later repent.”

“Lord, should I go back to Rome to announce the consecration?”

“No, Nicholas. There is danger if you return before the day of the consecration. You should have it announced in Rome, with all the conditions imposed upon the bishops, while you are still hidden away here at My Mother’s beloved Cova. You should only return to Rome, by private means and in disguise, on the day before the consecration. Otherwise, evil men will try to kill you.”

The voice stopped speaking, and Nicholas remained for a very long time in prayer.

After awhile, Father Belarus approached from the rear of the church where he had been keeping watch, saying that it was now two o’clock in the morning, and the Holy Father needed to think about his rest.

“Did you hear a voice?” asked Nicholas.

“No, Your Holiness. It has been very quiet here tonight. No one said anything.”

“I am going to bed now, Father Belarus. Tomorrow I will be in retreat. On Sunday morning, please meet me at the rectory in time for us to be seated in church before the prelude begins. And remember, in public you must call me ‘Father Jacob,’ and we will pretend that I speak very little

⁵⁵ Mark 9:24.

⁵⁶ Matthew 10:28.

English.”

“Yes, Your Holiness,” said Father Belarus.

“Oh – and Father Belarus, will you please inform Father Herald that we are going to do it. Jesus has told me I must do it now. Father Herald will understand precisely what I mean. Please ask him to pray for me.”

“Yes, Your Holiness,” repeated Father Belarus. But he had no idea at all what it was that the Pope was going to do.

On Saturday morning at seven o'clock, Doctor Mikhail Romanov made early morning rounds with Luke and Monica at Borgess Medical Center. Medical students did not sleep in on Saturdays – or on Sunday either, this weekend, as they would be looking after Doctor Mike's patients, under the supervision of a colleague, while he went to Detroit. At half past eight o'clock Doctor Mike's BMW pulled out of Nazareth and found its way onto the I-94 freeway eastbound. His fingers found the well-worn beads of his Rosary, and he sought the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary on behalf of himself and all those for whom he daily prayed. He had added three new people: Mariya, and her parents George and Katarina, whom he had yet to meet. He knew they were in the choir and he would be meeting them at the Cova this weekend. Three and a half hours later the BMW pulled through the “Fatima Cova” archway off Gratiot Avenue in Detroit, and parked behind the rectory. It was noon, and Father Kiril had invited Mike for a private lunch in the rectory office. After lunch had been delivered by the new housekeeper, and Father Kiril gave thanks, their visit began in earnest.

“I still feel a profound sadness each time my new housekeeper appears, even though she is absolutely wonderful. It makes me realize how very much I miss dear Mary Moretti,” said Kiril.

“She was in this parish since long before we first came here as teenagers,” said Mikhail. “When I think of quiet saints like Mary Moretti, I am reminded that most great saints remain unnoticed by the world. Worldly greatness counts for nothing in the end.”

“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints,”⁵⁷ said Kiril, who could recite the Psalms by heart. Mikhail noted that his brother was struggling not to shed tears.

“Then maybe it's a good thing I'm not a saint just yet,” said Mikhail. “The Romanov's sent a punk to my office this week to threaten me, Kiril. That's the real reason I needed to come see you.”

“What?”

“It seems they had their annual meeting in New York, and certain family members are not terribly pleased that I exist.”

“What changed, Mike? You've never had dealings with the Romanov clan before, have you?”

“Well, no. But sometimes I share my history with people I meet, who show some interest. Recently I told my two medical students about my

⁵⁷ Psalm 116:15.

family history, because one of them inquired. And then I took Mariya out for coffee after her recital, and she asked all about it too. She ended up saying she thought I should go to the Romanov Ball and be proud to be Catholic. I decided maybe she was right.”

“Love is blind, Mike.”

“Hey, I only met her once, Kiril.”

“You do have impeccable taste, Mike. Mariya is a striking young woman, very talented, and unusually pure in heart. Good parents. Only eighteen, probably quite romantic. She is attached to an outstanding young man of this parish. But he is my protégé, so I know him well, and I suspect he’s going to end up being a priest, if he ever manages to tame his wild side. So you might have a slight chance, even though you’re ancient.”

“Yes, she told me all about Mark.”

“Really? And that didn’t scare you off?”

“Well, at first, yes. But after she said I should go to the Romanov Ball, I started thinking I would need someone to take along as my date.”

“And so you got the brilliant idea of inviting Mariya to go along with you to New York?”

“Well, yes – and her parents, of course. It seemed perfect, since apparently all three of them are of royal descent. I wouldn’t dream of taking her to New York without proper chaperones.”

“And so you contacted the Romanov Nobility Organization and applied to go to the ball, and to also bring Mariya and her parents, I suppose.”

“Yeah. Stupid, huh?”

“Apparently.”

“So what do I do now?”

“What were the threats?”

“Well, this muscled-up guy, about forty, showed up in my clinic as a new patient. He said he was sent by ‘certain members’ of the Romanov family to warn me that, since I have a good argument about being the rightful heir to the throne, it is intolerable that I am Catholic and no longer Orthodox. They seem to feel that could hurt the family’s chances of restoring the Russian monarchy. So the family wants me to either become Orthodox again, or to voluntarily and publicly renounce any rights to the throne. And if I choose to abdicate, then I also have to agree that I can never go back to Russia. They don’t want to risk my becoming popular there.”

“And if you agree to neither of these options?”

“Then I am very likely to suffer an unfortunate fatal accident. I get up to thirty days after the ball to decide.”

“So they do want you to attend the ball?”

“Yes. I suppose most of the family hope to schmooze me while I am there, to see what nice people they really are.”

“And to try to charm you into compromising your religious principles.”

“That will never happen, Kiril. As Saint Ambrose so famously said, *Ubi Petrus, Ibi Ecclesia, Ibi Deus*. ‘Where Peter is, there is the Church, there is God.’”

“Have you already invited Mariya to the ball?”

“No, not yet. After the threat, I don’t want her to have anything to do with these nasty people.”

Father Kiril sipped his tea, and appeared to be pensive for a minute or two. Doctor Mike sat nervously, understanding his little brother needed some time to think. And pray.

“Mike, I think you need to go to the ball. The thing is, hardly anyone knows who you are, from a Romanov point of view. If you go to the ball, the press will take great interest in you, and in your young lady and her parents. Then, if something untoward happens to any of you in the near future, it will not look good for the Romanov’s. Getting your faces in the news is going to be your best protection.”

“But I don’t want young Mariya to become involved in all this.”

“She already is. They know you like her, and they could attack her or her parents as a way of attacking you. As long as all of you are not publicly connected with the Romanov dynasty, any of you could suffer apparent accidents without bringing suspicion on the Romanov Nobility Organization. But once the press figures out that you exist, and that you have a claim which supersedes the claim of the current pretender, then you have some protection.”

“The old *cui bono* method – the press and the police would ask ‘who benefits’ if something should happen to us?”

“Exactly.”

“So, then, my little brother, the good priest, is now advising me to take an innocent eighteen year old female parishioner of his with me on an overnight trip to New York City?”

“Sounds bad if you put it that way.”

“Just kidding, Kiril.”

“But of course you would take her parents with you, too.”

“That goes without saying, bro. So, when should I invite Mariya and her parents?”

“There will be a champagne reception in the gymnasium after the orchestral Mass tomorrow. A chance for people to meet the soloists. I’ll introduce you to George and Katarina. I’ll notify them today that you plan to take them out for dinner tomorrow afternoon. Then you can invite them all to the ball. I may be otherwise occupied tomorrow afternoon.”

“Why, what’s going on, Kiril?”

“Can you keep a secret? I mean, something you can’t tell anyone at all?”

“Yes, Kiril. I’m your brother.”

“Okay, well I have a secret visitor here this week, a priest from Rome who is a dear friend of Father Herald, and has come here to the Cova for a spiritual retreat.”

“So?”

“This priest is also a bishop.”

“Well then, as a courtesy, he would have to notify the Archbishop of Detroit that he was coming into his diocese. So how is that a secret?”

“He didn’t want to tell the Archbishop.”

“Why ever not?”

“Because he is the Bishop of Rome.”

“But ... wait, wouldn’t that be the Pope!?”

“Exactly.”

“Kiril, little bro, you know you never cease to amaze me?”

“It wasn’t my idea, Mike. It was all Father Herald’s doing.”

“Still, Kiril, I am continually astounded by the things you manage to pull off here, in the worst part of Detroit, in a parish that normally would have been closed down and sold off decades ago.”

“The Holy Father is here in disguise. And he is excited about attending the orchestral Mass tomorrow. He’s quite a musician himself, you know.”

“Oh, great, so now I get to sing for the Pope as a last-minute, substitute soloist. And I thought I would be nervous just having Mariya and her parents listening!”

“You’ll handle it fine, Mike. Now remember, you can’t tell anyone at all. Not even the Peterson’s. The Holy Father’s security depends upon the fact that no one knows he is here.”

On Sunday morning, the sky would be brilliant blue, and the Michigan weather would be mercifully cool for a June morning. Being an inner city parish with limited funds, the huge stone church had never been air conditioned, but the massive limestone walls could retain the cool temperature of the previous night until close to noon. The solemn high Mass would begin at nine-thirty in the morning, with a concerto for organ and orchestra beginning ten minutes before.

But at four o’clock, in the pre-dawn darkness, Father Kiril came rapping on Doctor Mike’s guest bedroom door at the rectory.

“Mike! Wake up! It’s already four o’clock, and you have to play this morning!”

“I can’t. I’m going to sing. Go away.”

“Mike! I mean it, bro.”

“Be quiet, Kiril. I’m going back to sleep. You should, too.”

“You have to get up, Mike. Now. Mark Szczypiorski, the Cova’s supremely talented young organist for the Rheinberger Organ Concerto Number Two, has just called in sick. He’s got a fever, chills, and vomiting, and he can’t possibly perform. I know you know that Rheinberger piece, Mike. You recorded it at Saint Luke’s when you were a resident.”

“That was years ago. Be sensible and go back to sleep, Kiril.”

“No, you have to substitute, Mike. I can’t get anyone else on such short notice, and the Pope is counting on hearing it.”

“Kiril, don’t be ridiculous. I haven’t performed it publicly in ... let’s see ... uh, three weeks. We did it at Saint Augustine Cathedral in Kalamazoo before our last orchestral Mass.”

“See? See how divine Providence works, bro? You’re on, dude. The orchestra has already been paid and rehearsed it. No one will notice a few wrong notes, except for me and the orchestra, and they’ll appreciate the difficult situation you are in. However, you know me – *I* may be

somewhat more critical. So you need to get up and practice.”

There was a moment of silence, then Mike resumed his yelling at his younger brother. It was like old times, back when they were teenagers at home.

“Great! Just great, Kiril! First you tell me I have to sing the bass solos for Mariya and her parents, because your bass soloist had some emergency. Then you add that, oh by the way, and there’s nothing you can do about it, but the Pope will be here listening too, in disguise, but we can’t tell anyone about that minor detail. And now you drag me out of bed in the middle of the night and tell me I have to go practice the Rheinberger concerto on the organ so I can perform it in ... oh my gosh! Five hours! Why did you let me sleep so late, little brother?”

Kiril heard him jump out of bed, and saw the light shine out from under the door.

“I just found out, Mike. I’m laying the organ score here outside your door, and keys for the church and the organ loft. Get some coffee on your way out. I brewed it just for you.”

“Thanks, bro.”

“Oh, and if you happen to meet any muscled-up young men snooping around outside in the night speaking French, they’re probably just a few Swiss guards from the Vatican, disguised in street clothes from the ‘hood.’”

“Great!”

“Now you get over to the church and practice, Mike. I’m going back to bed.”

In the dim light of pre-dawn, Mikhail found his way to the same familiar organ loft where he had begun organ study as a youth of sixteen. The Cova’s three-manual pipe organ had been upgraded gradually, over the years, by their youngest brother Vladimir Romanov, whose downtown Detroit pipe organ workshop was not far away. But Mikhail was basically familiar with it and with the peculiar acoustics of this vast stone room. Before long, his fingers and feet were feeling limbered up, the coffee helped his concentration, and Rheinberger’s magnificent concerto greeted the morning sun just now beginning to glow through the stained-glass windows. Mikhail had always imagined that this noble work, composed in the late Nineteenth Century, would have been suitable for a great state occasion such as a royal wedding or the coronation of a king. Today, however, unbeknownst to the faithful, it would be music to welcome a Pope.

By half past eight o’clock, the Men’s Schola had completed the final rehearsal of their Gregorian Chant, and the full Latin Mass choir was beginning their warm-up in the school. Mariya, their rehearsal accompanist, was leading the vocal exercises. Mikhail now learned that she would be the organist for the Haydn Mass, which was scored for organ and orchestra, but she had not been familiar enough with the Rheinberger concerto. So the two of them would both be featured organists in the same program. Well, maybe Mariya would be a bit nervous too, Mikhail mused.

Fair is fair.

But then he remembered that she had already played for the Pope, in Rome, for his birthday. And she would not realize the Pope was present today. *Not fair.*

Then suddenly Mikhail experienced an uncharacteristic pang of intense jealousy, as he realized that, had this reportedly handsome young prodigy named Mark not been ill today, *he* would have been alternating places with Mariya at the console in the organ loft, while Mikhail spent the entire Mass on the choir risers down below on the main floor. With Mark out sick, Mikhail would have to run back and forth between the choir risers and the organ loft, serving as bass soloist during the sung portions of the Haydn Mass, and as organist for the three movements of the Rheinberger concerto which would be performed during prelude, communion, and postlude. It might all seem a bit frantic, Mikhail thought. But today would be the perfect opportunity to show his new young friend Mariya that not only could he sing, he could still play the organ with virtuosity – even if he was ancient. Suddenly, his fear about singing and playing for the Pope was completely erased by his new urge to show off – just a bit – for Mariya.

At ten past nine o'clock, Father Belarus, well-known to everyone at the Cova, emerged from the rectory accompanied by the elderly visiting priest, "Father Jacob," who had a full head of curly gray hair and a full gray beard. As they crossed the rectory lawn and entered the church, Father Belarus greeted many parishioners and friends visiting for today's special Mass, but Father Jacob just nodded and smiled. Father Belarus explained to those who asked that Father Jacob, visiting from Europe, spoke little English.

"But that's the beauty of the Latin Mass," noted one parishioner. "No matter where one travels in all the world, it is always just the same. The vernacular really isolates people when they travel, but Latin, the universal language of the Church, unites all nations and tongues in one liturgy."

Nicholas realized, from the parishioner's enthusiasm, how much the Church had profited, in those places like the Cova, that had taken full advantage of his action nearly a decade ago. It was Nicholas who had freed the old Latin Mass, so that any priest who wanted to could say it without any special permission from anyone. Nicholas' erudite sense of humor had caused him to give the elegant old Tridentine Mass the clever designation "Extraordinary Form," thus relegating the new Mass to the properly descriptive category of "Ordinary."

Together, the two priests – one youthful and one elderly – made their way into a pew about halfway down the nave of the church, and took their seats. Others soon filled in their row, and when George and Katarina Peterson arrived, they could not get close to Father Jacob on their way to the choir risers in the back of the church. That was good, thought Father Belarus, for of all people here today, they would be the most likely to see through Father Jacob's disguise. The Pope was fascinated to note that several rows of pews had been permanently removed from the back of the

church, making room for the orchestra of twenty-five players in front of the fifty-voice choir on risers. The rear choir loft could not accommodate that many musicians. But the organist, seated at the console in the choir loft above, could view the conductor through a large mirror. An announcement was made concerning a correction in the program. Two scheduled soloists had taken ill, and Doctor Mikhail Romanov of Kalamazoo, older brother of Father Romanov, was substituting on very short notice, both on organ for the Rheinberger concerto, and as bass soloist for the Mass. The Pope, himself an accomplished musician, understood intuitively what a great feat this would be for Mikhail, if he proved able to perform such demanding works well under the circumstances.

Then the first chords of the Rheinberger concerto were struck, and the Pope began to feel his soul transported into realms of noble order and beautiful dignity. When the final notes of the first movement reverberated through the stone arches, the Pope thanked God for the privilege of being present. By then a dozen altar boys, the three associate priests of the parish in traditional vestments with birettas, and several Knights of Columbus in full honor dress and with ceremonial swords drawn, had formed the procession at the rear of the center aisle. Mariya Peterson now sat at the organ in the loft, and as the first grand chords of a brief Widor excerpt sounded, a solemn procession began. At the gates of the sanctuary, the Knights stood guard while the altar boys and priests entered the sanctuary to begin the opening prayers of the Mass. As the priests knelt before the high altar steps, the grand organ music ended, and all in the sanctuary knelt before the divine presence in the tabernacle on the altar. Next, the Latin *Asperges* was chanted by the choir, while the priest sprinkled the congregation with holy water. Then, kneeling at the foot of the altar, the priest and altar boys began the prayers of the Mass, in Latin:

“I will go unto the altar of the Lord.”

“To God, Who gives joy to my youth.”

As the ancient, ever-familiar prayers of the old Latin Mass proceeded, orchestra, organ, and chorus filled the church with Haydn’s dignified and glorious music, embellishing the beauty of the words with sweet harmonies hinting of higher beauties in the Heavenly realms.

Mariya was thrilled by the rich bass voice of her new friend, Misha. She had also been astounded at his virtuosity on the organ during the prelude, which was the first movement of the Rheinberger concerto. Alternating with him on the organ bench, as the program proceeded, seemed to cement a common bond, like two adventurers who were sharing a challenge together. She could easily imagine becoming friends with such a man, and maybe making music together on a regular basis.

At Communion, during the second movement of the Rheinberger organ concerto, the Pope filed up the aisle in his simple black cassock and presented himself on his knees at the altar rail to receive Holy Communion. He felt a renewed hope that liturgy of such dignity would again become commonplace, beginning in the Catholic Church in Russia, once Russia converted. The Russian Orthodox had never tolerated any modernization

of their rite nor any tinkering with the Old Slavonic in which their Mass was prayed. He began to foresee how Russia, source of the spreading of the errors of modernism, would soon become the source of liturgical restoration throughout the world. Please, Jesus, he prayed, keep me strong to do what You are asking.

When the Mass had ended, most of the congregation remained in their seats to hear the final, third movement of the Rheinberger organ concerto. Then, when the church was silent, many lingered, on their knees, to make their thanksgiving to God. Father Belarus wanted to spirit Father Jacob out the side door of the church and back to the rectory as quickly as possible. But Father Jacob had other ideas. He wanted to go to the reception and greet the musicians, and thank them for their fine work. He whispered to Father Belarus not to worry, that he would pretend he only spoke German well, with very broken English.

After another twenty minutes, most of the parishioners and guests had gathered in the gymnasium. As soon as a Knight of Columbus announced the official opening of the reception, there ensued an enthusiastic and prolonged applause, with not a few shouts of "Bravo!" for all the musicians who had worked so hard to bring today's Mass to fruition. Father Belarus cringed, hoping no one else would notice that as Father Jacob repeatedly shouted "Bravissimo!" he sounded a *lot* like Pope Nicholas VI. But not one of the musicians, except for Mikhail, realized that they had thrilled the heart of the Holy Father himself. Father Belarus was nearly in a panic as Father Jacob went down the receiving line of soloists, warmly greeting each one and speaking a few words of praise in broken English. Mariya had the uncanny sense that somehow she almost knew this old German priest. When Father Jacob greeted Mikhail, their eyes met, and momentarily locked in a bond that only two benevolent monarchs might share.

What was it about this Romanov man that he seemed to exude a royal dignity? mused Pope Nicholas. He seemed as if he were born to be a king.

But Mikhail knew exactly what it was about this old German priest, with broken English, that made him seem to carry himself with the air of a head of state. He was the Pope in disguise. Mikhail had never imagined that he would meet a Pope for the first time in his life under such circumstances, where he could not fall on his knees to kiss the Fisherman's ring. Perhaps, he hoped, there would be another time and place where proper decorum would be possible.

Father Belarus only allowed Father Jacob one glass of champagne. Then he whisked him out of the gymnasium and back to the rectory, where the Pope had much work to do. It was Sunday, and servile labor was not permitted on the Lord's Day. But intellectual work, which tended to ennoble the soul, was permitted. The Pope, former university professor and author of numerous scholarly books, would begin drafting the proclamation that would soon be issued from Rome, announcing the consecration of Russia. As Nicholas settled into his comfortable desk chair, at a window in his third-floor corner bedroom overlooking the park-like cemetery, he

switched on his laptop computer and asked Father Belarus to bring his breakfast, and a pot of coffee with cream, to his room.

After that he was not to be disturbed except in an emergency, and would probably be writing all afternoon long. If he were able to make sufficient progress on his urgent task, then at five o'clock he would like to relax by playing duets with Father Romanov on the two grand pianos in the parlor, before supper. Father Belarus was charged with making sure Father Romanov would be prepared with some appropriate music.

Meanwhile, back in the gymnasium, Mikhail had cornered George and Katarina Peterson, and was inviting them and Mariya out to dinner as his guests. All of them were on their second glass of champagne, which fortified Mikhail with more courage than he might otherwise have been able to muster. Defending himself in war zones or against punks in his clinic was easy. He was trained for that. But greeting the parents of a beautiful young woman, who had swept him off his feet, was quite another.

In this, he was in foreign territory, untrained, and, to be blunt, basically scared stiff. Mikhail nervously suggested the Coach Insignia, a revolving dining room on the seventieth floor of the Renaissance Center in downtown Detroit, just a fifteen minute drive from the Cova. Perched atop the General Motors World Headquarters, the Coach Insignia was named for the Fisher Body Carriage logo that for decades graced the metal floor panels inside the doors of General Motors vehicles. The Peterson's were of course delighted at the invitation, being anxious to become acquainted with this man about whom their daughter had been talking incessantly.

Less than an hour later the four were seated in a window-side table overlooking the Detroit River and Windsor, Ontario. During the next hour, their table would slowly move around the circle, giving them a gradually shifting view of the entire Detroit metropolitan area. But the Peterson's perspective on their future lives would also be changing during that hour.

Mikhail explained that he had been honored to meet young Mariya after her recital in Kalamazoo recently. Being taken with her musicianship, he had invited her for coffee afterwards. In the course of that visit, they had shared the stories of their respective lives and histories, and came to understand that both were Russian royalty. He had mentioned to Mariya that his high school name had been Petrov, but that his family had retaken the ancestral Romanov name around the time when he went off to college. He was in fact the only living direct descendant of a Russian emperor, through an unbroken male line free of morganatic marriages. That meant he was arguably the crown prince of Russia, should the monarchy one day be restored.

Since he had never considered restoration of the Russian monarchy to be an important possibility, he had not previously been active in the Romanov Nobility Organization, nor had he attended the annual Romanov Balls in New York City. But Mariya had encouraged him to go this year. He had therefore inquired, and the Romanov family had extended to him an invitation to attend, and to bring Mariya and her parents as his guests. This would be allowed only because all of them were of European royal

descent.

“We only learned about that recently,” said Katarina. “We were so surprised.”

“The thought of attending a ball for royalty was hardly on our minds,” affirmed George. “Visiting New York on short notice can be prohibitively expensive.”

“Surprisingly, my brother’s friend Father Herald became aware of this opportunity for us – I think Father Kiril must have told him – and he has arranged with Don Brown, the retired mayor, wealthy businessman, and philanthropist – to fly us out to New York in his private jet on Friday afternoon. He will let us stay free for two nights in the Brown Group’s three-bedroom condominium suite on top of the Waldorf=Astoria, the very hotel where the ball will take place on Saturday evening. All we need to do is rent elegant evening attire, and practice our ballroom dance steps. Especially the waltz.”

Suddenly, everyone at the table began to see this adventure as a fairy-tale royal ball being generously set before them for the taking. The fact that it might set in motion a series of events that would change their lives forever was not foremost on their minds. They were focused on more immediate concerns, like evening gowns and fairy tale ballroom dancing.

Mariya had no thought that this would in any way permanently impact her relationship with her beloved Mark. She assumed he would be thrilled at her opportunity to mingle among Russian royals. Her parents, however, being older and wiser, recognized the possible hand of divine providence in these events. This adventure would provide an important opportunity to carefully assess the character of this admittedly charming older man to whom their beloved young daughter was obviously so strongly attracted – even if she hardly admitted that attraction to herself.

For Mikhail, it would be another opportunity to get to know Mariya, and to observe how she interacted with many new people. As the dinner progressed, all of them experienced a growing sense of excitement and anticipation about the New York trip in just six days. Mariya felt she could hardly wait to tell Mark all about it – and yet she was beginning to realize that, to him, it might not seem very delightful at all.

After careful consideration, Mikhail and Kiril had decided it was best not to inform any of the Peterson family about the threat he had received, or of the fact that he and Kiril believed media publicity would be the best protection for all of them against any attack by rogue members of the Romanov family.

Meanwhile, back at the rectory, Pope Nicholas’ fingers had been flying over the keys of his laptop computer. A proclamation to the bishops and to the world had taken shape in his mind, and was now being recorded on the papal laptop hard drive. Pope Nicholas had the draft of his proclamation, including the consecration formula, ready for editing by Father Herald by five o’clock Sunday evening. While the editing proceeded, Pope Nicholas unwound by playing classical piano duets with Father Romanov in the

Cova rectory parlor until seven o'clock. Pope Nicholas then reviewed the final draft with Father Herald, and at eight o'clock called for his trusted Swiss guard Jacques, who was an expert in ultra-secure communication to and from the Vatican.

The text of the proclamation was to be transmitted securely during the night to the Vatican Press Secretary, who was charged with proclaiming it orally from the balcony of Saint Peter's Basilica on Monday evening at eight o'clock Rome time. While it was being read aloud in Latin from the balcony, it was to be simultaneously transmitted electronically to all Catholic diocesan headquarters in the world, and to all major world news outlets, with official Vatican translations into all major languages. The world media would be given just six hours advance notice that an important papal announcement was going to be read in Saint Peter's Square, so that they would have time to set up their cameras and get some correspondents in place for the initial reporting, but no time for excessive foolish speculation.

In just one day the world would begin to anticipate the formal consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, in a ceremony once and for all finally complying in every detail with the precise request of Our Lady of Fatima. The media firestorm would begin, and the forces of hell would unleash their full fury – knowing that their time was short to avert hell's definition of disaster, a beginning of the restoration of Christendom and all its blessings. And out of that tempest, Heaven had promised to inaugurate a new era of world peace. It would bring about a new period of the peace of Christ in the reign of Christ, beginning in Russia. At the suggestion of Father Herald, Nicholas included in his proclamation the words of the prophet Malachi: "Unto you that fear My Name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings." (Malachi 4:2)

Nicholas asked Father John Herald to return to Rome as his personal deputy, to oversee all the preparations for the consecration ceremony. A special document was drafted, deputizing Father Herald to act on Nicholas' behalf in every way necessary to ensure that the consecration ceremony could take place as ordered.

Nicholas knew that there would be hundreds of details to be decided, and that he could trust Father Herald better than anyone else to ensure a dignified and impressive ceremony, worthy of the honor due to the Mother of God. At Nicholas' request the Brown Group jet was made immediately available, and by early Monday morning Father Herald was on his way back to Rome, arriving in time to be present on Monday evening when the proclamation would be read from the balcony overlooking Saint Peter's Square.

Chapter Eleven

Monday, June 15, 2015.

Saint Peter's Square, Vatican City.

On Monday evening a large crowd was gathered in Saint Peter's Square, in anticipation of a landmark papal proclamation scheduled to commence at eight o'clock. For the last several hours, the major news media had been predicting that the Holy Father would emerge on the balcony of Saint Peter's Basilica, and begin to read to the world yet another lecture about how the world needed to turn back to Christian unity. But, at five minutes before eight, when the doors of the balcony opened and a sudden hush came over the vast crowd, it was not the Holy Father but the Vatican Press Secretary who emerged, his face being clearly seen on the huge television screens that were mounted here and there around the square, and on major news networks all over the world.

"Dear faithful, and visitors from all parts of the world: the Holy Father is not able to be here in person this evening. He is continuing in a private spiritual retreat at an undisclosed location, where he is fervently praying for wisdom to guide the Church and the world according to the will of Heaven. He has asked me to read to you a proclamation, written by the Holy Father within the past week while on retreat, which is directed to all the Catholic bishops of the world. As I read it here now, copies of the proclamation will be posted on the Vatican website and will also be transmitted electronically to all Catholic diocesan headquarters, and to all major world news outlets. The words which follow are those of the Holy Father."

There was an appropriate period of silence before the proclamation itself was begun.

PROCLAMATION

Of His Holiness, Nicholas VI, Sovereign of the State of Vatican City, Pontifex Maximus, Bishop of Rome, and Servant of the Servants of God

To Each and Every Catholic Bishop Professing to be in Union with this Holy See:

Greetings, Venerable Brethren:

By virtue of the divine authority vested in us by unbroken apostolic succession from Peter – the Rock upon whom Christ founded His Church, and promised that the gates of hell shall never prevail against it; Peter, to whom Christ gave the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; Peter, to whom Christ promised that whatever he binds on earth will also be bound in Heaven, and that whatever he looses on earth will also be loosed in Heaven

– We do hereby proclaim and order the following:

Whereas Our Lady of Fatima, Queen of Heaven and Earth, appeared to three innocent shepherd children at Fatima, Portugal, on the thirteenth day of several successive months in the year 1917;

And whereas the authenticity of those apparitions was confirmed beyond any possible doubt by the Miracle of the Sun, witnessed by more than seventy thousand people and reported by previously skeptical eyewitnesses in all the major secular newspapers of the time;

And whereas Our Lady of Fatima told the shepherd children that She would come back to ask for the Consecration of Russia to Her Immaculate Heart, a consecration to be done by the Holy Father in union with all the Catholic bishops in the world;

And whereas Our Lady of Fatima did return as She promised, in 1929 in Tuy, Spain, to Sister Lucy, the only one of the three shepherd children to survive into adulthood, and there instructed Sister Lucy to tell the Holy Father that it was now time to perform the requested consecration of Russia;

And whereas, because the consecration was not then done as requested, Our Lord Jesus Christ appeared to Sister Lucy in 1931 at Rianjo, Spain, and warned that the Popes, in delaying, would become like the King of France who suffered misfortune on June 17, 1789, the day the Third Estate usurped the legislative powers of the French king and set in motion a godless revolution which led to eventual regicide at the guillotine; and whereas this chastisement was imposed by Heaven because the French kings had delayed for one hundred years in performing a request, spoken through Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque on June 17, 1689, for the consecration of the Kingdom of France to the Sacred Heart of Jesus;

And whereas, during intensive prayer on private retreat within the past week, the Holy Father has been profoundly impressed by the Sacred Heart of Jesus that it is now more than ninety-eight years since the 1917 apparitions and request, so that the one-hundred-year deadline for the Consecration of Russia is now less than two years away;

And whereas Our Lady of Fatima promised that the Consecration of Russia, performed as requested, would result in the conversion of Russia and a consequent period of peace for the world;

And whereas it is now clear that Russia is not being singled out as being in any greater need of conversion than any other modern nation, since the secular humanist “errors of Russia” have long since been spread throughout the whole world, as predicted by Our Lady of Fatima if the consecration were to be delayed;

And whereas the world, at this perilous time, no longer enjoys the inestimable blessings of even one powerful Catholic Confessional State;

And whereas Our Lady of Fatima is offering to Russia, through the

requested consecration, the glorious opportunity to lead the way for all the rest of the nations of the world in returning officially to the Social Kingship of Her Divine Son, Jesus Christ Our Lord – so that in our time the Sun of Righteousness may once again arise, with healing in His wings;

And whereas Our Lord explained to Sister Lucy that He wishes the whole world to witness the miracle of the conversion of Russia through the intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, so that devotion to Her Immaculate Heart will everywhere flourish alongside devotion to His Sacred Heart;

And whereas we may trust completely in the Mercy of Heaven and in the unfailing intercession of Our Lady of Fatima – the same Blessed Virgin Mary, of Whom never was it known that anyone who fled to Her protection, implored Her help, or sought Her intercession was left unaided.

Now therefore, we, as Christ's Vicar on earth, do hereby order and proclaim the following:

On Sunday evening next, June 21, 2015, beginning at eight o'clock in the evening Rome local time – and simultaneously, at whatever the local hour, day, and date may be in each time zone around the world – each and every bishop who professes to be in union with this Holy See of Rome is ordered to join with the Holy Father in performing the public consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, as requested by Our Lady of Fatima. We require each and every bishop to cancel any existing plans for next Sunday evening which would in any way conflict with his public fulfillment of his new duties precisely as set forth herein.

The form of the consecration which must be used was originally proposed some years ago by Our Lady's fervent defender and faithful son of the Church, Father Nicholas Gottschalk. The gratitude of the Holy Father to Father Gottschalk for his untiring work and manly courage in promoting the consecration of Russia in the face of much skepticism and persecution by many highly placed members of the hierarchy of the Church, is hereby acknowledged. Father Gottschalk's proposed text for the consecration has undergone only minor revisions, by the Holy Father, in preparation for the pending consecration.

Each and every bishop, in performing the required consecration, must employ the following form of prayer publicly, precisely, and without any addition or deletion:

**Required Text for the
Act of Consecration of Russia
to the Immaculate Heart of Mary⁵⁸**

O Most Holy Virgin Mary, Mother of God, Mother of the

⁵⁸Downloaded from <http://www.fatimacrusader.com/cr44/cr44pg25.asp> on 7-29-10. Reference: *The Fatima Crusader*, Issue 44, Spring 1993, page 25. Used with permission, with minor alterations by the author to reflect the expected state of world politics in 2015.

Church and of each one of us. In response to Pope Benedict XV who in anguish on May 5, 1917 cried out to You in the name of the whole Church – asking You to show humanity the way of Peace – You came to Fatima on May 13, 1917, and subsequently on the 13th of June, July, August, September and October 1917. You then returned, as You had promised, on June 13, 1929, in Tuy, Spain, and revealed that God asks for our act of Consecration of Russia to Your Immaculate Heart.

You said when You came:

“The moment has come in which God asks the Holy Father to make and to command all the Catholic bishops of the world to make the Consecration of Russia to My Immaculate Heart. God promises to save Russia by this means.”

Ever mindful of the words of Jesus that “it is never too late to have recourse to Jesus and Mary,” we now undertake to obey the Will of the Most Holy Trinity revealed to us through Your words on that day in the Solemn Extraordinary Vision of the Most Holy Trinity and of the Sacrifice of the Mass.

We intend by the following Act of Reparation and of Consecration of Russia to Your Immaculate Heart, to obey Your request in the manner that You, Our Most Dear and Holy Mother, have requested, so that the peace that has been so long desired and which You promised, may be granted.

We promise in gratitude to You, and in reparation for all the sins committed in the past and present against Your Immaculate Heart, to promote among all the faithful the pious devotions of Reparation to Your Immaculate Heart on the First Saturdays, as You requested in the Fatima message.

We know that nothing happens to nations or individuals unless God wills or permits it. Our poor human race is engulfed by evils of every description including: the silent apostasy – which You Yourself foretold in the Third Secret – of whole continents of former Christendom due to the widespread loss of the Faith, unjust wars, murder of the unborn, unprecedented economic injustice fostering needless famine and pestilence, widespread divorce and immorality, unspeakable moral corruption among certain members of the clergy, and increasing persecution of the Church.

We now turn to You, Our Dear Mother and Mediatrix of all Graces – You, Our Lady of the Rosary, Who are our only hope for overcoming the evils of our times and the approaching punishments, which we, sinful humanity, so justly deserve. Mindful that, without Your help, we cannot overcome these evils on our own, we now turn to You in humble supplication to beg Your help.

You are the “Woman” predicted in Sacred Scripture (Genesis 3:15), Who has the Commission from God – to crush the Serpent’s head, the head of satan, who is a murderer and a liar from the beginning. You are that same “Woman” addressed by Jesus from the cross, and left to us as His last will and testament as Our Mother (John 19) – and You are indeed the same “Woman” clothed with the sun, spoken of in Chapter 12 of the Apocalypse, and Who at Fatima was seen to be clothed with the sun. It is to You, to Your Immaculate Heart, that we consecrate Russia.

We recognize that all authority comes from God, and mindful of the authority God has entrusted to us to “make disciples of all nations” – we, the successors of the Apostles, engage our authority to consecrate a nation, Russia, to His service through that nation’s Consecration to Your Immaculate Heart.

We recognize that great crimes against God have been committed in Russia, but also in all modern nations, to which Russia’s errors of secular humanism and practical state atheism have been spread. Therefore, we offer on this day of prayer, reparation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary for the crimes of official State Atheism and official State Religious Indifferentism, and all the sacrileges and blasphemies that such Anti-Christian-State regimes in post-1917 Russia and all other modern nations have committed. We pray in fraternal solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Russia who have suffered so horribly, who in the past have been persecuted, tortured, imprisoned and killed under the Atheist Soviet Regime, and who still suffer under a secular humanist government which is not officially Christian. We pray that Russia be saved: that the Russian Orthodox Church and all other Christians in Russia, and indeed all Russians of goodwill, be brought miraculously and swiftly into complete unity of Faith with the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church of whom the one head appointed by Christ is the Bishop of Rome, and that Russia be made a vessel of divine election and of the fruitful spreading and implementation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, first throughout her own territory, and then throughout the world, thus bringing a period of peace, justice, prosperity, and the inestimable blessings of Faith and faithfulness to the entire world.

We make this Consecration in response to God and to You, Our Blessed Lady, and in response to the millions of petitions made by the Faithful everywhere, particularly the requests for this Act of Consecration made by many of the Russian people, and even certain of her leaders, who indeed are close to our heart.

And we, so that our fervent prayers for conversion of our generation to Jesus Christ the King and that the fervent prayers and aspirations of all the Faithful and in particular the Faithful of

Russia may be heard, and to give to Thee, O Immaculate Virgin Mary, the testimony of our devotion and obedience, *so now we, in a most solemn and public manner consecrate, and entrust all the people and social institutions of Russia to Thy Immaculate Heart*, with the firm hope that soon, thanks to the all-powerful patronage of Thee, O Blessed Virgin Mary, the wishes which we form may be happily fulfilled, for a true peace, fraternal concord, and the liberty due to all, and in the first place to the Church.

Thus by our prayer, united to Thine own and that of the whole Christian people, the Kingdom of our Savior Jesus Christ will be firmly established over all the earth: A Kingdom of truth and life, a Kingdom of holiness and grace, a Kingdom of justice, love and peace.

And we suppliantly ask Thee, O Most Merciful Mother, to obtain from Thy Divine Son, Heavenly light for our minds and for our souls, the strength and courage by which, being supernaturally upheld, we all will be able to repulse and overcome all errors and impiety. (HERE ENDS THE REQUIRED TEXT FOR THE CONSECRATION OF RUSSIA.)

Each and every bishop who professes to be in union with the See of Rome but who does not obey precisely the instruction given above will, by virtue of his disobedience, have automatically excommunicated himself from the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, and will remain in mortal sin, reserved to the Holy Father alone to absolve.

It is to be understood that, even after repentance and absolution, there will be absolutely no possibility of immediate or future reinstatement to the office of bishop. Any such man, once repented, absolved, and reunited to the Body of Christ, will be expected to serve the remainder of his days on earth making reparation for his sins as a simple priest, through a life of contemplative prayer, in a remote monastery to be selected on a case-by-case basis by the Holy Father personally.

Insofar as possible, each and every bishop is invited to come in person to Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome to join with the Holy Father in performing the public consecration. Each and every bishop who is unable to come to Rome, due to the short notice, is encouraged to travel to his archdiocesan cathedral to join in performing the public consecration.

Each and every bishop who is unable to travel at all is ordered to perform the consecration publicly in his own cathedral. Each titular bishop having no active cathedral of his own must present himself at the highest-ranked cathedral to which he reasonably can travel.

From every cathedral in which a public consecration ceremony takes place, an unedited professional audiovisual recording, clearly documenting the local consecration ceremony in its entirety, together with an official document listing each and every bishop who participated in that ceremony. It must be signed by the bishop of said cathedral, and must be submitted to the Vatican within seven calendar days after the consecration, to the

personal attention of Father John Herald, special assistant to the Pope.

Recordings must display a real-time indication of full date and time of day throughout the recording, and must be certified by the professional recording service as being completely free of any editing. Each participating bishop must wear a personal microphone, and must be recorded on a separate sound track while he publicly says the consecration prayer, and he must clearly state his name and the city of his home cathedral into his microphone just before the consecration prayer begins, and again just after the prayer is completed.

If any bishop, or group of bishops, experiences difficulty with the quality of the audiovisual recording, then they will be required to repeat the consecration again within twenty-four hours, subject to all the same rules. Therefore, care should be taken to review the quality of the recording, immediately after the ceremony has been performed, and prior to submission to the Vatican.

Each submitted recording will be reviewed in its entirety by a panel of Vatican experts, to be selected by the Holy Father personally. Each and every bishop found through such review of the audiovisual recording to have willfully altered the form of the consecration will be subject to the same penalties as if he had refused to participate in the public consecration.

Finally, the Holy Father encourages all the faithful in union with the See of Rome to pray fervently for all the bishops including the Bishop of Rome, and also to continue (or to begin) the devout practice of the Five First Saturdays of Communions of Reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and to continually offer up sacrifices for the conversion of sinners.

Trusting in the Providence of God the Father; in the Divine Mercy of His Son Our Lord Jesus Christ; in the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit; and in the promises made to mankind by Our Lady of Fatima, the All-Immaculate Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and Earth, we do hereby make this Our Apostolic Will known, for everlasting memory.

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on the fifteenth day of June, in the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Fifteen, the eleventh year of Our Pontificate.

Nicholas PP. VI

“Dear Faithful, and visitors from all parts of the world, that concludes the proclamation this evening of the will of His Holiness Pope Nicholas VI.”

The Vatican Press Secretary withdrew from the balcony overlooking Saint Peter's Square, as a stunned crowd exhibited a very mixed reaction. Small groups were cheering wildly, falling on their knees in prayers of thanksgiving, and beginning spontaneous recitations of the Rosary. Far greater numbers were filing out of the square, some gesturing wildly, some shaking their fists at Heaven, and some seeking out the reporters lining the exits in order to express their shock and disbelief.

In major cities around the world, crowds with similarly mixed characteristics were seen to be assembling outside the Catholic cathedrals.

In most cases, bishops were nowhere to be seen. In a few prominent cities, Archbishops and Cardinals could be heard on cathedral steps giving press conferences in which they expressed their shock and dismay at the “utter loss of collegiality” represented by the Holy Father’s unprecedented “strong-arm tactics.”

A number of Archbishops and bishops, however, appeared on their cathedral steps to express their complete solidarity with the Holy Father in this historic moment that held forth wonderful new hope for the whole world.

Chapter Twelve

Tuesday, June 16, 2015.

Worldwide Media Firestorm.

On Tuesday morning following the Monday evening papal proclamation, in the rectory at the Cova, Father Kiril Romanov had arisen at six o'clock to begin to review the reaction of the news media before the Pope would arrive for breakfast after his morning Mass. To prepare himself, Father Kiril poured fresh coffee from his timer-controlled brewer into a large "Summons to Holiness Conference 2014" mug. On the rectory dining room table he found a stack of six newspapers which, at Kiril's request, one of Don Brown's security men had brought from a twenty-four hour downtown news dealer at five-thirty. On top of the pile was the national edition of *The New York Times*, tired old "gray lady" of American journalism. The mindless headline screamed "Pope Attacks Russian Church!" but Father Kiril went straight to the opinion page, and began reading the lead editorial:

Russian Roulette

Last evening the world was shocked by the sudden strange and inexplicable proclamation, issued in the name of Pope Nicholas VI while the pontiff himself remained sequestered in an undisclosed location. Pope Nicholas had been previously viewed as the liturgically conservative but politically astute leader of the world's one billion Roman Catholics. Now, however, questions about his mental health and about his ability to read the political signs of the times in even the most elementary manner will be voiced in virtually every quarter.

The modern world, in all but the most backward nations, has long since moved beyond outdated religious superstitions based on a pre-scientific understanding of the cosmos. Today, most of mankind has progressed beyond the utterly provincial notion that one's own creed and its associated religious discipline could possibly be the one and only path to human fulfillment for all persons. Nicholas' predecessor Pope Leo Alexander II, for example, made giant strides toward reshaping the Roman Catholic Church into its only useful and realistic role in the modern world: a strong voice for world peace, and an advocate for justice for the oppressed. But Pope Nicholas has now shown the audacity to act – and moreover to require all the Catholic bishops in the world to act with him – in a public ceremony almost calculated to offend the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian people. Worse, the pontiff's reasoning is based entirely upon the bizarre imaginings of illiterate shepherd children back in 1917, a time when horses and buggies were still commonplace and automobiles and electric

lights had yet to find their way into rural hamlets of no importance, such as Fatima, Portugal.

Today the editors of this storied newspaper raise their voices in protest against a Pope seemingly gone mad, and in solidarity with believers of every non-Catholic religion which has enjoyed a historic role in Russia. Adherents to ancient faiths, including especially Russian Orthodoxy, Islam and Judaism, are now threatened with a campaign to try to convince the Russian government to limit their rights. For we can only presume that Pope Nicholas actually believes – incredible though it may seem to educated modern minds – that the public display of provincialism which he has ordered will actually have an effect on modern democratic Russia through supernatural intervention! We call upon all persons of goodwill to voice their opposition to the ill-advised Russian consecration before its scheduled completion in just five days, in hopes that the world can be turned back from an incredible act of stupidity and unnecessary offense toward all non-Catholic Russian people.

Father Romanov noted that there was no opposing view offered on the Op-Ed page, and laid *The Times* down on the dining room table. He took another sip of coffee, and felt profoundly saddened by the mindless *ad hominem* attack which, he knew, was typical for *The Times* whenever honestly arguing the truth of an issue would involve the risk of acknowledging something that was not currently politically correct. He thought about opening the CNN live feed on his laptop, but decided instead to read some more papers and be well prepared before Pope Nicholas arrived for breakfast after his Mass.

Next in the pile was *Ha'aretz* (“*The World*”) from Tel Aviv. Again, the headline was accusatory and inaccurate: “Pope Calls for Repression of Judaism in Russia.” But the lead editorial was always more informative, so Father Kiril began to read:

A New Russian Pogrom? Pope Calls for Renewed Suppression of Jews and Other Minorities in Russia

In a public spectacle of unprecedented Vatican *chutzpah*, Pope Nicholas VI issued a proclamation to the world last evening, ordering every Catholic bishop in the world to publicly pray for the conversion of Russia to the Roman Catholic religion. This outrageous Papal mandate is based on alleged apparitions of Mary, the mother of Jesus of Nazareth, way back in 1917. Supposedly Mary promised to convert the nation of Russia if public prayers were offered according to a precise set of conditions, involving all the Catholic bishops in the world. Perhaps the Pope could have argued, back in 1917 when the atheistic Bolsheviks were busy

outlawing all religious practice in the new Soviet Union, that such a concern might make some sense from a Catholic perspective. But today Russia is a modern democratic state with freedom of religion and without any established religion of state. While the Russian Orthodox Church is the “official” religion of Russia, simply because the majority of her citizens self-identify as being affiliated with that Church, several other religions, which also have ancient roots in Russia, are also officially recognized and have equal rights. These include Judaism and Islam, but do not include Roman Catholicism, since the Orthodox Church views the tiny Roman Catholic Church in Russia as its main competitor for Christian souls.

If Russia were to convert to the Roman Catholic religion, then we can only assume that these other official religions would somehow face increasing restrictions on their freedom in Russia. Recalling that Imperial Russia under the Tsars had a long history of suppressing the rights and freedoms of Jews, unless they converted to Christianity, we must voice our fear that a new wave of persecution against Jews would result from a conversion of Russia to the Roman Catholic religion.

Of course, the editors of *Ha'aretz*, being well-educated modern men, do not believe that a Pope forcing every Catholic bishop to demean himself – by public participation in such a folly as the requested consecration ceremony – would actually have any impact on Russia from some imaginary supernatural realm. Russia can handle herself, and Her Orthodox Church is hardly vulnerable to the tiny Catholic minority who live within her borders, estimated at no more than half a million persons. Rather, it is the very notion that a modern democratic nation could or should be converted to the Roman Catholic religion that is offensive. While we do not believe the Pope is specifically thinking about the suppression of Jews in Russia – but rather plans to pray for the suppression of all non-Catholic religious activity – nevertheless, any action which results in a potentially anti-Semitic outcome must be roundly condemned.

Father Kiril shook his head in dismay. Again, there was no opposing opinion offered. The news media were going to skewer Pope Nicholas because he was acting like a true Pope, instead of being an obedient lackey for global secular humanism. Next was *The Detroit Free Press*. Father Kiril expected it to be somewhat more moderate, and in fact the headline read “Pope Embroiled in Controversy,” and the sub-headline added “Detroit Archbishop Supports Pontiff.” Good, thought Kiril, the local newspaper was going to remain at least neutral, and would acknowledge that some leaders supported the Pope while others condemned him. Perhaps the days of actual news reporting (as opposed to public mind

control) were not entirely over yet, at least in Detroit. Kiril began to read the lead article, under the sub-headline:

Pope Embroiled in Controversy – Detroit Archbishop Supports Pontiff

On Monday evening Pope Nicholas VI, leader of the world's largest religion, issued a public statement calling upon all Catholic bishops in the world to pray for the conversion of Russia. While this request is based upon a specific request of Our Lady of Fatima in 1917, the Pope took care to note that all modern nations require conversion, since none are officially Catholic, and therefore Russia is not being singled out in any negative way. Rather, says the Holy Father, Heaven has been inviting Russia, ever since 1917, to be the first modern nation to get back on track as a Christian nation. While not everyone would agree with such an agenda, it must be said that if Roman Catholics take their Faith seriously, they will naturally pray – as the Catholic Church has always prayed – for the entire world to become united in the Faith of Jesus Christ ...

Father Kiril smiled. This was a very fair assessment for a secular news organization. As he read on, he noted that the writer had already conducted a telephone interview with the Archbishop of Detroit, a man who had been selected by Pope Nicholas himself, and who was known for his efforts to restore a more traditional form of liturgy and catechesis within the archdiocese. The opinion page offered a similarly balanced lead editorial, with a brief opposing opinion penned by the local chairman of Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

Now there was time for a few more sips of coffee, and a silent *Ave Maria* in thanksgiving for at least one just and fair mainstream news report. But there were six newspapers, and that was only the top three. Fourth in the pile was *Le Monde* from Paris, English edition. As expected, the headline was abrasive: "EU Leaders Voice Shock Over Papal Action." The lead article began thus:

EU Leaders Voice Shock Over Papal Action

During the night, key leaders of the European Union in Brussels seemed united in expressing shock over the latest Papal *faux-pas*. Requesting anonymity, one well-placed EU spokesperson said, "Europe has long since moved beyond the horrible old days when kings went to war over religion, and the Pope crowned temporal rulers as his servants. The Pope's proclamation reeks of the old triumphalism, when the Roman Catholic Church claimed rights over kings and emperors." Today, the modern world of democratic secular states no longer seeks to enforce a Christian moral code, and in fact rejoices to be free of benighted medieval ideas about unattainable chastity, impossibly large families, and cheerfully submitting to injustice now while hoping for better things in an

imaginary world to come. While the world moves on toward global integration, the Pope seems to be regressing rapidly into an outmoded worldview that cannot be permitted any place at the table where discussion of modern public policy takes place.

Kiril sighed, thinking to himself that one could not expect any other perspective from contemporary European leaders. The spiritual annihilation of once-Catholic, now-secular Europe had been long since accomplished. Indeed, he thought, only a miracle of divine intervention, such as the promised conversion of Russia, could possibly turn things back now.

Next on the pile, the fifth newspaper, was *The Moscow Times*, an English daily newspaper widely read in Detroit, where more than forty-thousand Russian expatriates made their home. The headline was predictably negative, but one sub-headline acknowledged that important opinions differed. Most interesting was the fact that both President Polzin and Patriarch Filaret of Moscow were quoted expressing a guardedly positive view of the Pope's proclamation.

Father Kiril noted that they sounded very much like *The Detroit Free Press*: if Catholics take their Faith seriously, then of course they are going to pray for all the world to become Catholic, just as we Russian Orthodox always pray for all the world to become Orthodox. Kiril noted, however, that no other Orthodox bishops were reported to voice anything positive, and many of them roundly condemned the Pope's audacity for wanting to interfere in the internal religious affairs of the Sovereign state of Russia.

Kiril was reminded of how the Russian Orthodox Church had long been accustomed to being the established church of the empire, and that fervent Russian nationalism had been the real root cause of a thousand years of refusal to reconcile the Orthodox Church with the apostolic authority of Peter in Rome.

The sixth and last newspaper was *Der Spiegel*, English edition, from Germany. The headline proclaimed "Leading Cardinals Decry Pope's Insensitivity." One elderly German Cardinal, elevated to the red hat at the very end of the pontificate of Nicholas' predecessor, and known around the world for his outspoken belief in ecumenism as the way of the future, was quoted extensively. There was in fact a sidebar, entitled "German Cardinal Speaks Out," containing his entirely predictable opinion:

Leading Cardinals Decry Pope's Insensitivity – German Cardinal Speaks Out

Ever since the Second Vatican Council, the Church has moved beyond any expectation that Christian groups separated from the authority of the Bishop of Rome would come back to the fold by "converting." That is an entirely outmoded concept. It is offensive to intelligent ears, and flies in the face of all we have worked for during five long decades since the Council. So we don't care how

many Catholic Bishops knuckle under to this shocking pressure coming out of Rome. Even if they all participate to save their ecclesiastical skins, obviously it will be against their better judgment.

And anyway everybody knows Russia is not going to “convert.” No one converts any more. If people come to us and try to say, “We want to convert, we want to become Catholics,” we tell them “No, you must stay where you are and be better Lutherans, or better Jews, or better Buddhists.” Even that reactionary little group of Anglicans who wanted to be in formal union with the Bishop of Rome kept their own liturgy and their own customs when they “became Catholic,” so they didn’t really convert, you see. So I don’t know what the Pope can be thinking, maybe he is becoming senile, I really don’t know.

Kiril burst out laughing. The vacuousness of the Cardinal’s words could easily qualify him for television news sound bites, but not for serious intellectual discourse. Yet, sadly, the mainstream media continued to lap up this sort of pabulum, just so long as it served their editorial bent – which was always pro-secular-humanist and therefore always anti-Catholic.

Kiril decided to start his laptop computer and log onto CNN Headline News using headphones, so he would not awaken anyone, such as the Pope. The reporting on CNN, Fox News, and BBC News seemed entirely consistent with *The New York Times*, *Ha’aretz*, *Le Monde*, and *Der Spiegel*.

Chapter Thirteen

Tuesday, June 16, 2015.

Offices of the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, Moscow, Russian Federation.

By eight o'clock Tuesday morning in Moscow, just twenty-two hours after the papal proclamation, Russian Orthodox bishops from all over Russia, and affiliated bishops of the now-reconciled Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia from all over the world, began calling the offices of Filaret III, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia. There were even calls of complaint from Orthodox bishops from the national Orthodox churches of other countries, including Greece, Bulgaria, and Serbia, expressing concern that their nations might be "targeted" next – even though Fatima had never mentioned any specific nation except Russia. All callers were united in their shock and dismay that Filaret had been quoted in *The Moscow Times* as suggesting that Catholics would have a right to their own opinion about whether the Orthodox Church should convert. Filaret sensed that they were more motivated by emotion and self-defense than by reason, and so he agreed to a special meeting, called a Sobor, to be held in Moscow on Friday, in which the Russian Orthodox bishops and certain Russian seminary theologians of high renown could voice their opinions in open fraternal debate. Those unable to attend in person would be connected by remote videolink.

A smaller storm was brewing at the Russian presidential headquarters. Many of the same bishops were calling there to lodge protests against President Polzin's seeming agreement with the errant Moscow Patriarch, as reported in *The Moscow Times*. Interestingly, there was not much protest coming from any other quarter. There were no calls from regional governors within the Russian Federation. The Russian people seemed mostly unfazed by the Pope's pronouncement, and certainly did not think it any issue for the Russian government.

When the Sobor convened on Friday, twenty-two bishops attended in person, and a dozen more by remote videolink. Five seminary theologians also attended. The discussions focused on the very same issues that Filaret had discussed with George and Katarina privately, before sending them as envoys to the Pope. Filaret pointed out to the Sobor that, in a world that has almost completely turned its back on God and on His Christ, there is no excuse at all for the two main branches of Christianity to remain separated. The world, he reminded them, is rushing headlong into hell, yet the Orthodox like to fight against Catholics over contrived doctrinal differences that have no real justification and only serve to justify the separation due to ancient habits of nationalistic caesaropapism. This launched a heated debate about whether the Catholic-Orthodox differences were in fact contrived. It turned out that a majority of the Sobor attendees were well aware of the arguments of the great Russian Orthodox theologian

Vladimir Soloviev, who had insisted that to be truly Orthodox one must be in union with the Chair of Peter in Rome.

Most of them also acknowledged that both Saint John Chrysostom and Filaret I of Moscow, patriarch and founder of the Romanov dynasty, had agreed with what Soloviev said. The majority agreed in principle that the Bishop of Rome should be first among equals, but they also insisted that until such time as Rome gets its own house in order, they have to continue to remain separate in order to preserve true Orthodox doctrine and praxis.

Several of them argued that the liturgical revolution which followed Vatican Council II was absolute proof that the hand of God had to be with the Orthodox Church, which had not changed its liturgy for centuries except in the normal slow, organic manner of minor changes from time to time which characterized Church history right back to the time of the apostles. They expressed the fear that what the Pope was going to pray for would amount to an Orthodox Vatican II that would destroy what remained of the belief of the Orthodox Faithful, forcibly modernizing everything into irrelevance.

“Brethren!” said Filaret III, seeking to halt the heated debate as it became increasingly redundant. “You are right in all your concerns. But you have to listen carefully to what Pope Nicholas actually has said. In his proclamation he said that every nation on earth needs to convert, not just Russia.

“He said that Heaven is inviting Russia to be the first nation, to lead the way for all the others. Is that not exactly what we have always argued: that the Orthodox Church preserves purity of doctrine and practice, and that until Rome comes around to reforming herself, we have had to remain separate?”

“But that is not what most Catholics think!” protested one outspoken bishop. “Didn’t you read what the liberal German Cardinal said, quoted in *Der Spiegel*?”

“The German Cardinal is widely known as the most extreme modernist in the College of Cardinals,” retorted Filaret. “That is why the world news media love him so much. But what he thinks is irrelevant to our discussion here, which has to do with what Heaven thinks. We all agree in principle with Vladimir Soloviev, Saint John Chrysostom, and Filaret I of Moscow that the Bishop of Rome is in the primary place of honor among all Bishops, do we not?”

The Sobor attendees begrudgingly agreed that such was the long-established doctrine of the Russian Orthodox Church.

“So then the real issue is this,” said Filaret III. “What does the Pope think it means, when the Mother of God says that Russia will be ‘converted’?”

The Sobor made clear what they feared: that it would mean the Russians would all become good modern Catholics attending Roman Rite Masses with guitars and tambourines, with the priest no longer performing the consecration in holy secret behind the veil, but instead the priest would turn his back on God and begin facing the people behind a simple table,

and very soon thereafter people would begin losing their belief in the real presence of Christ in the Holy Mysteries. This is exactly what the bishops in the Sobor feared.

Filaret countered that such a catastrophe of liturgical devolution would not be “conversion” according to the mind of Heaven; and it was Heaven, speaking through the Holy Mother of God, which was calling for the consecration and promising conversion. So, if it was Heaven promising to convert Russia, then it would have to mean that the nation would become truly Orthodox, in widespread belief and practice, and that Rome would have to reform itself to come into union with this situation.

“What could be so bad about that?” asked Filaret. “You know how the Anglicans who so chose were able to keep their rites and customs, and yet come into union with Rome, right? Well, what if suddenly we Russians could become much better at being truly Orthodox, and in so doing the Pope would become our chief supporter and guide?”

Some of the bishops began to see Filaret’s point.

“Guess who was most opposed to the idea of the Anglicans coming into union with Rome?” asked Filaret. “It was the liberal German Cardinal, because he doesn’t want any more seriously Catholic people coming in to the Catholic Church. He wants the Catholic Church to become like the liberal Protestants. So for a while he tried to tell the Anglicans that they could not convert *en masse*. But he was eventually overruled by the Pope. And now the very same thing is going to happen for us, I think. We Orthodox will vastly outnumber the liberal Catholics, and so we will help to steer the ‘Bark of Peter’ back onto the path of true Orthodoxy!”

But the majority of the bishops stubbornly insisted that Russia could never give up the right to run her own internal Church the way Russians saw fit. They could never allow a foreign potentate, such as the monarch of Vatican City, to have any say over how they ran their Church. Filaret pointed out that such stubborn resistance to clear apostolic authority was classic Protestant thinking. He warned them that in speaking this way they were showing themselves to be schismatic and, in spirit, outside the one true Church founded by Christ, because they were in essence denying the rights of the one to whom Jesus had given the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Heated debate again ensued, and it became clear that there was going to be no real consensus. But neither were the majority able to raise arguments that would justify removing Filaret III from his office. Instead, his stronger opponents, a significant minority, warned him that he was going to bring the judgment of God down upon their nation, and that God might strike him dead at any time for failing to resist the anti-Orthodox forces now mounting their assault through the pending public consecration in Rome.

Chapter Fourteen

June 2015.

The Romanov Nobility Ball.

Romanov Nobility Ball Preparation, Detroit, Michigan.

Katarina and her daughter Mariya, both romantics at heart, had spent the past several days building dreams about the upcoming royal ball. Both had rented luxurious evening gowns that were beautiful and flattering without being immodest. The Romanov Nobility Ball Attendees' Guidebook, overnighted to them along with their official letters of admittance, advised that more-traditional evening gowns were appropriate and encouraged, and that modern, overly-revealing styles were at least frowned upon and in some cases could result in denial of admittance to the event. As required, George had rented a traditional black tuxedo. The guidebook advised that the music would be typical of the late Romanov Russian Empire, roughly 1850-1920, and would be played by a live orchestra. Traditional ballroom dancing was the required form, with an emphasis on the waltz. So George, Katarina, and Mariya had taken a crash course in ballroom dancing in their downtown Detroit condominium, taught by a private dance instructor personally recommended by Don Brown. Mikhail had arranged to drive down to Detroit from Nazareth, and stayed with his brother at the Cova rectory in Detroit on Thursday evening. The final dance instruction session, including Mikhail, took place at the Peterson's that evening, so that the two couples could fine-tune their style before appearing under intense media scrutiny at the Romanov Ball on Saturday evening.

By Tuesday, June 16, after the Sunday June 14 orchestral Mass, Mark felt well enough to join Mariya for their usual morning run on the Wayne State campus. After four miles in the June heat, they sat together on the grass beneath a shade tree, savoring the gentle breeze and sipping Gatorade. Mark told Mariya how Father Romanov, who normally never praised anyone following a performance, had telephoned Sunday evening to check on his well-being. Once he knew Mark was feeling better, Father had enthusiastically reported that Mariya's organ performance in the Haydn Mass had been absolutely outstanding. And Mikhail had done such an excellent job of replacing Mark for the Rheinberger organ concerto that Mark needn't feel bad at all about having been ill.

"I really missed being with you on Sunday," said Mark. "But I'm proud of you, girl. *No* one gets a compliment from Father Romanov! *No* one! And yet *you* did! You must have been fantastic! Do you even realize how much I love you?"

She put her arm around his shoulder, and fought back tears.

"Mark, there's something I have to tell you. On Friday I'm going to go to New York to the Romanov Nobility Ball, as Mikhail Romanov's date. My parents are going too. It's all rather sudden. Mikhail just invited us on Sunday."

"I see. While I was at home, sick."

She saw her beloved best friend, her joy and soul mate, the one who replaced the brother she never had, also begin to fight back tears.

"For Mikhail it's really a political trip. He's finally going to break into the social circle of Romanov nobility. My parents and I are just going along as props, because we're eligible as people with a royal heritage, and he needs our moral support."

"Well, I'm just a poor Polish graduate student," said Mark. "How am I supposed to compete with a Russian crown prince?"

"Mark, you *are* noble, in the *truest* sense of the word. And you have been my brother, my best friend, my companion and my joy, for all these years. I will always love you, and we will always be dear friends. I promise you that." She leaned her head against his, and tears began to streak down both their faces, as she continued: "But I do not know exactly what the future may hold for each of us, in terms of our vocations. We could easily choose to cling, each one to the other, as the one who is completely familiar, comfortable, and safe. Perhaps we could marry someday, and be blessed by God. But do we really know if that is His will for us?"

Now Mark began to sob openly. She knew that a part of his heart was breaking, so she cradled his head against her neck as she stroked his wild and sweaty curls.

"I'm not angry, Mariya," he said. "I'm just ... I don't know, exactly ..."

"Mark, we've loved each other since we were children. We never thought the day would come when time and circumstance would pull us apart. Neither one of us has ever really thought about not being together."

"Do you think you're falling in love with him, Mariya? Is he going to steal you away from me?"

"Oh, Mark! What can I say? I didn't go looking for him. He came to me, out of nowhere, when I was exhausted after my Kalamazoo recital. I didn't go searching out my royal genealogy either. That too came out of nowhere, when my parents suddenly announced I was a princess. And I never even dreamed of going to a ball just for nobility. All I ever thought I wanted was my Mark, and my parish, and my music. Now, it seems like my whole world is being turned upside down."

"Its okay, my love. Don't you know that, if necessary, I would even die to defend your happiness?" They sat in silence for a few moments, softly weeping. Then Mark continued: "It may even be that the hand of God is in this. And it may be that dying to myself is exactly what I have to do: sometimes, I have thought God might be calling me to the priesthood. But I never would admit it to myself, or anyone else, because I couldn't bear to think of losing you."

"No matter what, Mark, I will always love you. It could be that this New York adventure with Mikhail will prove to be a royal disaster."

"No pun intended?" quipped Mark, now smiling, and wiping away her

tears and then his. "God will show us each His plan for us. The only thing we know for certain is that it will include the cross."

They arose and walked, hand in hand, across the campus athletic fields toward the locker rooms. Duty was pressing in upon them, calling them to work and smile as mature young adults, even while their hearts ached. But Heaven was smiling upon them, with unimaginable blessings in store for each one.

Mikhail and the three Petersons were scheduled to meet at Detroit City Airport on Friday noon, at which time Don Brown's jet would fly them all directly to a private airport near New York City. A stretch limousine would then drive them directly to the Waldorf=Astoria Hotel, arriving by three o'clock Friday afternoon. They would be admitted directly to The Brown Group's three-bedroom condominium on the top floor. A private dinner would be served in the condominium, catered by the hotel. Brown Group security and hospitality staff would attend them throughout their stay. On Saturday morning a standard limousine would drive them to a Traditional Latin Mass in Manhattan at nine o'clock, and would then take them for a buffet repast at Don Brown's favorite breakfast club. At noon Mrs. Brown's private New York hairstylist would be waiting at the condominium for the ladies, accompanied by a barber to trim up the gentlemen. Then at three o'clock in the afternoon, a famous New York-based dance instructor, arranged by Don Brown, would assist the two couples with a final practice session of ballroom dancing in the privacy of the condominium living room.

The Romanov Nobility Ball would begin Saturday evening at seven o'clock in the Waldorf=Astoria Grand Ballroom, with formal entrances and introductions of each couple.

Dinner would follow at eight o'clock in an adjoining dining hall, with assigned seating. The family tradition sought to follow the rules of state dinners in the latter days of the Russian empire. Years ago the family had commissioned a set of chinaware, goblets, and wine glasses emblazoned with the Romanov double-headed eagle, and these were stored in a special wooden chest and brought to the hotel each year for the event. Attendees were seated according to rank, by couple, so that men and women alternated all around the table. Conversation was generally limited to those adjacent and across. The trustee of the throne would sit in the traditional spot for the emperor, in the center of the table. The heir apparent to the throne would be seated across from her. Marina was widowed, and her son Grigory was not formally courting, so mother and son would attend as a couple. The next persons in line for the throne, according to family records, would be seated adjacent to this leading couple, in descending order of rank, first to the right, next to the left, and so forth, and would be accompanied by their spouse or guest. Those family members and guests with no potential claim to the throne were relegated to the farther ends of the table. To preserve imperial tradition, each course was served to everyone simultaneously, and no one could begin eating until the trustee of the throne raised her

fork or spoon. She would then take care not to lay her utensil down until everyone had finished the course, because as soon as she did, all places would be cleared at once to make way for the next course. When dessert was finished, about nine o'clock, dancing would commence in the grand ballroom, and would continue until midnight.

The first two dances were reserved, in succession by rank, to the two couples currently closest to the throne. Each couple would dance alone, to a traditional waltz, while all others in attendance watched in admiration. Then the dance floor would be opened up for everyone. Each lady had been provided with a dance card, pre-printed with the name of each gentleman in attendance and his family rank if relevant. The ladies were expected, in the course of the evening, to dance with as many Romanov gentlemen as possible, and dance numbers could be promised beginning during the time of formal introductions before the dinner. The orchestra leader would announce the number of each dance, allowing a few minutes for couples to shift according to the commitments found on the ladies' dance cards. This encouraged all family members to maintain at least passing acquaintance with each other. The orchestra would be on break for fifteen minutes during each hour, and during this time the gentlemen would retreat into a men's lounge, and the ladies would retreat into a separate women's lounge, where they could greet new attendees and renew old acquaintances of the same sex. Once the orchestra stopped at twelve forty-five in the morning, there would be an open bar in the ballroom until three o'clock in the morning, and most of the attendees would stay the entire time to visit with others.

Cova Rectory, Friday Morning, June 19, 2015, Detroit, Michigan.

At nine o'clock on Friday morning, Father Kiril Romanov and his older brother Mikhail settled into the rectory study at the Cova, after a light breakfast in the kitchen. They were intent on sharing advice before the momentous events which were about to unfold. Within thirty-six hours, Mikhail would make his appearance on the world stage in New York City as the probable heir-apparent to the Russian throne. Eighteen hours after that, back in Rome, the Holy Father would lead the consecration of Russia as requested at Fatima, and the number of Catholic bishops in the world would be automatically diminished by the exact number who refused to cooperate fully. How quickly this would result in any obvious changes in Russia was for Heaven alone to decide. Father Kiril set down his half-empty coffee cup and looked his brother Mikhail in the eye.

"Mike, bro, you're going to make quite a splash. You realize, of course, that the media will lap it right up, don't you? I mean, if it was the same matronly heir apparent and her son that they have been reporting on for the last decade, it wouldn't rank very high in importance. A couple of inches on the seventeenth page in the *Sunday Times*, and a couple of photos in the society pages. But all of a sudden a dashing young decorated war hero appears, accompanied by a beautiful young woman with remarkable poise, and the press and the paparazzi will go gaga over the photo ops.

At least a front page reference, for sure, and maybe even one front page photo. Then a full page write-up with several more photos, on about page four, and a bunch more photos in the society pages. Maybe even a minor Op-Ed piece about old world monarchy. Big stuff, bro.”

“Sounds terrible. I prefer a quiet life. I’m only going because they threatened me.”

“Look, Mike, a lot of people are just going along in their lives on a planned trajectory, thinking they know just where’ll they’ll end up in twenty or thirty years. Then, out of nowhere, Heaven throws them a curve ball, and their entire life plan is turned upside down. It happened to Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus. It happened to me when I was finishing music school, and the parish offered me a scholarship to seminary.”

“You had a pretty serious girlfriend at the time, as I recall,” needled Mikhail.

“Yes, and mother was all set for me to marry her. Then I woke up one morning and suddenly thought to myself, ‘I know, I think I’ll be a priest!’ Remember how mother cried when I told her?”

“Yeah, but she didn’t cry because she was thrilled you were going to be a priest. It was because you weren’t going to marry the girl she had already selected as her new daughter-in-law.”

“But in the end, mother was glad I became a priest.”

“Yeah, that only took her about ten years.”

“Well, her life got turned upside down suddenly, too. See the point?”

“No.”

“The point is, your life is about to be turned upside down, Mike, and it may well be God’s will. Your future may not be anything like you imagined a year ago.”

“Kiril, I’m just trying to find a way not to get killed.”

“Listen, bro, there is someone who wants to meet you this morning, before you go. Around here we call him by his birth name, Father Jacob. He was very impressed with your singing and playing last Sunday, by the way. For the past few days he’s been joining me here about this time.”

“Look, Kiril, I don’t think ...”

“Good morning, my sons!” said the Holy Father, as he glided into the rectory office with his morning cappuccino in hand. In his black cassock he looked like a simple parish priest, but Mikhail knew who he would be, and therefore could recognize him despite the fake beard.

“Holy Father, I would like to introduce my older brother, Doctor Mikhail Romanov. He was the bass soloist for the Haydn orchestral Mass last Sunday. He also played the organ for the Rheinberger concerto, with just six hour’s notice.”

Mikhail fell on his knees. Nicholas pulled his Fisherman’s Ring out of his black cassock pocket and permitted Mikhail to kiss it, thus demonstrating his respect for the office of Peter.

“Please, my son, be at ease,” said Nicholas. “You have shown proper respect for my office, but I am only a man, and at the moment a rather

befuddled one at that. Your brother here, along with our mutual friend Father John Herald, has been of immense help to me, more than I can say. I seem to be going through a time when my whole life is suddenly being turned upside down.”

Mikhail glanced at Kiril, and rolled his eyes. No doubt Kiril had recently given the same spiel to the Holy Father.

“Let’s see, Professor Doctor Romanov, I believe ...” began Nicholas.

“Please, Your Holiness, just call me Mikhail.”

“Ah, yes. Well, then, Mikhail, please accept my sincere compliments on your superb musicianship. Your organ and voice performances last Sunday morning greatly uplifted me. I would never have guessed you were doing the Rheinberger on short notice.”

“Thank you, Holy Father.”

“Mikhail, please, I am here incognito. You must just call me ‘Father Jacob.’ I can’t risk having others here discover who I am. There could be great danger if my whereabouts should be discovered. Father Kiril has assured me you will be completely trustworthy.”

“Yes, Father.”

“But enough about me. Father Kiril tells me you are off to New York today for a great adventure. One to which he has given his blessing. By the way, doctor, your young friend Mariya Peterson is quite a talented musician, and a most dignified Catholic young woman. And a princess, too, I am told.”

Mikhail blushed.

“It has all happened rather suddenly, you see ...” he stammered.

“Much like the upcoming consecration of Russia. I doubt this is any coincidence, mind you. Heaven seems to be moving at breathtaking speed to bring about real change in Russia. We may feel as if we are helping to make it happen, but really we are all just spectators, caught up in the current of history and watching in wonder as Heaven moves to change the world.”

“Why, what did Kiril tell you, Father Jacob?”

“Oh, not too much. Merely that you are, beyond any reasonable doubt, the legitimate Romanov Crown Prince of Russia, and that you are about to make your appearance on the world stage – on the evening before I consecrate Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, in union with all the Catholic bishops in the world. That’s all.”

“Actually, I never had intended to make anything of my family history. The world of princes and monarchs is long gone, and God saw fit to put me here in modern America.”

“Now think, Mikhail. The Pope is a prince and a monarch. Heaven is a monarchy where Christ is King and His Blessed Mother is His Queen, just as King David’s widow Bethsabee was queen in the royal courts of her son King Solomon. Monarchy is the natural form of government. Modern democracy is essentially an historical aberration, born out of mankind’s revolutionary rebellion against God’s established order, which by nature

is hierarchical.”

“We are not conditioned to think that way in America.”

“I dare say not. But there are still people who hope for the restoration of fallen monarchies, especially the Romanov family of Russia.”

“Yes. Apparently they don’t like the fact that I exist, because under their family rules I would be first in line for the throne, except that I am Roman Catholic and they can’t live with that. I have actually been threatened recently.”

“Yes, yes, Father Kiril explained it all to me. Of course they have threatened you, because there are some of them who have spent years being in love with the power and glory of the throne, which they believed was potentially theirs, and now they think you have come to steal it away from them. So they are desperately looking for some way to disqualify you.”

“Well, they found it, Father Jacob. They say I must either revert to the Orthodox Faith, or renounce the Russian throne and never return to Russia ... or die. I can never renounce the Catholic Faith, Father.”

“Of course not, my son.”

“And I don’t think it would be just to force anyone to renounce a hereditary title which by tradition and dynastic law ought to be God’s decision.”

“I fully agree, Mikhail.”

“You do?”

“Oh, yes. It’s obvious to me that these events – your appearance at this year’s Romanov Nobility Ball, and the Pope’s imminent public consecration of Russia – are occurring at one and the same time so the world will understand that Heaven has blessed Russia with a miraculous complete conversion. For Russia, too, the world is about to be turned upside down. It doesn’t just happen to people, you see. It can happen to nations too, when Heaven so decrees.”

“Do you think, if Russia converts, she will restore her monarchy?”

“Oh, I would think so. Monarchy is the normal form of government for a Christian Confessional State, because it reflects the very nature of Heaven itself.”

“And if Russia becomes a Catholic nation, then perhaps she will no longer demand that the new Tsar be Orthodox?”

“Exactly. Now you’re getting it. Personally, I’m foreseeing that the Russian Orthodox Church will probably come over to Rome *en masse*, much like many of the Anglicans did. But almost all of the Russian people will convert, in a very short span of time, and that is the miracle, promised through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, which the world will not be able to deny or ignore. The doctrinal differences between Catholic and Orthodox believers are fundamentally political, not theological. I can foresee that the faithful could choose to attend either rite – the Roman Rite or the Russian Orthodox Rite – because they would both equally be Roman Catholic rites. Suddenly, a restored Russian monarchy would be able to function in either rite or in both rites, and all the while remain in perfect

harmony both with the Pope in Rome, and with the Russian Orthodox Church.”

“Wow. That could actually be a Heaven-sent way out for me.”

“Yes. That’s why I don’t believe it is any coincidence that these things are happening all at once. But to cooperate with Heaven to bring all these things to fulfillment, we need to ensure safe travels for you to New York, and then for ‘Father Jacob’ back to Rome. I’ll be flying out tomorrow morning in the same private jet that will be flying you to New York this afternoon. So, my sons, all three of us must go upstairs to the rectory chapel, and kneel together before the Blessed Sacrament, and pray the Rosary together. We need to ask Our Blessed Mother to intercede with Jesus, so that the Holy Angels will travel with us and keep us safe. There are great powers, both natural and supernatural, which would like to impede our travels and our temporal and spiritual objectives, if they could. The threat you received from the Romanov family should be the least of your concerns.”

So the three men left the study, and climbed the rectory stairs, to fulfill the Pope’s request. After they had prayed, Mikhail knelt once again to kiss the papal ring, and received a special Pontifical blessing, traditionally reserved for princes and kings who had the duty to assist the Church in shepherding the souls of their people home to the safe sheepfold of eternal salvation.

Kiril then called for a Brown Group driver, and sent his brother on his way to City Airport, and to the elegant world of the Russian royal ball.

Trip to New York City, Friday Afternoon, June 19, 2015.

Mikhail met George, Katarina, and Mariya at the Brown Group’s private lounge at City Airport on Friday at noon. The flight crew introduced themselves: Captain Michael, First Officer Gabriel, and flight attendant Rafael. Mikhail found these names reassuring, considering the Pope had just prayed minutes ago that the Holy Angels would keep him safe on his journey. In the event, the flight proved unremarkable, and by half past three o’clock in the afternoon they were settled into their bedrooms at the Brown Group condominium atop the Waldorf=Astoria hotel. One of the Brown Group attendants was sent downstairs to the Romanov Nobility Ball registration table, and picked up their four guest packets. These included elegant name tags bearing the Romanov double-headed eagle crest, and in the lower right-hand corner was a number indicating their family rank. The multi-page full-color program included a seating map for dinner, the names of those assigned the introductory dances at the beginning of the ball, and color face photos of each person attending, together with their name, position within the family or as a guest, their occupation, and their place of residence.

“Hey, look, mom and dad,” laughed Mariya, “it says here that there are one hundred and twenty people attending. On the guest roster, they gave you numbers one hundred nineteen and one hundred twenty. Way to go!”

“We’re just trying to follow the parable’s advice,” quipped George. “When you are invited to a dinner party, take the lowest seat, and then perhaps the host will ask you to move up to a place of greater honor. That’s better than taking the chance of being demoted in front of everyone.”⁵⁹

“Yeah, right, dad.”

“But it seems that you and Mikhail have not learned so well.”

“What?” Mariya shot back. “Mikhail and I are not even listed.”

“Yes you are, but not in the regular guest roster. You two are listed separately among the elite, here on pages three and four.”

Mariya flipped back to the front of the program. She had figured that, just as in a school year book, the individual listings and photos would be at the back. On page one was featured Marina Mikhailovna Romanov, listed as current trustee of the throne. On page two was Grigory Mikhailovich Romanov, her son, listed as current heir apparent of the trustee to the throne. Since Marina was widowed and Grigory was neither married nor formally courting at the present time, Marina was assigned place number one, traditionally the place of the monarch at the center of an imperial state dining table, and Grigory was assigned place number two, directly across from his mother. This was all in accordance with the past several years, and was as expected. But the surprise was this: on page three was listed Mikhail Nicholaevich Romanov, listed as the only direct-male-line-of-descent heir of the Russian throne! A one-paragraph biographical sketch was included. He was assigned number three and was therefore seated at the right hand of Marina. On page four was listed Mariya Georgovna Peterson, European princess of full royal blood, and honored guest of Mikhail Nicholaevich. A similar biographical sketch was included. She was assigned a dinner place directly across from Mikhail, at the left hand of Grigory. On pages five through ten was the evening program schedule, and then on page eleven began the alphabetical listing of all the other guests, with small photos and brief biographical sketches, four to a page.

The schedule indicated that, following dessert and coffee, the family would sing two traditional hymns reflecting their prayers for the restoration of the monarchy. After dessert, everyone would move to the ballroom.

The first dance of the evening would be for the trustee of the throne, Marina, dancing with her son Grigory, her heir apparent. The second dance would be reserved for Mikhail and Mariya, giving everyone in the family a chance to get a good look at them. Then dancing for everyone would commence, and in the course of the evening nearly everyone would make or renew their acquaintance with almost everyone else.

“Dad, this is ridiculous. We’ve never even been here before, and now they’re making us big celebrities.”

“Well, Mikhail is the big celebrity, and you are his date,” said George.

“But you may end up like Jackie,” suggested Katarina. “When the Kennedy’s went to Paris, President Kennedy quipped that everyone really wanted to see his wife, and that he was merely the excuse for Paris to host Jackie as their favorite guest.”

⁵⁹ Luke 14:10.

"I don't know if I can handle this," sighed Mariya.

"Don't be silly, my dear," said George. "Earlier this month you played for the Pope on his birthday. He is a true world leader. These people only dream of being important someday."

"Hey, what's up, guys?" asked Mikhail, entering the dining room and picking up his copy of the program.

"You're number three in there, Misha. And because of you, I'm number four."

"What ..."

"Mom and dad are where I'd like to be. They're last."

"I don't get it," said Mikhail. "First they ..." But then he remembered that the threat he had received was kept secret from his guests. So he did not continue his intended remark.

"They what, Misha?" pressed Mariya.

"Oh, they acted like they were merely willing to tolerate my presence," he extemporized. "Now they put me in a high place of honor. It's just not what I was expecting."

"Good thing we have one more dance lesson together," said Mariya. "Listen, Misha, we're both accustomed to performing on stage. You were fantastic on the organ and bass solos last week at the Cova. No one could imagine you only learned about being the organ soloist a few hours beforehand. You can pull this off equally well."

"Only because I have a beautiful and graceful young woman to guide me across the dance floor," smiled Mikhail, causing her to blush delightfully.

Armed with information about what to expect, they took their final preparations to heart. On Saturday morning at the Traditional Latin Mass, after preparing themselves through the sacrament of Confession, they each received Holy Communion. After Mass, they stayed and prayed the Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary together before the Blessed Sacrament, being reminded through the Mystery of the Coronation that Heaven itself is a monarchy. They prayed for sufficient grace to represent themselves as good Catholics amid the staunch Orthodox Romanov gathering. They offered the Rosary for the Holy Father, knowing that he would be facing severe trials, both temporal and spiritual, as the Sunday evening consecration approached.

In the final Saturday afternoon dance instruction back at the condominium, they strove to perfect their waltz style, and the gracefulness of their movements together. Then they submitted to extensive professional advice and preparation concerning their formal attire, makeup, and grooming, provided by the Brown Group's New York public relations staff. It seemed to George and Katarina that they were being prepared for a television or stage appearance. But they understood that, while it was their own duty to ensure proper preparation of their hearts and minds, it was for these professionals to add the exterior finishing touches that would fit them for the roles they were called upon to fill on this remarkable evening. George and Mikhail would be attired in traditional black tuxedos

with black tie and shiny black shoes. The tuxedos had been individually tailored for them during the previous 12 hours, and were an exact fit. The ladies would wear elegant evening gowns of silk, Katarina in red and Mariya in blue. Tailored for them over the past twelve hours, their gowns covered their shoulders, perfectly accentuated their feminine figures while remaining modest, and ended half-way between their knees and ankles. Very full, their gowns could billow out delightfully in the twirling motions of the traditional waltz. Both were adorned with diamond earrings and necklaces loaned to them by the Brown Group personnel from Theresa Brown's personal collection.

At six-forty in the evening, the staff finally pronounced Mikhail, Mariya, George, and Katarina ready to take on the Romanov world. As a final external touch, their official Romanov Nobility Ball name tags were precisely positioned and affixed. They were each served one shot of top shelf Russian vodka, and Mikhail offered a traditional Russian toast for protection by the Holy Archangels. Then, arm in arm, they crossed the top floor corridor and pushed the down button, intending to descend to the hotel lobby. But just as the elevator doors opened, Mikhail called a halt.

"Wait," he said. "We need one more toast. Very important."

So they returned to the condo bar, where he poured another round of the same exquisite Russian vodka, and then offered an extemporaneous toast, asking Saint John Chrysostom and Saint Cyril to intercede for the whole Romanov family, on behalf of Russia, in the course of this evening.

"There," said Mikhail, "I have given in, just a little, to my Orthodox past, calling upon saints common to both Orthodox and Catholics. Tonight, we must comport ourselves as worthy but innocent Russian nobles, knowing that powerful and evil forces will be arrayed against us. The last Tsar was an Orthodox daily communicant, who in his mature years was a man of personal holiness and tireless dedication to his people, but he became caught up in impossible circumstances engineered in the depths of hell."

"We can be sure that hell will be raging again tonight," said Katarina, "against the Holy Father, and against all those who dare to entertain even the dream of a restored Christian monarchy in Russia."

"True. But I believe we are sufficiently fortified and ready for our small parts. We've been to Confession and Communion, we've prayed the Rosary, we've practiced our dance moves, we've been spiffed up like movie stars on the outside by Don Brown's pros, and now we've had two shots of fine vodka with toasts invoking Heaven's aid and protection. Come, let us trust in Heaven, and descend into the fray."

The Romanov Nobility Ball, Saturday Evening, June 20, 2015, New York City.

As they stepped off the elevator into the crowded hotel lobby, bejeweled ladies in evening gowns and tuxedoed gentlemen turned to look, and many whispered together. Photographers were everywhere, and

flashes flickered constantly. Walking arm in arm, the two elegant couples smiled confidently and nodded graciously as they entered the ballroom and strode to their places in the lineup at the back, where numbers one through twenty-four were instructed to await their formal introduction and entrance. Soon everyone was seated, and precisely at seven o'clock the emcee, a well-known New York City television personality of Russian descent, mounted the podium and began the formal welcome to the Annual Romanov Nobility Ball.

"Noble ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the 2015 Romanov Nobility Ball. Tonight are gathered here in New York City's Waldorf=Astoria Hotel the leading members of the House of Romanov. It is my distinct pleasure to introduce to you the trustee of the Romanov throne of Russia, Her Imperial Royal Highness Marina Mikhailovna Romanov, who is accompanied this evening by her son, the heir apparent to the throne, His Imperial Royal Highness Grigory Mikhailovich Romanov."

While Marina and her son Grigory proceeded down the aisle as a couple, to take their seats in the front row, the crowd clapped and cheered, but in the manner of a familiar routine, as if this had been done a dozen times before. Only a few photo flashes brightened the room. At the front, Marina and Grigory lifted their clasped hands, in the victory gesture of countless political running mates, and beamed at the crowd before taking their seats. The applause quickly subsided.

"Ladies and gentlemen," resumed the emcee, "I now present two very special newcomers to this year's Romanov Nobility Ball, who have come to New York City from the Great Lake State of Michigan. One is a true gentleman, a musician, military hero, and professor of medicine, who has only recently come to the attention of the family leadership. The Romanov Nobility Organization has officially confirmed that he is the only living direct-male-line-of-descent hereditary Romanov Crown Prince, Professor Doctor Mikhail Nicholaevich Romanov. This evening he is escorted by the lovely young lady of the Russian royal blood, Princess Mariya Georgovna Peterson."

Mikhail and Mariya began their promenade down the aisle, arm in arm, smiling and nodding as they walked. The crowd leapt to its feet and cheered wildly. The photo flashes were incessant. As they reached the front of the room, the couple bowed with humility, smiled graciously, and then took their seats beside Marina and Grigory. But the crowd would not be silenced, nor would the photographers' continuous flashes cease. The emcee motioned for Mikhail and Mariya to stand up and once again face the crowd, this time blowing kisses to them in a gesture of affection, and again bowing with deep humility. Eventually, the emcee pounded his gavel and pleaded for order, so that the introductions might resume. The cheering finally faded, and then the series of names began as the remaining twenty most-prominent persons, from among the total of one hundred sixteen guests, were introduced in pairs, in rapid succession, each couple walking down the aisle to their seats at the front.

At twenty minutes to eight o'clock, Marina was called to the podium to begin a brief welcome speech.

Noble ladies and gentlemen, it is my special privilege to welcome each and every one of you to the 2015 Romanov Nobility Ball. Each year, our gathering here serves to remind the world that the Romanov family, deeply in love with Holy Mother Russia, stands ready and waiting to serve the people of Russia once again, in any capacity which the Russian people, under the guidance of Heaven, may someday confirm. We believe that Christian monarchy is the best form of government possible on this earth. We pray for a restoration of a truly Christian government in our Motherland. We have been delighted that, since July of 2010, largely through the encouragement of President Polzin, our homeland now celebrates a new national holiday: the Baptism of Saint Prince Vladimir, the once-pagan ruler whose Christian baptism on July 28, 988 marked the beginning of Russia as a Christian nation.

Tonight, we seek to re-create the elegance of the Romanov nobility, who for more than three hundred fifty years led Russia in her growth and development. The tragedy of the atheistic Bolshevik revolution, forcibly inserted into Russia from outside by anti-Christian enemies of the Russian people, martyred our saintly last Tsar, the Passion-Bearer Nicholas II, and enslaved our people for seven decades under Communist tyranny. Then, the possibility of a new Russian sunrise began with the sudden and miraculously bloodless end of the atheistic Communist rule. But the new republican constitution is only a copy of any other modern secular state. Russia is still deprived of the singular grace of a Christian monarch. We proudly proclaim, through our gathering here this evening, our hopes and prayers that one day Russia may be restored to the blessings of a Holy Christian monarchy, and quite possibly under the restored Romanov dynasty. Of course this is a choice that the people of Russia must make. A monarchy only operates properly when it is born out of the love of the people for a devout and selfless leader, one who has been chosen by Heaven and anointed by the Church. The true Christian ruler not only leads the people toward human progress in this world, but teaches them by example and helps them by decree to serve God faithfully in this world, so that they may be happy with Him, and with His angels and His Saints, in the everlasting world to come.

Through all the long years that I have been acknowledged by this noble organization as the trustee of the Russian throne, such has been my dream for Russia. It is the dream I have inculcated in my son Grigory Mikhailovich, who has long been expected

to assume my role once I am gone. Now, however, a new Romanov prince is entering upon the world stage this evening. He is an outstanding gentleman who has lived his life in quiet seclusion, and who did not seek to come to the attention of our family organization until just this year. We have substantiated his remarkable genealogy beyond any reasonable doubt. As the trustee of the throne, it is my duty to inform you that, according to the rules of the Romanov dynasty as they existed at the death of the last Tsar, Professor Doctor Mikhail Nicholaevich Romanov, of Nazareth, Michigan, is the sole surviving heir of the Romanov throne, by an unbroken line of direct male descent uncompromised by any morganatic marriage. By the rules of the dynasty, he would normally take precedence over me and over my son Grigory, and would be acknowledged as the new trustee of the Russian throne.

Marina paused for a moment, allowing an unmistakable murmuring to spread throughout the crowd. When the desired degree of anticipatory tension was established, she resumed.

To repeat, normally Doctor Romanov would be proclaimed the new trustee of the throne – except for one thing. Noble ladies and gentlemen, I ask you now to please listen carefully. Mikhail Nicholaevich Romanov was born and baptized into the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia. But when he was sixteen, he and his parents began to frequent a Roman Catholic Church in Detroit, and before his sixteenth year was over, he freely chose to become a Roman Catholic, thus renouncing the Orthodox Faith of the Romanov Imperial dynasty.

Again, murmuring could be heard throughout the audience, this time much more vociferous.

Like any Romanov of the true royal blood, we have welcomed Doctor Romanov here this evening as our honored guest. But we have also informed him that, to preserve the precious credibility of our family with the overwhelmingly-Orthodox Russian people, he must make a choice. He must either renounce any claim to the Romanov throne, or he must revert to the true Orthodox Faith of our fathers. So I ask you, noble ladies and gentlemen, if you agree with me that Russia is, and ever will remain, a Russian Orthodox nation?

The crowd broke into applause, and many rose to their feet, as if they were at a political rally. Mikhail and Mariya remained seated in front, as did George and Katarina in the rear. But Marina did not allow this cheering to go on for long. She pounded the gavel and asked for silence.

Noble ladies and gentlemen, it is my duty and honor to introduce to you this evening's guest of honor, Professor Doctor Mikhail Nicholaevich Romanov.

Marina returned to her seat, smiling at Mikhail with eyes like cold steel daggers. She motioned to Mikhail to rise and take his place at the podium. He was caught entirely off guard, as any introductory speech by him was not listed in the program, and he had made no preparation for such a moment. The crowd remained silent but attentive as he adjusted the microphone to his greater height. His military bearing, his humble dignity, and his uncanny resemblance to Tsar Nicholas II were not lost on the crowd.

Noble ladies and gentlemen of the Romanov family, it is a great honor to stand before you this evening. It is not a little disconcerting to follow such a beautiful and gracious leader as Marina Mikhailovna. Nor do I dispute the facts which she has told you about me. I am indeed the true Romanov crown prince of royal blood, by unbroken line of succession. Here in my native America, I am a professor of medicine, a former Marine officer, and a decorated war hero. By avocation I am a somewhat accomplished classical musician. But most important of all, I am a Roman Catholic. It has never been my belief that in becoming a Roman Catholic I ever ceased to be an Orthodox believer. In common with the great Filaret of Moscow, father of the Romanov dynasty; with Saint John Chrysostom, whose Mass is daily celebrated in Old Slavonic throughout the Orthodox world; and with Vladimir Soloviev, the most respected Orthodox theologian of modern pre-revolutionary Russia, who died a Roman Catholic while considering himself still to be truly Orthodox – in common with these great men I proclaim my conviction that to be truly Orthodox one must be in union with Peter, the Vicar of Christ, the Bishop of Rome, to whom Our Lord Jesus Christ gave the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore you should know that there is no possibility of my ceasing to be a Roman Catholic. But neither will I deny that I am truly Orthodox, nor have I ever repudiated the true Orthodox Faith of my youth.

Certain family members have asked me, for what they believe to be the good of this noble organization, to either publicly renounce my identity as a Roman Catholic, or else to renounce any potential claim to the Romanov throne and to never again travel to Russia. But I must inform you that I can do neither. For as a Roman Catholic, I do not consider that I have ever stopped being truly Orthodox. I do not know if there will ever be a restoration

of the Romanov monarchy in Russia, though I heartily agree with Marina Mikhailovna that such an eventuality could only shower great spiritual and temporal blessings upon Holy Mother Russia. I believe it is for Heaven to decide, not for me. A true Christian monarch must be chosen by Heaven, and must answer to Heaven. I will not presume to interfere in Heaven's prerogative. Instead, I will trust Heaven to guide and protect our beloved Russia. I will not renounce my potential rights to the throne. I will not be deterred from the medical mission trips which I am accustomed to make, three times each year, to the remotest parts of Russia. And I will not be deterred from the lecture posts which I hold at academic medical centers in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. But there is one thing I will do. I will look forward this evening to making your acquaintance as we eat, drink, and dance together as a noble family. May God be with each and every one of you, and may the Holy Archangels protect us. Thank you.

At first there was stunned silence. Then a few in the audience began to clap, and a few camera flashes lit the podium. Little by little, others took up the applause, until a respectable but subdued applause was offered. Most members of the audience were whispering with one another, trying to formulate a position on the controversy they had just witnessed. To break the awkwardness, Grigory proceeded to the podium and announced that the guests were invited to reconvene in the dining room in ten minutes, at their assigned places, for dinner.

As Mikhail and Mariya moved through the crowd of nobility, some greeted them warmly and introduced themselves with firm handshakes. Others pointedly moved out of the way, making clear that they desired to keep their distance from the newcomers. And one or two pointedly voiced their opinion that at this gathering only Orthodox believers were welcome, and that the young Catholic couple should consider leaving early. Mercifully, three chime tones soon sounded throughout the lobby, signaling that it was time to be seated for the dinner.

When all were at their places, Father Oleg, the elderly Romanov gentleman who was a Russian Orthodox priest, offered in Russian the traditional blessing for the beginning of a meal. Marina recalled that this meddlesome priest had publicly challenged her son, at the recent annual planning meeting, when Grigory had suggested that perhaps Mikhail would need to be stripped of his claim to the throne for the good of the Russian nation. Some people, she mused, just did not understand that rulers often have to operate pragmatically, bringing an unfortunate injustice upon one man in order to bring about a greater good for a greater number. Marina liked being in charge. When everyone was seated, she picked up her fork. Since she sat in the place of the monarch, this signaled to everyone at the dinner that it was now permissible to commence eating and conversing. Appetizers were already on the tables, and the servers immediately began

offering a choice of wines.

Mikhail was seated next to Marina, and across from them Mariya was seated next to Grigory.

“So, Professor, how are you enjoying yourself so far this evening?” asked Marina, launching the next verbal contest.

“I am deeply honored to be among such illustrious company, quite frankly.”

“But you must notice how everyone is watching you,” she prodded. “You are quite the spectacle this evening. Everyone sees you as an intruder and an upstart, and yet you sit in the third highest place of honor.”

Mikhail felt the beginnings of actual irritation, due to the game of insult and intimidation which she was obviously attempting to play.

“Madame, I am sitting precisely where I was instructed to sit. If you have a problem with that, I suggest you consult with the Romanov family leadership who planned this event. Oh, but that would be *you*, wouldn’t it?”

“Remember you are being watched, Professor.”

“Indeed. And *you* should remember that Princess Mariya, her mother Princess Katarina, and my princely self are all accomplished musicians accustomed to being stared at and judged while we perform the most complex classical works on stage. Tonight our performances may be of a different sort, but I can assure you we are quite at home in this element. Furthermore, I spent many years as a special operations officer in active theaters of war, and I am quite accustomed to answering threats definitively with measured and effective retaliatory force.”

“So I see. But then, what about Professor George Peterson?”

“Prince George is a well-known Professor of Psychiatry. He is widely published, and lectures internationally on the interface between science and faith in the practice of psychiatry. His lectures routinely engender strong controversy and heated debate, some of which is actually academic. But most of his opponents launch crude *ad hominem* attacks on his character, because they are shallow secularists who do not know how to directly challenge his arguments. You will find that Prince George, too, can hold his own tonight, I can assure you.”

“So then, you people will not easily be dislodged from your pretensions to have a place of honor among this noble family.”

“The question is, Madame, how will you handle this evening, and the coming media exposure which we will gain from tonight’s celebration? How will you handle being dislodged from *your* longstanding pretensions?”

Marina perceived that this newcomer displayed remarkable strength of character and solid self-assurance. His unflappability was worthy of a monarch. He was capable of firing back darts of truth that stung as much as the calculated half-truths she launched at him. In a certain way she was beginning to like him, because she respected those who could wield power and defend their interests with equanimity and poise. A part of her might even regret it if he should have to be formally declared disqualified from

the throne, as seemed to her increasingly likely. But, being a pragmatist, she knew that Grigory would not hesitate to act in the best interests of the family – and of herself and his own future throne.

The four newcomers all began to charm those seated in their vicinity, much to the distress of Marina and Grigory. Because the rules of the Romanov royal table allowed each person to speak directly only to those seated on either side or directly across from them, impromptu games were soon begun by means of which questions or comments for the four were passed down the table from person to person, and the four began to speak in loud voices so that those whom they could not properly address directly could nevertheless hear what they had to say. Some older, more-perceptive family members noted the mounting distress and restlessness displayed by Marina and Grigory as they progressively lost control of the dinner conversation to the four Catholic newcomers. It was plain to Marina that almost all those who had a chance to engage these new people in conversation invariably began to like them. For Mikhail, Mariya, George, and Katarina, the dinner hour flew by, and as they finished their dessert and coffee it seemed to them that the dinner had only just begun. But for Marina and Grigory, dinner had proved to be a very long ordeal, one which now seemed as if it would never end.

Finally, Father Oleg, the Russian Orthodox priest, called for everyone's attention, and offered the customary Russian prayer for the end of a meal. He then stated that it was time for the family tradition of singing two hymns together after dinner: "The Russian Hymn," and "God Save the Tsar." He announced that Prince Mikhail Romanov, this evening's pre-eminent guest, had agreed to lead the singing on the hotel dining room's three-manual pipe organ.⁶⁰ His beautiful guest, Princess Mariya Peterson, would play along on the concert grand piano. The words and music could be found at the back of each person's official program. Mikhail and Mariya stood up, and went to the small stage where the organ console was opened, and the Steinway concert grand piano was waiting. At the microphone, Mikhail spoke these few words:

Noble ladies and gentlemen, this evening we are seeking to recapture the elegance and grandeur of a lost world: the world of pre-revolutionary Christendom where governments were officially and actively Christian, a world in which many saintly rulers of vast empires were as much concerned with the salvation of individual souls as with the production of material goods or the amassing of earthly wealth and power. These two classic poems, set to the glorious tune known as *The Russian Hymn*, serve as a window on that world. By singing them we express our hope that

⁶⁰ In the real world, unfortunately, this noble 1931 M.P. Moller 3-manual, 44-rank pipe organ was removed from the Waldorf=Astoria hotel dining room in 1952. But in this story concerned with the restoration of tradition, the author chose to pretend that the organ had survived the post-World War II American "progressive" folly of ripping great pipe organs out of hotels and concert halls as if they were intrusive artifacts of a happily discarded past.

one day such a world may yet again be reborn. *The Russian Hymn* tune, commissioned by Tsar Nicholas I in 1833, was composed by Alexey Feodorovitch Lvov, a former military aide to the Tsar who ultimately became the director of the imperial court chapel choir in Saint Petersburg. This noble hymn tune was used by Tchaikovsky in his *1812 Overture*. It has long had two sets of words. The first poem, 'God the Omnipotent,' combines stanzas by two authors. Henry Chorley composed the first two verses in 1842, while John Ellerton wrote the third and fourth verses in 1870. The text is based on Apocalypse 19:6: 'Alleluia: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, hath reigned.' This hymn reflects our prayer for our beloved Motherland, the home of our ancestors. It acknowledges that, like all nations, Russia has sinned and needs to repent and return wholeheartedly to God. I will play the hymn through once, and then you may join in singing all the verses. There will be a brief organ interlude between each verse, to provide for changes in pitch and organ registration. I am likely to add a trumpet descant here and there. But whenever the grand piano joins with the organ, that is when you sing.

With that, Mikhail took his place at the console, and Mariya sat at the piano. Following the grand organ introduction, the whole Romanov family sang together as follows:

God the Omnipotent! King Who ordainest
Thunder Thy clarion and lightning Thy sword;
Show forth Thy pity on high where Thou reignest:
Give to us peace in our time, O Lord.

God the All-Merciful! Earth hath forsaken
Thy ways all holy, and slighted Thy word;
Bid not Thy wrath in its terrors awaken:
Give to us peace in our time, O Lord.

God the All-Righteous One! Earth hath defied Thee;
Yet to eternity standeth Thy Word.
Falsehood and wrong shall not tarry beside Thee:
Give to us peace in our time, O Lord.

God the All-Provident! Earth by Thy chastening
Yet shall to freedom and truth be restored;
Through the thick darkness Thy kingdom is hastening:
Thou wilt give peace in Thy time, O Lord.⁶¹

⁶¹ Referenced on August 13, 2010 at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God,_the_Omnipotent! Public domain.

When the singing was done, Mikhail immediately returned to the microphone:

Thank you for your well-sung prayer. The second set of words, sung to the same tune, was composed by Vasily Zhukovsky in Russian, and was translated into English by an unknown writer. ‘God Save the Tsar’ was the Russian National Anthem, from 1833 until the tragic atheistic revolution of 1917. In praying for the Tsar, we pray not only for Russia’s former rulers who have passed on to the next world, and may yet be in their time of purgation, but we also pray for the future Tsars of Russia, for the office of the monarchy and our hope that it may be gloriously restored to lead the world back into a renewed Christendom. As we sing together, let it be our prayer. The first and third verses will be in English, with the second verse sung in Russian. The format will be the same as for the previous hymn.

Again, Mikhail provided a grand organ introduction, and then the piano joined in, leading the family as they sang these words:

God save the noble Tsar! Long may he live, in pow’r,
In happiness, and in true peace to reign!
Dread of his enemies, Faith’s sure defender,
God save the Tsar! O God save the Tsar!

Боже, Царя храни! Сильный, державный,
Царствуй на славу, На славу нам!
Царствуй на страх врагам, Царь православный.
Боже, Царя храни! Боже, Царя храни!

God save the Christian Tsar! Long may he live, in pow’r,
In holiness, and in Christ’s peace to reign!
Dread of Christ’s enemies, Faith’s sure defender,
Christ save the Tsar! O God save the Tsar!⁶²

At the conclusion of the singing, there was a moment of silence, and a good many family members could be seen wiping tears from their eyes. A moment of silence seemed natural, but then Mikhail and Mariya stood and faced the audience, and many leapt to their feet and began to applaud and to shout “Bravo!” So, the newly introduced prince and princess humbly bowed, and then quickly returned to their places at the table. Marina, looking somewhat subdued, stood at her place and announced that there would be a twenty-minute break for everyone, after which all were to convene in the grand ballroom for the formal beginning of the ball.

As the crowd filed out into the lobby, Mikhail and Mariya perceived a

⁶² Referenced on August 13, 2010 at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_Save_the_Tsar!#Russian. Public domain. Third stanza altered by the author.

marked difference from before dinner. Couples were pressing in all around them, waiting in line to meet and greet them, and smiling with a warmth not seen earlier. Quite a few requested to be photographed with the new couple, some by press photographers and some using their own cameras. Others requested autographs on their programs. Not a few offered their business or calling cards, and extended invitations to come and visit them in their various places of residence, some in the United States, many in other parts of the Americas, and not a few in Europe. Many of them mentioned that they had family members who were Catholic, and that they tended to agree that the longstanding schism was primarily political not theological. A few reporters, noting the interest in the new couple, attempted to begin interviews, but were reminded of the rules of the evening: the press could photograph all they wanted, but interviews would not be granted until the next morning after ten o'clock in the Romanov family's special morning-after-the-ball press room.

The Waldorf=Astoria Grand Ballroom was an immense room with an ornate ceiling four stories above the floor. A series of small balconies projected out around the walls, at the second and third story levels. Flags were draped from each balcony, alternating between the black, gold, and white flag of the Romanov empire, and white flags bearing the unmistakable Romanov coat-of-arms with its double-headed eagle. On the stage at the front of the ballroom, an orchestra was set up, together with a Steinway concert grand piano and the console of the grand ballroom's magnificent 4-manual pipe organ.⁶³ The orchestra, which included strings, brass, woodwinds, percussion, and a gilded Lyon and Healy concert grand harp, was prepared to play the full range of classical and popular tunes typical of a European royal ball at the time of transition from the Nineteenth to the Twentieth Century. At the rear of the stage was a huge painted backdrop, used every year, depicting a Nineteenth Century European royal ball in the Alexander Palace⁶⁴ at Tsarskoye Selo just outside Saint Petersburg. The emcee's podium was placed at stage left, in front of the flag of the Romanov dynasty. The United States flag was properly displayed at stage right. Across one side of the vast room, a head table was set up on a raised platform. Here were seated the top twenty-four people in the family organization, with the most important persons positioned at the center and those of lesser status toward the ends, in the same order of rank as had been observed at the dinner table. The huge wooden dance floor filled the entire center of the vast ballroom, providing ample space for everyone to dance at once without being crowded. On the far side, opposite the head table, was a group of twenty round tables, each seating six persons, where the less-prominent family members and guests might sit between dances.

⁶³ In the real world, this grand 1931 M.P. Moller 4-manual, 76-rank pipe organ, like its smaller counterpart in the dining room, was removed from the Waldorf=Astoria hotel Grand Ballroom in 1952.

⁶⁴ The Alexander Palace, home of the last Tsar, will figure prominently in this story. It can be explored online at the excellent historical website "The Alexander Palace Time Machine," at <http://www.alexanderpalace.org/palace>.

In the back of the room was a refreshment table, decorated with models of famous Russian buildings, and supplied with dessert, coffee, candies, and fountains of chilled champagne and punch. In the back corners were two full-service bars. Small adjoining meeting rooms were provided as lounges, one for ladies and one for gentlemen, where they might retreat to renew acquaintances or discuss business and social opportunities. Press photographers were allowed free access only to the ballroom, and were provided with a third small meeting room as a place of rest and retreat.

Mikhail and Mariya found themselves feeling more at home among this crowd of strangers, many of whom had begun to warm to their presence. To them, it seemed as if the chime tones sounded all too soon, calling everyone into the ballroom for the beginning of the formal dances. The twenty-four leading family members took their seats on the raised platform, with Marina in the center, Grigory at her right hand, and Mikhail then Mariya to her left. When all were seated at their tables, the emcee stood at the podium and began the celebration.

“Noble ladies and gentlemen, tonight we observe many great traditions of the Romanov dynasty. Our fine Romanov Nobility Ball orchestra, consisting of professional musicians drawn mainly from the New York Philharmonic, is being conducted by Rostislav Gorsky, music director of the Mariinsky Ballet in Saint Petersburg. Please welcome to the podium our distinguished maestro!”

Appropriate applause ensued as Maestro Gorsky, in the glow of a spotlight, mounted the podium and took a brief bow. Then the emcee resumed.

“The first dance, according to long-established custom, is reserved for the current trustee of the throne, Her Royal Highness Princess Marina Mikhailovna, and her son, escort, and heir apparent, His Royal Highness Prince Grigory Mikhailovich. They have selected the beautiful waltz from ‘Sleeping Beauty’ by one of Russia’s greatest composers, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. Noble ladies and gentlemen, please welcome to the ballroom dance floor the dedicated leaders of the Romanov Nobility Organization!”

A spotlight from the rear projection gallery shone on Marina and Grigory as they rose from their places at the head table. Nearly everyone in the ballroom rose to their feet with cheering and clapping as the couple made their way to the center of the dance floor. Hand in hand, and beaming with broad smiles, they bowed in each of the four directions, and then positioned themselves to begin. The maestro raised his baton, and as the melodious strains of the Tchaikovsky waltz wafted through the vast room, the couple began to dance with perfect poise and practiced elegance. As they danced, photographic flashes brightened the room from every vantage point. Servers placed a champagne flute at every place, in preparation for the toast which would follow. When the music ended, Marina and Grigory once again bowed in all four directions, and the crowd broke into another round of applause with most standing to their feet. As they made their way back to the center places at the head table, the emcee announced a toast in honor of the couple.

“Noble ladies and gentlemen, I propose a toast to the honor of the

elegant lady who is our trustee of the Romanov throne, and to her son and heir apparent. May they be preserved in health and honor, and may the day soon dawn when they can assume their proper role as the moral and cultural leaders of our beloved Motherland!”

Glasses were raised, and as the toast was drunk, Marina and Grigory, shining in the light of the spotlight at their places, smiled and waved graciously. Then everyone took their seats to await the emcee announcement of the next dance.

“Tonight we also break with tradition, by honoring two guests who have never previously attended the annual Romanov Nobility Ball. Prince Mikhail Nicholaevich Romanov, accompanied by the beautiful Princess Mariya Georgovna Peterson, will now be honored by a special dance to acknowledge Prince Mikhail’s apparent potential as the new trustee of the throne. As you know, some religious controversy surrounds this issue, but during tonight’s festivities we lay our differences aside and pay our respects to the possibility of an unbroken male dynastic succession preserved, as if by a miracle, by Heaven itself. In keeping with Russian tradition, they too have selected music by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, the elegant waltz from ‘Swan Lake.’ I know that many of you have already begun to make their acquaintance, and now I ask you to warmly welcome to the dance floor His Royal Highness Prince Mikhail Nicholaevich Romanov, and his beautiful escort the Royal Princess Mariya Georgovna Peterson.”

Now the spotlight shone on Mikhail and Mariya as they rose from their places at the head table, and began to make their way onto the dance floor. The crowd clapped politely, and with some degree of enthusiasm, but there was no standing ovation, and a certain number of persons pointedly did not clap at all. Following the example of the first couple, they held hands, smiled confidently, and bowed in all four directions. Then the maestro raised his baton, and the music began. Mikhail and Mariya knew they were being watched intently, as camera flashes flickered from all directions, and the spotlight followed them across the floor. But their intense preparation was now paying dividends, as they artfully and flawlessly recreated the elegance of late Nineteenth Century ballroom dancing. Their musical souls let the music guide them, and the audience, as they watched, became enraptured by the beauty and elegance of their performance. Clearly, here were two gifted musical artists, hardly interested in politics, who were stealing the show. If the two opening dances represented any sort of competition, there was no doubt in anyone’s mind as to which couple had won the victory. When the music ended – all too soon, it seemed to many – Mikhail and Mariya stood at the center of the floor, smiled enthusiastically, and bowed in all four directions. At first the crowd seemed to hesitate, as if they were not at liberty to let their emotions rule their hearts. But then a few brave souls, following the lead of Father Oleg, leapt to their feet with shouts of “Bravo!” and soon the entire room exploded with enthusiastic applause, continued shouts of acclamation, and a standing ovation by almost everyone. Mariya and Grigory, and perhaps half of all those at the head table, remained seated. Photo flashes were incessant while the

spotlight followed the newly popular young couple back to their places at the head table. Once there, they smiled and, hand in hand, bowed once again, and took their seats. Only then did the applause begin to subside.

“So, the military hero who saves lives by day and plays the organ by night is also a master of the dance,” said Marina sarcastically. “You two danced as if you had practiced for a Hollywood movie.”

“Why, thank you,” retorted Mikhail, recognizing that in her effort to be insulting she had actually rendered a real compliment. He felt sorry for her, sensing the deep emotional turmoil that this evening represented for her. She was accustomed to the unquestioned leading role in this noble family. Now suddenly he, an unknown upstart, had appeared on the scene and seemed poised to take the leading role away from her. But it was not something he had ever desired or actively pursued, it was something to which Heaven itself seemed possibly to be calling him. He decided that sincere kindness, in Christian charity, was the only appropriate response to her suffering and anxiety. So he decided to be a true gentleman, and to act like the nobleman he was.

“May I have the honor of the next dance, Your Highness?” he ventured. “Unless you have already promised it to someone else.”

There was just a moment too long delay, while she pondered the fact that, as trustee of the throne, it was her prerogative to ask the gentlemen to dance with her. But Mikhail would not know that, having never attended this function before. So she suppressed her initial irritation at this *faux pas*, and smiled at him.

“I would be delighted. Properly, as the Crown Princess, I am supposed to ask you, but now you have made that easy for me. As soon as the emcee announces the beginning of the general dancing, it will be our place to lead everyone onto the floor.”

Having learned from this the proper etiquette, Mikhail could not help musing that, since he was arguably the Crown Prince taking precedence over her claim to the throne, perhaps his invitation was no *faux pas* at all, but rather reflected a changing reality which she had yet to accept.

“Noble ladies and gentlemen,” began the emcee, “now it is time for every one of you to take the floor with your partner, for the beginning of our evening of dancing and celebration together. The next waltz will be a favorite classic from the Hapsburg empire, ‘On the Beautiful Blue Danube’ by Johann Strauss II.”

Marina and Mikhail stood up together, hand in hand, and, under the glow of the spotlight, made their way to the dance floor. Grigory took his cue and asked Mariya to dance with him, and they followed closely behind the leading couple. When the dance floor was populated by nearly everyone present, the maestro raised his baton, and the delightful music began. Dancing a traditional waltz was a sufficiently complex undertaking that casual conversation was not really possible. Ever the consummate politician, Marina smiled throughout, and nodded at others as they whirled past. Although Mikhail actually knew only a handful of faces, he smiled at everyone as well. Whether unwittingly or not, the two of them telegraphed

a message: there was going to be peace in the Romanov family. But whether peace in the family would come about by gracious submission of habitual power to Heaven's manifest will, or whether it would come as the eventual aftermath of a murderous plot hatched in secret in a locked room, was a question not yet answered.

When the music stopped, Mikhail thanked Marina for her company, and mentioned that he needed to start circulating among the ladies to see if any of them still had blank lines on their dance cards. Naturally, his name was already filled in on several lines on Mariya's card, including the last dance of the evening. Soon the music started again, and during the next several dances, Mikhail and Mariya began to make the acquaintance of various members of the House of Romanov. On the whole they found their new acquaintances to be quite cordial, respectful, and interested in learning about them. They began to feel that some were potential good friends. Finally, after a full hour of dancing, the emcee announced that the orchestra would take a twenty-minute break. Those who wished could retreat to the men's or ladies' lounges, or else mingle at the tables in the ballroom. Just before the emcee left his podium, Mariya climbed up the steps to the stage and whispered something in his ear. He nodded and smiled, and spoke again.

"Noble ladies and gentlemen, I have one more announcement. During the orchestra break, our new guests have offered to provide some background music for your entertainment. Princess Mariya and Prince Mikhail will perform a piano and organ duet of excerpts from the Nutcracker Suite by Tchaikovsky. It was originally transcribed by Tchaikovsky for piano four hands, but Prince Mikhail's brother Kiril developed a special transcription for piano two hands together with organ two hands and two feet."

The crowd laughed delightedly as Mikhail mounted the steps to join Mariya on the stage. This was an arrangement Mariya had performed with Father Kiril within the past year for the annual "Music by Candlelight" wine and dinner fundraiser at the Cova parish, and Mariya had faxed Mikhail a copy of the organ score just a few days before. He had found an evening or two to run through it on his Allen practice organ at home before he came down to the Cova on Thursday evening. He had tried to tell Mariya that he doubted it would really work out to do it at the ball, but time and circumstance now proved that Mariya had been correct. This was going to be an excellent means to share their talent and to warm the family to their presence, and he realized that Mariya had the makings of an excellent politician. She knew how to win people's hearts by generously sharing her goodness and talent with them, with neither timidity nor pride. He was not sure he even dared to think his next thought: that she was made for the role of a Tsarina, who would work behind the scenes to build him up in the eyes of the people.

By the time they had their music arranged, the organ registration decided, and began to play, many had begun filing out of the ballroom. But before long, almost everyone gradually returned, realizing that they were missing a rousing performance of some of the most delightful

tunes ever penned. They played for about fifteen minutes, and at the conclusion, those present stood and clapped enthusiastically, with shouts of "Bravo!" from various corners of the room. But as soon as the applause subsided, the three chime notes sounded, indicating the end of the break, and members of the orchestra began returning to the stage. Soon the dancing resumed, and Mikhail and Mariya continued making the acquaintance of Romanov family members as they danced through the evening.

At the second twenty-minute break, they each retreated to their respective lounge, where they could meet some members of their own sex and make more new acquaintances. In the men's lounge, Mikhail was queried about his military history, his special forces training and operations, his medical teaching and missions in Russia, and how it came to be that such an accomplished man of science and war was also a consummate musician. A number of leading men in the family began to perceive that this newcomer was indeed a man of exceptional character, achievement, intelligence, and personal grace, possibly fit to be a Tsar. They would have to re-think what they had taken for granted for the past decade or more.

In the ladies' lounge, Mariya, just eighteen, impressed the older Romanov women with her poise, maturity, and kindness. They inquired about her recent award-winning performance in Moscow at the *Soli Deo Gloria* festival, and wondered what it had been like for a group of Russian students to play for the Catholic Pope in Rome. They were also interested in how she and Mikhail managed to be so elegant in appearance, and Mariya shared with them the secret of Don Brown's public relations staff assistance. The fact that the richest businessman in Detroit had come to their aid only enhanced the women's impression that this young couple were no ordinary pretenders, but seemed to have the sort of grace and favor about them which typified those born to be royal leaders. By the time the break ended, both Mikhail and Mariya had each received several more invitations to visit the private estates of princely Romanov's in various European nations.

As the orchestra once again returned to the stage, for the final session of music, Mikhail handed a note to the maestro, who was profusely complimentary about Mikhail and Mariya's earlier performance of the Nutcracker excerpts. The note stated that, about midway through the final hour of music, Mikhail wished to be called to the stage where, as bass soloist, he would serenade his date, Mariya, with the love song "Somewhere My Love," set to the tune "Lara's Theme" from the 1965 film *Doctor Zhivago*. The maestro was informed that Mikhail had left a packet on the organ console music rack that contained the orchestra parts. Mikhail had done his own orchestration for small orchestra, in the popular-classical style of the 1966 Connie Francis recording, and had composed additional verses of his own poetry. The maestro was delighted, but as the dancing was about to begin, he barely had enough time to pass out the music and inform the orchestra of where the piece

would fall in the final-hour lineup. Orchestra members were seen to smile and nod in approval as they received the mysterious music sheets.

Without delay, the emcee announced the next dance, and the maestro's baton signaled the orchestra to play. For a third hour this evening, the elegant dancing of the lost world of imperial Russia was seen in all its splendor, whirling across the polished floor of the Waldorf=Astoria Grand Ballroom. By this time in the evening, most of the guests were more than a little tipsy, and there was an increase in laughter and merriment as the tempo of the waltzes picked up. Just when many of the guests felt they could not go on without a rest, the emcee announced an unscheduled intermission.

"Noble ladies and gentlemen, tonight a surprise has been prepared for you. At this point in the evening you all need a brief rest before the evening's final dances. Our guest of honor, Prince Mikhail Romanov, has asked permission of the maestro to serenade his lovely lady, Princess Mariya Peterson. Prince Romanov has provided the musicians with an original orchestration, which he himself prepared for this evening's performance. The maestro and musicians have kindly agreed, and so, if you will all take your seats for a brief period of rest, you will hear a beautiful rendition of the popular Russian-themed song, 'Somewhere My Love,' with additional verses composed by the prince for tonight's celebration. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome to our stage the talented bass soloist, Prince Mikhail Nicholaevich Romanov."

The spotlight followed Mikhail from his place on the dance floor, where his last dance had been with Mariya, up onto the stage, where he took the wireless microphone from its cradle on the podium and stood at stage center. He turned and nodded to the maestro, and the orchestral introduction began. Soon Mikhail's sonorous bass voice began the well-known lyrics:

"Somewhere, my love ..." ⁶⁵

After the standard well-known verse, there was a brief orchestral interlude with a change in key, and then Mikhail began a new verse, sung to the same tune, which he had composed for this very evening. As he sang, he kept his gaze fixed on Mariya:

Princess Mariya, you set my heart to sing:
 Love blooms and grows, fresh as the flowers of spring!
 This lonely prince, born to an ancient throne,
 Yearns but for this: that you will be his own!
 Princess, I would have you, my love
 Near me, to cherish our whole life through!
 Ancestral saints, out of the long ago

⁶⁵ Well-known words and tune are widely available online. Words by Paul Francis Webster. Sung to the tune "Lara's Theme" by Maurice Jarre, used in the 1965 motion picture *Doctor Zhivago*. Recorded by Connie Francis in 1966. The standard words and tune, which are copyright, are available online at several websites.

Smile on us now, praying our love may grow.
 Come waltz with me, now and 'til life is through.
 God keep our hearts, and keep me close to you!

Again there was an instrumental interlude, reverting back to the original key. Mariya, in her seat at the head table, was profoundly moved. Here, in front of this noble gathering, she had been serenaded by the very man who, by right of birth, should be numbered first among them. She had been impressed the previous weekend when she heard Mikhail sing the Haydn Mass, but was completely enthralled by the more casual artistry with which he sang this light classical-style popular work. Surely, she thought, he would have no difficulty winning a part on Broadway. Then Mikhail began a third verse, which he had composed for the very eve of Russia's consecration. It was meant to engender the imminent hope of Fatima's promise in all the Romanov family:

Someday the world will wonder in surprise:
 Heaven will grant Russia a new sunrise!
 Someday the Tsar will proclaim Christ the King,
 And Christian laws will make true freedom ring.
 Someday, Christendom will return,
 Someday, Russia will change the world:
 She'll come to us, out of the long ago,
 Fervent in Faith, noble toward friend and foe.
 'Til then, we'll pray for our dear Motherland:
 Christ keep her safe, in His own Mother's hand.

By the time the song was ended, Mariya was wiping tears from her face. She risked a glance at Marina, one empty seat away from her, and saw that she, too, was crying. Their eyes met, and in that moment a profound understanding passed between them. Marina had once been loved too, and had lost her beloved when she was widowed years ago. She was entering upon her eighth decade, and in beholding the youth and beauty of these newcomers to the ball, she was reminded of her own days of youth and happiness. Now, she saw her long-cherished hopes – that her son Grigory might become the next Tsar – slipping from her grasp, as these young newcomers won over the hearts of the family, not through intrigue and manipulation, but through a natural display of their noble character, exceptional talent, and innocent goodness of heart. She knew of no weapons effective against such an assault, and was beginning to be resigned to the secondary places which Heaven seemed to be suggesting for her and for her son.

Marina stood up and began to make her way to the stage, while Mikhail made his bow and accepted the adoring applause of the entire room. He blew kisses in Mariya's direction, and a second spotlight suddenly illuminated her face, revealing her to be shedding a tear or two

and blushing appropriately as a waiter presented her with several red roses and a romantic greeting card from Mikhail. As Marina mounted the stage, she strode briskly toward Mikhail, shook his hand while smiling and voicing her compliments, and then she briefly embraced him as a symbol of his acceptance by the Romanov family. She took the microphone in hand, and offered some comments of her own:

Noble ladies and gentlemen, tonight we have unexpectedly been treated to remarkable musical talent, provided for us by our two very special new family members. I believe their noble bearing has been evident to everyone. While Prince Mikhail was singing just now for his beautiful companion Princess Mariya, I could not help thinking that, for all of us, these new words to a familiar tune beautifully capture the hope of our hearts.

We are gathered here tonight because all of us long for the eventual restoration of the lost world of Christian Russia, a Holy Russia ruled and guided by a Christian monarch. We long for the elegance of the former royal courts, which provided an edifying reflection of the majesty and beauty of the Courts of Heaven.

Prince Mikhail's new words to this beloved song reflect the yearning we all feel for our long-lost love: glorious Christian Russia, Holy Mother Russia. Her former glory was completely hidden underneath the cold snows of atheistic communism, and the springtime of modern democracy in Russia so far provides only the faintest hope that the snows of secular government and godless culture may yet melt away.

All of us long for the summertime glory that will come only when a truly Christian Confessional State once again 'blossoms in green and gold.'

Ultimately we all hope to live in such a state once again, perhaps yet in this world and perhaps in Holy Mother Russia. But if we do not live to see it, we all have hope nevertheless. For in this world we are all pilgrims and strangers, seeking for a better country, that is Heaven. For our true citizenship is in Heaven, where Christ Our King will reign forever and ever.

When we meet vibrant young persons such as Prince Mikhail and Princess Mariya, we wonder if perhaps the warm winds of spring may already be blowing across the face of the cold snows of modern secularism. In our hearts we feel the promise of a new Russian sunrise, as if the restoration of Christian monarchy may be about to dawn upon our beloved Motherland.

When we see how devoutly Christian our young Catholic guests seem to be, we even dare to hope that the schism between our one true Orthodox Faith and the Catholic Church in Rome may yet be healed in our day. Let it be the daily prayer of every one of us, that we may live to see all these blessings come to pass.

Marina's voice was quavering as she finished her brief address, and for the first time that evening the weariness of her seventy years seemed evident to Mikhail. Ever the perfect gentleman, Prince Mikhail took Her Royal Highness Marina by the arm, and gently helped her down off the stage of the Grand Ballroom – and perhaps, down off the stage of future thrones and scepters as well.

Her time to envision herself and her son Grigory as the next Russian monarchs was now fading. As he accompanied her back to her place at the head table, he noted her newly slowed pace and slightly stooped posture, and he quietly thanked her for her profoundly moving comments.

All at once, the emcee announced the next dance, the maestro's baton began the next waltz, and the dance floor began to fill with whirling humanity. Mariya had several names left on her dance card before the final waltz that would be with Mikhail. So Mikhail took a break for a few minutes, and found a dark and empty meeting room down a vacant corridor where he could sit in seclusion for a few minutes and collect himself.

He remembered that the Pope was arriving in Rome this very night, where he would remain in disguise, hiding out in a place arranged by Father Herald, until the very hour of his appearance in Saint Peter's Basilica tomorrow evening. Then, at the central altar of all Christendom, high above the tomb of the Blessed Apostle Peter, and joined by all the Catholic bishops in the world, Pope Nicholas would consecrate Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

If the consecration were successfully completed, thought Mikhail, Heaven itself would not fail to fulfill its promise, and bring forth the Romanov family's long desired new era in Holy Mother Russia. Heaven had promised that, following the consecration, Russia would be converted, which could only mean that Russia would become a Catholic Confessional State.

And whatever role he and Mariya might have to play in that promised Russian sunrise was for Heaven alone to say. He thought of the Christian's proper stance: to emulate the Blessed Virgin Mary, the perfect Christian. "Let it be done to me according to Thy word,"⁶⁶ he prayed.

He also thought of the firestorm the Pope would face because of his obedience to Heaven tomorrow. And soon, if Russia converted and Mikhail should be involved in the formation of a new Catholic Christian state, he too would be persecuted mercilessly by desperate secularists all over the world.

Like Christ in the garden, he foresaw that he and Pope Nicholas were likely to become living martyrs, suffering immensely for the faith. He began to see that all the glamour of royal balls and state dinners, of bejeweled crowns and scepters, of palaces and parades, was but the superficial side of a monarch's life – something like Christ entering

⁶⁶ Luke 1:38.

Jerusalem to the acclaim of the throngs on Palm Sunday. But the real essence of a Christian monarch's throne was the cross: fulfilling the duty to resist when the devil would offer him the power and glory of this world, all the advantages that come to those who compromise, if only he would fall down and worship him.

So Mikhail foresaw that, when they came to take him and make him the new Tsar, it would be as when they came for Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane. And so he also prayed, "Not my will, but Thine be done."⁶⁷ His soul was heavy, weighed down with awareness that the final conflict between the woman and the serpent was being waged even now, and somehow he was caught up in the very middle of it all.

Mikhail sighed a very deep sigh, the spirit within him groaning in prayers that he did not even know how to utter.⁶⁸ And when peace finally came over him, he was quite certain that it was because angels came, unseen but altogether real, and ministered to him.⁶⁹

Glancing at his watch, he knew it was time to thrust himself back into the life of the ball. As he exited into the darkened corridor, suddenly he was punched in the stomach and kicked in the knees. Instantly his classified military self-defense training self-engaged, and within ten seconds he was looking at two unconscious male figures, dressed entirely in black including black ski masks, sprawled on the floor beside him.

He stepped into a men's room, adjusted his coat and tie, combed his hair, and strode down the darkened corridor into the lighted foyer just outside the ballroom. He did not think these assailants were connected with the Romanovs. Most likely they represented the same dark forces that had ransacked the Peterson condominium before their recent trip to Rome. He decided to tell no one about the incident.

There would be only one or two dances left before the final waltz. As he entered the ballroom, a dance was just ending, and he found several eligible ladies in the place where those whose dance cards were not filled up could stand awaiting an invitation. It was now clear that many considered a dance with him a special honor, and the next two dances were over in a whirlwind.

Now it was time to find his Mariya. The final dance would be staged in succession, as announced by the emcee: first, Marina and Grigory would take the floor alone, then they would be joined by Mikhail and Marina, then by the remaining twenty from the head table, and finally by everyone. In no time, it seemed, it was all over, the music stopped, and the magic evening was ending. Many of the guests made a point of approaching Mikhail and Mariya to thank them for attending and to welcome them into the Romanov Nobility Organization.

In the course of this evening, Mikhail and Mariya had watched each other in the spotlight, displaying natural gifts of political *savoir-faire*

⁶⁷ Luke 22:42.

⁶⁸ Romans 8:28.

⁶⁹ Matthew 4:11; Luke 22:43.

under intense pressure. Each was now much more certain of the other's fundamentally sound character, and was aware of a growing fondness for the other's companionship.

Retreating to their condominium together with Mariya's parents, they reviewed the evening over a nightcap, and then, after evening prayers, slept the peaceful deep sleep of faithful souls who had given all they had to give.

Chapter Fifteen

June 2015.

Our Lady of Fatima Church (“Cova”) and Grounds, Detroit, Michigan.

Cova Rectory, Friday Afternoon, June 19, 2015.

On Friday afternoon at four o’clock, after Mikhail Romanov had left the Cova to meet the Petersons at Detroit City Airport to fly to New York for the ball, Father Kiril and “Father Jacob” met together in the rectory office. To help preserve his anonymity, the Pope had been saying his daily Mass privately in the rectory chapel, very early in the mornings, with only Father Kiril or Father Belarus in attendance. The Holy Father had spent most of Friday afternoon, after Mikhail’s late morning departure, working on correspondence and administrative matters for the Vatican. On Monday he had sent his most highly trusted personal assistant, Father John Herald, back to Rome to oversee every detail of the preparations for the consecration ceremony. They talked together several times each day by secure telephone, and Nicholas was pleased with Father Herald’s wisdom and fortitude in such a difficult undertaking. He knew that enemies of the consecration lurked everywhere in the halls of the Vatican, and he was glad that Father Herald had a cadre of trustworthy and dedicated Swiss Guards, devout young men selected by Nicholas himself who would stay with Father Herald at all times, guarding him even while he slept.

As “Father Jacob” settled into a comfortable chair in the rectory, he wistfully imagined what it would be like to have the “Thank Goodness It’s Friday” perspective, so possible for the working man in today’s world as the weekend begins. But, for the Holy Father, the work was never done. That did not mean, however, that a bit of Friday afternoon spirits was in any way precluded.

“I have asked the housekeeper to bring us each a ‘Russian Sunrise,’” announced Father Kiril. “It’s mostly orange juice, so it’s quite healthy. But it contains a sufficient quantity of Jagermeister to fortify us for the tasks ahead.”

“Very good, Father. It would hardly do to argue with such a thoughtful host.”

“The news people have not been kind to the Holy Father this week, Father Jacob.” Because the housekeeper was expected any minute, Father Kiril had to use the Pope’s birth name. “On Tuesday morning, after the Proclamation was read in Rome, the press was vicious. Each day since then their attacks have escalated. Some bigoted anti-Catholic writers now publish innuendoes that the Pope’s actual secret location may be a psychiatric hospital, although of course the paparazzi telephoto shots, apparently showing him in the Italian monastery, stave off most such speculation. And there was one attempt to attack your brother – whom

the world supposes is you – in the Italian monastery. An unidentified man dressed all in black, including a black ski-mask, lobbed a grenade over the monastery wall at the time your brother usually exercises in the walled garden. Fortunately, the grenade failed to detonate. The paparazzi published a telephoto image of the man running off into the woods, but so far he has not been apprehended.”

“Here is what I have been thinking,” said Nicholas. “‘Woe unto you when all men speak well of you!’⁷⁰ ‘Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice and be very glad, for great is your reward in Heaven.’⁷¹ ‘If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.’⁷² These words of Our Lord often comfort me when the storms arise. It then seems to me as if, in the midst of the tempest, He is with me in the bow of the Bark of Peter, rebuking the wind and the waves and saying, ‘Peace, be still!’”⁷³

“Your faith is very great.”

“Much grace comes with the office. It is not so much ability but willingness, not so much fortitude but submissiveness, which enables me to carry on.”

“What do you think will happen when you fly to Rome in the morning?”

“The Holy Angels will protect me. Just as they have protected me here in this most unlikely of all places for a papal retreat. Otherwise, there would be no way to guarantee my safety. But you see, Heaven wants this consecration done every bit as much as I do. The Brown Group will fly me, disguised as ‘Father Jacob,’ into a private airport just outside Rome. First they will fly under the radar into a remote northern Italian town, and then take off for Rome as if we are an Italian domestic flight. That way no passport or customs will uncover my identity. Their security men, dressed as civilians, will drive me into the city in an unmarked private car. Father Herald has arranged for me to hide out in the apartment of Father Ignacio Battista, who lives just two blocks from Saint Peter’s Square. His apartment doubles as his office, and there is a sleeper sofa so his pro-life organization can accommodate the occasional priest traveling to Rome on a limited budget.”

“Yes, I know Father Battista. He is the Rome Correspondent for Worldwide Defense of Human Life. A very erudite man, who was a South American attorney before entering the priesthood. He has helped some of my parishioners find their way around Rome when they travel there as pilgrims. They say he is a holy priest and an expert on the art and history of Rome. By choice, he only says the Tridentine Mass.”

“He is a good man. But the press tries to ignore people like him. The best way they can silence them is to pretend they don’t even exist. So if

⁷⁰ Luke 6:26.

⁷¹ Matthew 5:11-12.

⁷² John 15:20.

⁷³ Mark 4:39.

he has ‘Father Jacob’ staying in his office for a night, no one will notice. Everyone’s eyes will be on the Apostolic Palace, looking for the Pope’s arrival.”

“When will you arrive?”

“Father Herald has arranged for expedited clearance for ‘Father Jacob’ right into the sacristy of Saint Peter’s Basilica. A few Swiss Guards who will be posted in the right places have photos of me in my disguise, and are instructed to escort ‘Father Jacob’ right in to where Father Herald will be waiting. They will be informed I am an old friend of the Pope from Germany who has been invited to assist with the ceremony.”

“And once you are in the sacristy?”

The housekeeper had now served the drinks and left, and the office door was closed, ensuring privacy.

“There will be twelve Swiss Guards present when I remove my disguise and don the papal robes. They are all trained in military and martial arts and will be armed with modern weapons. It will no longer matter if people figure out how I was disguised, or where I have been on retreat. So you and Don Brown may find the news media hounding you here to some extent, but by then most of the media attention will have been diverted to Rome and Russia.”

“What about security for the bishops coming to Saint Peter’s? Won’t they also be in great danger?”

“Only standard Vatican security will be needed for them. Most of them will be housed inside the Vatican in the *Domus Sanctae Marthae*, the dormitory built to house Cardinals during future papal conclaves. Our enemies will understand that killing a few bishops, or even a Cardinal or two, would make no difference, because the remaining ones would still constitute ‘all the Catholic bishops in the world.’ So if any of them were attacked, it would be for spite, not because it would stop the consecration. Actually, any such violence would probably do more damage to our opponents’ agenda than to our own. So if there is any violence, it will be staged as the work of a ‘radical individual acting alone.’ The only bishop who is absolutely essential to the process is the Bishop of Rome.”

“It sounds as if Father Herald has all the bases covered.”

“Yes. He is even adding the ‘Detroit special’ security device that you insisted I wear here.”

“You mean the Kevlar flak jacket? In Saint Peter’s?”

“Yes. Only until the consecration is completed. We just cannot risk a lone gunman putting a stop to the coming Russian sunrise.”

“You are wearing it here, then?”

“Oh, yes. It’s heavy and uncomfortable, but it is my duty to take reasonable precautions since my life is not my own, and the salvation of countless souls depends upon the completion of the consecration. There is a very great danger that the current College of Cardinals would not elect a successor who would do the consecration. We only have this one opportunity left. If the consecration is delayed any longer, I fear, the vision

of the bishop dressed in white may be fulfilled literally.”

“So you don’t really think the attempted assassination of Leo Alexander II by a lone gunman in Saint Peter’s Square was the fulfillment of the vision?”

“Not anymore, no. I allowed the Vatican Secretary of State to hoodwink me some years ago, when I signed onto the Vatican document released in 2000 that purported to declare an end to the relevance of Fatima as prophecy. But then there was that former close friend of the Secretary, an Italian journalist and television personality,⁷⁴ who researched the whole matter, starting with the assumption that the 2000 document was correct. In the process of his excellent and very thorough research, he came to realize that part of the Third Secret was held back – that is, the actual words of Our Lady of Fatima – and that the consecration has never been done in the exact manner requested by Heaven.”

“Well, then what do you think the vision is all about?”

“I carry a copy in my pocket at all times. These are the words written down by Sister Lucy, the only Fatima seer who lived into adulthood, describing her vision. Here, you take it and read it out loud to me.”

Nicholas handed Kiril a folded and yellow sheet of paper that appeared to have been well-traveled and unfolded many times. It was slightly torn across some of the creases. At some time in the past the text had been printed out on a computer. It read as follows:

J.M.J.

The third part of the secret revealed at the Cova da Iria-Fatima, on 13 July 1917.

I write in obedience to you, my God, who command me to do so through his Excellency the Bishop of Leiria and through your Most Holy Mother and mine.

After the two parts which I have already explained, at the left of Our Lady and a little above, we saw an Angel with a flaming sword in his left hand; flashing, it gave out flames that looked as though they would set the world on fire; but they died out in contact with the splendor that Our Lady radiated towards him from her right hand: pointing to the earth with his right hand, the Angel cried out in a loud voice: ‘Penance, Penance, Penance!’. And we saw in an immense light that is God: ‘something similar to how people appear in a mirror when they pass in front of it’ a Bishop dressed in White ‘we had the impression that it was the Holy Father’. Other Bishops, Priests, men and women Religious going up a steep mountain, at the top of which there was a big Cross of rough-hewn trunks as of a cork-tree with the bark; before reaching there the Holy Father passed through a big city half in

⁷⁴ Socci, Antonio, *The Fourth Secret of Fatima*. See Bibliography.

ruins and half trembling with halting step, afflicted with pain and sorrow, he prayed for the souls of the corpses he met on his way; having reached the top of the mountain, on his knees at the foot of the big Cross he was killed by a group of soldiers who fired bullets and arrows at him, and in the same way there died one after another the other Bishops, Priests, men and women Religious, and various lay people of different ranks and positions. Beneath the two arms of the Cross there were two Angels each with a crystal aspersorium in his hand, in which they gathered up the blood of the Martyrs and with it sprinkled the souls that were making their way to God.⁷⁵

Kiril finished reading, and laid the paper on the end table. He savored another sip of his Russian Sunrise, and both men sat silent for a moment, pondering what had just been read. Then Kiril spoke.

“Do you think any of this has happened yet?”

“No, not anymore. I think it may be a warning to the Popes of what will eventually happen if they delay too long in obeying the request of Heaven to do the consecration. And I am hopeful that, because of the obedience we will finally demonstrate Sunday evening, it may never come to pass.”

“Some say Our Lady’s words explaining the vision were written down by Sister Lucy, but on a separate paper – what one prominent Italian journalist has called ‘The Fourth Secret of Fatima.’”⁷⁶

“They are correct, of course,” said the Pope. “Actually, I sent that courageous journalist a personal note, thanking him for the sentiments in his book,⁷⁷ because he is telling the truth. A number of Popes and high ranking priests have read that carefully guarded page containing Our Lady’s actual words. Pope John XXIII had Malachi Martin read it.⁷⁸ I read it back when I was a Cardinal. But I cannot possibly disclose to you right now the contents of that page, which contains the actual words of Our Lady of Fatima. In 2000 the Vatican Secretary of State tried desperately to bury the very fact of its existence. All I can tell you is this: if the consecration is not done, if Popes continue to refuse obedience to the simple mandate of Heaven, the future of mankind looks very bleak indeed.”

“How can I assist you in your final evening here, Father Jacob?”

“I need to spend the evening hours in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. I want to have the church locked after nine o’clock tonight, with Father Belarus posted in the back to assist me if needed, and the Swiss Guards and Brown Group security men posted all around the exterior. I must not be disturbed short of a world crisis. Tonight Our Lord

⁷⁵ Downloaded from Vatican website on August 30, 2010 at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000626_message-fatima_en.html

⁷⁶ Soggi, Antonio, *The Fourth Secret of Fatima*. See Bibliography.

⁷⁷ Ferrara, Christopher, *The Secret Still Hidden*, Appendix II, No. 99. See Bibliography.

⁷⁸ <http://www.fatima.org/crusader/cr77/cr77pg04.asp>, downloaded on November 22, 2010.

will help me to obtain the grace I must have in order to go on tomorrow to the Calvary which awaits me in Rome. At this point, the consecration ceremony is the easy part. But the rage of the prince of this world, which will follow in its aftermath, may result in my destruction. Yet if it does, it will not matter, for the good deed will be done and Heaven's promise of unimaginable blessings for Russia and eventually the whole world will unfold in such a time and manner as Heaven sees fit. As for me, I think of Our Lord's parable: 'I am only going to do those things which are commanded; I am an unprofitable servant: I have done that which it was my duty to do.'⁷⁹

With that, the Holy Father took his leave from the rectory office, and went upstairs to his room to rest in preparation for his late-night prayer vigil that was to begin at nine o'clock.

Cova Church and Cemetery, Friday Evening, June 19, 2015.

At nine o'clock Friday evening Pope Nicholas descended from his rectory bedroom, and informed Father Kiril that he was ready to begin his prayer vigil in the church. The Pope was dressed in a Benedictine monk's hooded white robe, with a white rope belt about his waist. When Father Kiril looked surprised, Nicholas explained that the Swiss Guards liked him to change his appearance from time to time for increased security, especially at night, and so they had suggested that a white monk's robe would make it easier for them to see and protect him in the dark church and on the late-night walk back to the rectory. Father Belarus was waiting in the kitchen, and was again assigned to sit in the back of the church and watch, in case the Holy Father should need any assistance. The guards were already at their posts, and the church had been "swept" by Brown Group security men to ensure there were no other persons lingering within.

As Nicholas walked with Father Belarus across the rectory lawn to the side door of the church, the brilliant light of a full moon in the cloudless June night sky bathed everything in a silvery glow. It was actually somewhat cool this evening even for Michigan, about sixty-five degrees Fahrenheit, making the monk's robe welcome for its warmth. Michel, a Swiss Guard in plain clothes, unlocked the church door as the two priests arrived, and assured them that absolute security was being maintained on the outside perimeter of the church. As Nicholas heard Michel lock the door behind him, he breathed a sigh of relief. Here in this vast neo-gothic stone room was immense peace. The church was dark except for the flickering red candle of the sanctuary lamp suspended high above the center of the marble-floored sanctuary, and two small spotlights illuminating the tabernacle on the altar. A faint glow of moonlight shone through the large stained-glass windows.

As before, Pope Nicholas prostrated himself before the high altar, and once again sought the advice and consolation of Jesus in this hour of anticipation for the coming tempest. He remembered the rage and ridicule that had come at him all week long from the mainstream press,

⁷⁹ Luke 17:10.

following the announcement of the consecration. Once again he begged Christ for forgiveness for himself and all his predecessors since 1929, who had delayed, out of human respect, from fulfilling the simple request made by His Blessed Mother. Minutes passed, perhaps hours, while the Pope remained deep in prayer.

After some time Nicholas moved from the main altar to a kneeler in the corner of the south transept. Here were two statues, traditional in style and yet obviously the recent work of a skilled artisan, inspired by the vision reported in the 2000 document on Fatima issued by the Vatican. Our Lady of Fatima stood, looking down at a globe representing the world, with a gaze of immense love and patience. Golden rays extended from Her outstretched right hand, toward the figure beside Her. *At the left of Our Lady and a little above stood an angel with a flaming sword in his left hand. It gave out flames that looked as though they would set the world on fire; but they died out in contact with the splendor that Our Lady radiated towards him from Her right hand. Pointing to the earth with his right hand, the angel cried out, and his words were inscribed on the base of the statue: "Penance! Penance! Penance!"*

Nicholas prayed here for a few minutes, pondering the urgent need of repentance for all the nations of the modern world. His heart was pierced with sorrow as he realized that the delay of the Popes for the past ninety-eight years in performing the consecration had undoubtedly forestalled the urgently needed restoration of Christian civilization for nearly as many years. How many souls had failed to work out their own salvation in fear and trembling because the world and the Church had been focused on politics and ecumenism instead of earnestly preaching the Gospel in season and out of season? How many young Catholics had never even heard sound preaching about the last four things: death, judgment, Heaven, and hell? How many souls had needlessly been lost even during the years of Nicholas' own pontificate? Nicholas prostrated himself before Our Lady of Fatima, and wept bitterly in sorrow for his own sins, not only for what he had done, but especially for what he had failed to do. After a prolonged period of waiting in silence, Nicholas perceived that Our Lady, as the Mother of Sorrows, was calling him to visit Her at the Calvary on the hill in the back of the Cova cemetery, which would be ever so brightly lit in the moonlight. For She understood his sorrow, and wanted to console him there.

So Nicholas arose, and called out.

"Father Belarus, are you there?"

"Yes, Your Holiness." The tight security made it safe to use the proper form of address for the Pope.

"I feel the need to make a little pilgrimage this evening, through the cemetery behind this church and up the hill at the back to the Calvary. The moon is so bright that there should be no difficulty. Will you inform the guards, and ask them to notify us when they are ready to secure the cemetery?"

"Of course, Your Holiness."

The Swiss Guards were skeptical, but the can-do local men working for the Brown Group security service took the position that this was the Holy Father's secret retreat, and that, within reason, he should be allowed to go wherever he felt led by his prayers. Who were they to second-guess the propriety of a conversation between Heaven and the Pope? Their job was to make sure he stayed safe. It was now almost one o'clock in the morning, and the moon was directly overhead, bathing the entire cemetery in silver light. The city was mostly asleep, and no one was likely to notice a few men walking through the cemetery. Four Swiss Guards and four Brown Group security officers positioned themselves around the perimeter of the cemetery, and then they radioed to Father Belarus the "all clear" to bring the Pope out of the church.

As they walked across the parking lot and entered the cemetery gate between high stone pillars, Nicholas read the sign: "Saint Mary's Roman Catholic Cemetery, 1852." He stopped to read the inscription on one of the pillars, explaining that the replica of the little chapel at the Cova da Iria in Fatima, Portugal, had been erected in the cemetery in 1932, when the parish was renamed in honor of Our Lady of Fatima. It was styled to resemble the little white building with a tile roof that had been erected in 1919 in front of the little tree upon which Our Lady of Fatima appeared to the three shepherd children. However, unlike the original little chapel that had just one door, the chapel in the Cova cemetery had multiple folding glass doors that could open it up to serve as a sheltered high altar for the celebration of outdoor Masses. Large crowds of pilgrims would come on the thirteenth day of each summer and autumn month to commemorate the 1917 apparitions. The parish's regular Masses for First Fridays and First Saturdays were also held outdoors at the little Cova chapel whenever the weather permitted.

"Father, do you have a flashlight?" asked Nicholas.

"Of course, Your Holiness."

Nicholas began to shine the bright light on tombstones as he worked his way into the cemetery. Down the center, leading back to the little Cova chapel, was a long brick sidewalk. But Nicholas preferred to wander in and out among the graves, taking note of the history and evidence of Faith that could thereby be gleaned. Most family plots had a tall monument, such as a stone crucifix towering eight or ten feet, or a life-size statue of an angel or a saint. Nicholas knew that the dark-clad security guards were patrolling at the perimeter. Once or twice he thought he saw some of them move about behind the larger monuments, as if they were young children playing hide and seek in a moonlit forest.

"Here we are," commented Father Belarus, "surrounded by the half-ruined neighborhoods of inner city Detroit, neighborhoods which in 1929 were filled with elegant new homes, built of solid timbers and fine woodwork, homes filled with throngs of happy children growing up in large Catholic families. In those days a Catholic man working in a manufacturing plant could easily earn enough to raise such a family, and his wife could stay home and manage the household. People lived within

one to four blocks of their parish church, and they could easily walk to Mass or confession any day of the week. The life of their neighborhoods revolved around the liturgical calendar of feast days and seasons, and they could send their children out into the neighborhood knowing that they would be protected and corrected as needed by every adult, and even by most older children, whom they were likely to encounter. It was a Catholic world in these close-knit neighborhoods.”

“Sometimes I think these faithful souls, whose Faith is proclaimed so boldly on their gravestones and monuments, could hardly have imagined that in a mere hundred years many of their homes would be burned out shells, and almost no one in the neighborhood would even try to keep the Faith.”

“In Europe there is no urban decay like this, is there?” asked Father Belarus.

“No, but the spiritual decimation is every bit as complete. Architecturally intact neighborhoods filled with healthy bodies whose souls are mostly dead in mortal sin is hardly any better than this.”

The Holy Father noted that the sidewalk down the center was lined with posts supporting plaques depicting the fourteen Stations of the Cross. It reminded Nicholas that perfect obedience to Heaven always meant, one way or another, the way of the cross.

“Here is a monument to the millions of unborn infants sacrificed in the abortion holocaust,” said Father Belarus. “Some parishioners were able to retrieve the mutilated bodies of many babies from dumpsters behind abortuaries, and they were brought here and buried after a requiem Mass offered by the Archbishop in the Cova church.”

The Pope knelt down on the kneeler in front of the grave, and wept.

“Father Herald told me the story of how Father Kiril was arrested and put on trial, as a young seminarian, for “disturbing the peace” by daring to picket outside an abortion clinic. In those early days the diocese was more worried about the bad publicity of a troublemaker priest than it was about decrying the legalized slaughter of innocent souls. But Father Kiril’s courage of conviction changed things. The new Archbishop himself offered the requiem Mass and assisted at the proper burial for these innocent little ones.”

“But can they make it to Heaven without having been baptized?” asked Father Belarus.

“I always think about what Our Lord Jesus said: ‘See that you despise not one of these little ones: for I say to you that their angels in Heaven always see the face of My Father who is in Heaven.’⁸⁰ God is perfect in justice, but also in mercy.”

Soon Nicholas had reached the paved plaza in front of the Cova chapel. In the moonlight, the glass doors spread across the front of the chapel emitted a mysterious silvery glow. As Nicholas walked past them, he saw his reflection in the doors, as if in a series of mirrors. But through

⁸⁰ Matthew 18:10, DRV.

his white-robed reflection in the glass doors he could see the exceptionally bright light of the red sanctuary lamp, burning to attest to the very presence of God in the Blessed Sacrament, which was reserved in the tabernacle on the altar of the locked chapel. Superimposed on his small reflection, the light inside appeared to be enormous. For a moment, he had a powerful sense of unexplained *déjà vu*. Then he realized that this present scene was eerily similar to a certain passage in the Third Secret of Fatima, which Father Kiril had read to him that very morning: *An immense light that is God ... something similar to how people appear in a mirror ... a Bishop dressed in White ... we had the impression that it was the Holy Father ...*

“Strangest coincidence,” said Nicholas.

“What’s that, Your Holiness?”

“Oh, nothing, really ... I think it is getting late, Father Belarus, and I am so tired that I am beginning to imagine things. Can you help me now to find my way up to the Calvary?”

“This way, Your Holiness. Behind the little chapel, the hill suddenly becomes quite steep. In time past the hill was considered to be a place of honor, where the graves of many *Bishops, Priests, and men and women Religious* were placed, as if *going up a steep mountain* to Calvary. At one time there was a stone stairway, but long ago it fell into disrepair, and so we have to make our way somewhat carefully up the hill over the graves.”

Father Belarus used his flashlight to help Nicholas find his footing. In the process, the names and offices of many of the departed were illuminated. Here were two Archbishops, several auxiliary bishops, and many holy priests and nuns, as well as religious brothers who had taught in Detroit’s once-thriving Catholic schools.

“These precious servants of Jesus and Mary could never have imagined this *big city half in ruins*, surrounding the hallowed ground in which they now rest awaiting the resurrection,” mused Nicholas. “My soul is heavy with sadness when I think what has become of the once-vibrant Catholic culture which they bequeathed to those of us who would come after. Did they ever imagine that one day a Pope would stand upon their graves, at two o’clock in the morning in the moonlight, and think of their dedication and sacrifice? We have permitted most of former Christendom to self-destruct, because we have been too busy trying to make friends with the enemies of Christ, not by seeking to convert them, but by ‘dialog.’”

The Pope *half-trembled*, as his *halting steps* became uncertain on the steep hillside. His heart was *afflicted with pain and sorrow*, and he knelt down for a few moments to rest, and to *pray for the souls of the corpses he met on his way* up the hillside. After several minutes, Nicholas stood up, and asked Father Belarus to guide him up the rest of the way.

At the top of the hill stood a *big Cross*, at least fifteen feet high, fashioned *of rough-hewn trunks as of a cork-tree with the bark*. The carved-stone Corpus on the cross was life-sized, as were the statues of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of Saint John, which flanked it. Despite being in excellent condition, nevertheless Nicholas was an octogenarian and

was physically tired from the climb up the hill. But more importantly, he began to feel the weight of the world and its spiritual conflicts descending upon him. *Having reached the top of the mountain, he fell on his knees at the feet of the big Cross.* In his exhaustion he had no choice but to throw his arms about the shaft of the cross, as he began to weep and pray. Father Belarus thought someone was approaching up the hill from behind him, so he turned and began to descend the hill part-way, to see who it might be.

All at once, without warning, two groups of men in military camouflage uniforms stepped out from behind nearby monuments and pointed their weapons in the direction of the big Cross. One group, in United States army uniforms, had guns, and the other group, in United States Marine uniforms, had modern hunting cross-bows designed to shoot arrows. To his horror, as Father Belarus turned and watched the Holy Father from a distance, he saw that *he was killed by a group of soldiers who fired bullets and arrows at him.* Angry shouts rang out from the men, in a barrage of profanity and accusations of betrayal. The Swiss Guards and Brown Group security men quickly closed in, wrestling one Marine and one Army soldier to the ground and disarming them, while the other assailants escaped over the cemetery fences and into the adjacent labyrinth of abandoned houses. It was apparent from the attackers' exchange of words and accusations that they had a huge cache of illegal drugs hidden beneath the big Cross, a stash which had recently been flown in from Afghanistan on a United States military plane. The Army men and the Marines had each assumed that the others had sent the white-robed monk to steal the stash for their own profit, rather than splitting the drugs fifty-fifty as agreed. The four Brown Security men carried the two captive attackers off to a safe distance so that they would not overhear any discussion revealing the identity of their white-robed victim.

Jacques, one of the Swiss Guards, was trained as an emergency medical technician, and said he needed to determine the condition of the "monk." While he quickly ran the thirty yards to retrieve his medical kit, Father Belarus knelt beside the motionless white-robed figure and began to offer last rites. In the background, some of the Brown Group security men were advising the other Swiss Guards that it was impossible to call the Detroit police, lest the identity of the victim become known before there would be any time to plan for contingencies. They worried that the world would think the Holy Father had been killed in order to stop the consecration of Russia, when in fact he had been innocently caught in the middle of a midnight drug swap between corrupted members of two different branches of the United States military. The sound of gunfire was a nightly occurrence in inner city Detroit neighborhoods, and by itself would not arouse any suspicion.

In those intense moments of distress, the fact that these amoral drug dealers could well be unwitting accomplices of hell, assassinating the Holy Father on the eve of the consecration without even realizing what they were doing, did not yet occur to any of them.

Back in the rectory, Father Kiril's unlisted cell phone jangled on his nightstand. Only a few trusted parishioners, fellow religious, diocesan officials, and hospitals knew this number, so he always answered it, even in the middle of the night. Probably he would have to go for last rites at a hospital, he thought.

"Father Kiril speaking."

"Good evening Father," said the familiar voice of Jim Johnson. "I hate to wake you up, Father, but I'm worried. I heard gunshots across the street, and it sounded like it could have been right in the cemetery."

Jim and his wife were African-American parishioners who lived in the neighborhood, and were mainstays of the parish. Jim was always fixing something around the parish grounds on his days off, and the younger five of their seven children all currently participated in the Cova's homeschool support program. The older two children were in college on merit scholarships. The oldest son, now a college senior about to graduate with honors – who had served at the altar under Father Kiril since he was seven – had recently been seeking spiritual direction from Father Kiril about entering the seminary to discern if he might have a vocation to the priesthood. Kiril was always available to people like this, because they gave much more than they ever received from him. Such lives of heroic quiet virtue made him feel that all the relentless sacrifice involved in being a holy priest and dedicated pastor was, all told, a very good bargain.

"Jim, we hear gunfire in the neighborhood every night. There are extra security people on duty this week, and they are out patrolling the grounds even now."

"Okay, Father, I just wanted to be certain you were safe over there."

"God bless you for your concern, Jim. I'll keep an extra eye out for any trouble."

"Okay, then, Father. Just be careful. Good night."

At the Calvary atop the hill in the cemetery, as Father Belarus began to trace the sign of the cross on the forehead of the motionless Pope and to pray the prescribed prayers for a departed Christian soul, he was suddenly interrupted by an unexpected but familiar voice.

"Not so fast, Father! Not so fast! I know you mean well. But I am not dead yet!"

"Your Holiness!" laughed Father Belarus.

"I thought I should play dead for awhile, at least until I was certain they were done shooting."

"Are you badly hurt, Your Holiness?"

"You know, Father, I really don't believe I'm seriously wounded at all. Dear Father Kiril insisted on my wearing this flak jacket at all times while I am here in Detroit. And to think I tried to give him a hard time about it!"

Jacques, the Swiss Guard medic, now approached Nicholas.

"Holy Father, you are alive! Praise God! Uh, but you have a bit of blood on one sleeve, I see ... and also on the edge of your hood. I will

need to inspect your wounds immediately.”

“Jacques, you are the one who sided with Father Kiril against me, and forced me to wear this heavy bulletproof vest, against my own will. I had to rest halfway up this hill because of all the extra weight.”

“But I just wanted you to be safe.”

“Yes, and so now I have to thank you for being so obstinate. Your stubbornness has saved my life.”

“I will always remember this night when the Holy Father thanked me for having ignored His wishes,” laughed Jacques. “But I won’t tell it to my sons until they are too old to get into much trouble.”

“You won’t live until they are *that* old,” retorted Nicholas. “I am eighty-five and I still seem to get into trouble every day.”

Jacques was proceeding with his examination of the Pope’s wounds.

“Your wounds are superficial, Holy Father. It looks like a bullet just barely grazed the skin on your right cheek, and another bullet grazed your left forearm. That’s why there is only a little blood. Of course the white robe makes it look a lot worse than it really is.”

“I think we can thank the Holy Angels for guiding those bullets with such precision,” said Nicholas.

“Yes. And none of the arrows hit you at all.”

“It is as the psalmist says,” said Nicholas, a man of prayer who knew most of the psalms by heart: “ ‘His truth shall compass thee with a shield: thou shalt not be afraid of the terror of the night. Of the arrow that flies in the day, of the business that walketh about in the dark: of invasion, or of the noonday devil.’ ”⁸¹

“What are we going to do about the two men we captured?” asked Jacques.

“I will take full responsibility for this decision, my sons,” said Nicholas. “As a sovereign head of state I have diplomatic immunity, even if I am here illegally. It is my judgment that there is no reason to inform the local authorities, and there is every reason not to. I was smuggled into the United States in a private jet ‘under the radar.’ Tomorrow I have to be smuggled back into Rome the same way. So I can hardly afford to get caught up in a formal crime investigation involving corrupt United States military personnel,” said Nicholas. “Those two men over there have no idea they just shot at the Pope. We must let it stay that way.”

“So what do we do with them, Holy Father?”

“Let the Brown Group security men take them for a little ride out into the countryside, rough them up just a bit so they know who’s boss, and then let them go. Tell them that if they are ever caught stashing drugs on Catholic Church property again, the Brown Group boss, who knows many people in high places, will see to it that they are court-martialed.”

While the Brown Group security men herded the two military captives into one of their huge black SUV’s and sped off into the night, the four Swiss Guards and Father Belarus surrounded the Pope and escorted him back to the rectory. Father Kiril was sitting in the kitchen, in his robe and

⁸¹ Psalm 90:5-6, DRV.

pajamas.

“Holy Father, are you alright?” he asked anxiously, noting the blood on his hood and sleeve. “I am told there were gunshots out in the cemetery.” Then, in his most stern voice, he added, “In this neighborhood, that’s absolutely no place for you to be prowling around dressed like a monk in the middle of the night.”

“We are sorry, dear son. We have been properly chastened.”

For an ever-so-brief moment, Father Kiril felt a pang of guilt for having treated the Holy Father like an errant altar boy. But then he thought about how he was sitting up in the middle of the night because of this Pope’s moonlight madness, and he decided he was justified at being just a bit irritated. Father Kiril ran a tight ship in his parish, and this sort of thing was just too excessive. He certainly wouldn’t want to catch a group of his altar boys sneaking around in the cemetery late at night, like this impulsive Pope.

“Father Kiril, I do apologize for all the commotion. I know you probably have to say the early Mass in the morning. But something quite extraordinary has happened to me tonight.”

“You’ve been wounded.”

“Oh, just some scratches. Grazed by a couple of bullets. That’s nothing. Here’s the thing, Father: I have just lived through the vision of the Third Secret of Fatima.”

“What?”

“Here, let me read it out loud to you, and tell you how each and every line literally happened to me in the course of this evening of prayer. Right up until I was killed.”

Nicholas then explained to Father Kiril how it had begun with his prayer in front of the statues of Our Lady of Fatima and the angel with the flaming sword, and had progressed through seeing his reflection in the Cova chapel glass doors, his climb up the steep mountain over the graves, and then his being shot while kneeling at the foot of the big Cross.

“But then it stopped. *Other Bishops, Priests, men and women Religious, and various lay people of different ranks and positions*, were not shot along with me. So I knew this could not be the real fulfillment of the vision, but only a divine warning of how very, very close we have come to the complete fulfillment of this terrible vision.”

“That is remarkable,” said Kiril. “The attempt back in 2000 to make that vision fit the attempted assassination of Leo Alexander II by a lone gunman seemed awfully far-fetched. What actually happened didn’t seem to coincide at all with the words of the vision. But what you have reported tonight is precisely in tune with the vision. That does cause one to think Heaven is sending a message.”

“Yes, and the message is that the old Nicholas is finally dead: the young Father Jacob Ritter, gung-ho liberal *peritus* at Vatican II who figured he knew how to remake the Church to make it relevant to the new generation; the Cardinal who believed in ecumenism and Ostpolitik as the only realistic road to Christian unity; the Pope who went along with his

Secretary of State, issuing one part of the Third Secret of Fatima while trying to keep the other part – the actual words of Our Lady – forever buried and forgotten, because they condemned the major thrust of my liberal, modernist career.

“That Father Jacob, that Cardinal Ritter, even that previous Pope Nicholas, finally died tonight. The man who got up after the gunfire stopped is a new Pope Nicholas. Now I know for certain that only a miracle can save the world, and turn back the tide of destruction that has spiritually annihilated most of former Christendom.

“Only the consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, publicly performed by the Pope in union with all the Catholic bishops in the world, can now move Heaven to shower upon our poor world the singular grace of a new, powerful Catholic Confessional State, which by its spreading influence will bring a new period of peace to the world.

“I see now that Jesus means it exactly as He said: He wants all the world to know that this great blessing, the miraculous sudden conversion of Russia, will have come about through the intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, so that devotion to Her Immaculate Heart will be placed alongside devotion to His Sacred Heart, throughout the whole world.”

“You sound like you are ready to go to Rome, Holy Father. Like no one can stop you now.”

“Yes, I am ready. By God’s grace and mercy, the stubborn Pope who came here a week ago, who wasted his life trying to follow contemporary human wisdom, has finally died. It is a new man who will be returning to Rome, a Pope who can say, simply, ‘Let it be done to me according to Thy word,’⁸² and who can sincerely pray ‘Not my will, but Thine be done.’”⁸³

“As Our Lord observed, it does seem that ‘The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light,’”⁸⁴ said Father Kiril. “When we achieve true wisdom, then the world thinks we have become fools.”

“Of course. It is just as the Blessed Apostle Paul noted: ‘The foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.’”⁸⁵

And with that, the two men headed up the rectory stairs to their respective rooms, to sleep the two or three hours remaining until the dawning of the new day would call them to their duties.

But Nicholas was not concerned about himself. In his heart he now could see, from afar off, that Heaven would soon be moved to deliver on its ninety-eight-year-old promise of a new Russian sunrise.

⁸² Luke 1:38.

⁸³ Luke 22:42.

⁸⁴ Luke 16:8.

⁸⁵ I Corinthians 1:25, DRV.

Chapter Sixteen

Saturday, June 20, 2015.

Our Lady of Fatima Church (“Cova”) Rectory, Detroit, Michigan.

On Saturday morning, the Pope was scheduled to depart from Detroit City Airport at eight o'clock in the Brown Group private jet, which had returned from delivering Mikhail and the three Peterson's to New York the previous afternoon. The four Swiss Guards would travel with the Pope, and one Brown Group security man would fill in the remaining seat, to help facilitate connections with the Brown Group security detail that would be waiting in Rome to greet the plane. By midnight, and maybe by ten o'clock if all went well, “Father Jacob” expected to be safe in the Rome apartment of Father Ignacio Battista, just two blocks from Saint Peter's Square.

Over their breakfast in the Cova rectory, which was taken in Father Kiril's private office, with the door closed so that their conversation need not be guarded to preserve the true identity of “Father Jacob,” Kiril saw his opportunity to give a final spiritual “pep talk” to Pope Nicholas. When necessary, he would try playing the devil's advocate, thus calling forth in Nicholas a defense of all he was prepared to undertake.

“You will soon reappear on the world stage, Holy Father, and your twin brother's tour of duty as an imposter Pope at the Italian monastery will be finished.”

“I must admit that this is the best vacation I have had in all the years of my pontificate,” replied Nicholas. “Here I could concentrate on prayer and the work of discerning the will of Heaven. I was able to keep administrative matters to a minimum, especially after Father Herald returned to Rome as my deputy. And the press was unable to find me the entire time, though they certainly did not hesitate to write about me with all manner of fantasy and invective.”

“You are going back to Rome to place everything in the hands of Our Blessed Mother,” said Kiril. “You are willing to risk everything you have worked for all your career. You are even willing to risk the prestige of the papacy. Surely the human side of you realizes that if the consecration does not bear definite fruit that is obvious to the world in a relatively short time, you will be mocked mercilessly. There will be talk about the papacy having self-destructed, and having made itself irrelevant to contemporary world politics by focusing on a century-old fairy tale. That is what the secular media are preparing to say.”

“Yes, you are correct, Father Kiril. But when the angel Gabriel appeared to the Blessed Virgin Mary in Nazareth, and asked Her to become the Mother of the Savior of the World by means of a supernatural conception, She knew that the world would assume the worst. Her beloved fiancé Joseph would be tempted to wonder if She could possibly have been unfaithful to Her vow of perpetual virginity. She could potentially face the

Jewish penalty of stoning if accused of adultery. But She chose to take Heaven at its word, not thinking how to improve upon Heaven's message through human wisdom, but rather submitting in humility and child-like trust. She spoke Her blessed *Fiat*: 'Let it be done unto Me according to Thy word.' I have come to see, in this retreat, that Heaven is demanding precisely the same sort of humble trust from the Holy Father, in order to permit another unprecedented grace to come into the world."

"You are right, Holy Father," said Kiril. "Devotion to Mary is always the surest sign of true belief in the *real* Christ, and according to the ancient Fathers of the Church is one common sign of true election."

"When Mary had made Her decision to say 'Yes' to Heaven, She also went on a retreat, to get away from all those who surrounded Her in Her daily life. She went into the hill country of Judea to visit Her older cousin Elizabeth, who had been in sorrow because she was barren until her old age. And when Mary arrived, it had already been revealed to Elizabeth that Her Lord was in Mary's womb, and that she was singularly blessed just to have the Mother of her Lord come to visit her."

"Holy Father, in coming on this retreat, you were acting just like Mary. You knew that if you came 'home' to the 'unimportant' inner-city parish where Father Herald hangs out, you would be able to pray among like-minded priests. And just as the child in Elizabeth's womb, Saint John the Baptist, leaped for joy at the presence of his cousin Jesus in Mary's womb, even so you have met someone on this retreat who will play a major role in the unfolding of the world's future. I now foresee that when Russia converts, she will restore her Christian monarchy, and that the people of Russia will call upon my brother Mikhail to fill the role of leading them in the restoration of Christendom within their borders. You have only met Mikhail briefly, Holy Father. But I predict that, in days to come, you two will work very closely together, for the good of Russia, and ultimately for the good of the whole world."

"Probably you are right, my son. Our Lady of Fatima promised the world a period of peace that would come as a consequence of the consecration of Russia. History, studied honestly, shows that Catholic monarchs mostly kept warfare limited in scope and duration, whereas modern Protestant and secular humanist states, unrestrained by Catholic morality, have unleashed the untold horrors of World Wars I and II and the endless local warfare that has continued ever since. It now seems apparent that modern democracy does not really work very well at all, and that Catholic monarchy is the surest system to ensure the rights and dignity of the common man."

"Until recently, I had never imagined that my own brother would be called upon to exercise his inherited rights as the Crown Prince of the Romanov dynasty," said Kiril. "I always thought all that enthusiasm about keeping track of the Russian nobility and dynastic succession was pointless. Our family was never active in the Romanov Nobility Organization."

"Remember, Father Kiril, that there have been other times when royal

families were hidden for a time. When the Prophet Samuel came to Jesse in Bethlehem⁸⁶ – to review his sons and anoint one to be the next king – David, the chosen one of God, was off tending the sheep. Jesse did not even send for David because, obviously, he was just a lad and one of his older brothers would be chosen. But Heaven’s prophet demanded that Jesse call the boy to leave the sheepfold and come to the prophet to be anointed king. Because the Old Testament Jewish Confessional State had been suppressed following the Roman occupation of Palestine, the royal lineage of the Kingdom of Israel, descended from David, had been forgotten. Tradition tells us that the true royal family of Israel was hidden in Nazareth. Both Joseph and Mary were descendants of the House of David, and Jesus was in fact the rightful Crown Prince of Israel, except that, as in the case of contemporary Russia, there was no recognized throne to inherit. How similar it seems, discovering that the crown prince of Russia, the next Catholic Confessional State which will come upon the world stage, has also been hiding away in Nazareth!”

“Last night you sought to pray for final assurance from Heaven that the consecration of Russia at this time is the right course to follow. Heaven provided you a sign that could not be a coincidence: in your prayer you lived through a fulfillment of most of the vision of the Third Secret of Fatima. It was cut short just before the final horrors were fulfilled, in order to signal that there is still time to act before that terrible outcome occurs. No one else witnessed every detail of the fulfillment of that vision, so it was not a sign to the world but rather to you personally, as the Vicar of Christ. Heaven thus gave you the confidence that you are to proceed with the consecration, no matter what.”

“Imagine how reassuring it must have been for Mary, when She arrived at Elizabeth’s rural home in the hill country, to discover that Elizabeth already knew Her secret. And not only that, Her older cousin, who was thought to be too old to ever become pregnant, was six months along with her own baby. These were private miracles, which served to reassure Mary. They became publicly known only after Saint Luke, who surely learned many of these details from the Blessed Virgin Mary Herself, recorded them in his writings.”

“And,” said Kiril, “Mary’s response to these miracles was to sing the *Magnificat*, in praise of the goodness of God. In praise, actually, of the fact that God was preparing to send a just government into a pagan Roman world that was hopelessly corrupt. Holy Father, before you depart, let us go up together to the rectory chapel, and kneel before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and recite the immortal words which His Mother sang after greeting Elizabeth.”

So, their breakfast being finished, the two men climbed the stairs of the old rectory to the chapel, and brought themselves into the Real Presence of their Lord. Neither needed any printed text to aid their memory as they recited together:

⁸⁶ I Samuel 16:1-13.

My soul doth magnify the Lord,
and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

Because he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid;
for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

Because he that is mighty, hath done great things to me;
and holy is his name.

And his mercy is from generation unto generations,
to them that fear him.

He hath shewed might in his arm:
he hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart.

He hath put down the mighty from their seat,
and hath exalted the humble.

He hath filled the hungry with good things;
and the rich he hath sent empty away.

He hath received Israel his servant,
being mindful of his mercy:

As he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his seed for ever.⁸⁷

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Ghost,

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.⁸⁸

Afterwards they waited in silence before the Lord for a few minutes. Nicholas began to see clearly that the coming consecration would indeed show forth both God's mercy and the strength of His arm; that it would scatter the proud secular humanists of this world, and put down the mighty lords of mammon, who dealt in dishonest money and rapacious finance, from their seats; it would exalt the humble, true believers in Christ, who, like Jesus Himself, are marked by their devotion to His Blessed Mother.

Those who have hungered and thirsted for truth and justice would finally be satisfied, while those who sought riches through the unjust economic system that has long been oppressing the world would be sent away empty. The one religion which is true, which began with Adam and Noah and Abraham and Moses, which passed down through King David and the Priests and Prophets of Israel, and which continued on in the

⁸⁷ Luke 1:46-55, DRV.

⁸⁸ "Magnificat ánima mea Dóminum et exultávit spíritus meus in Deo salutári meo. Quia respéxit humilitátem ancillæ suæ: ecce enim ex hoc beátam me dicent omnes generatiónes. Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est, et sanctum nomen eius. Et misericórdia eius a progénie in progénies tíméntibus eum. Fecit poténtiam in bráchio suo, dispérsit supérbos mente cordis sui. Depósuit potétes de sede et exaltávit húmiles. Esuriétes implévit bonis et dívites dimísit inánes. Suscépit Israël, púerum suum, recordátus misericórdiæ suæ, sicut locútus est ad patres nostros, Abraham et sémini ejus in sæcula. Glória Patri, et Fílio, et Spirítui Sancto. Sicut erat in princípío, et nunc, et semper, et in sæcula sæculórum. Amen."

priesthood instituted by Jesus Christ Himself at the Last Supper – now no longer daily offering the blood of bulls and goats⁸⁹ but the Precious Body and Blood of the Spotless Lamb of God Himself, Our Lord Jesus Christ – that one true and universal religion was to be continued until the end of time among the true seed of Abraham, those who, by receiving Christ, were given the power to become sons of God,⁹⁰ not by being descended from the correct human ancestors, but by being born of God through baptism.

Nicholas also pondered his view of history, now so clear after living for eighty-five years in the heart of Europe, and after spending so many years upon the Throne of Peter. Christendom had flourished for sixteen hundred years, building Western Civilization upon the basic infrastructure prepared by ancient Greece and Rome.

Then the Protestant revolt against the timeless teachings of Christ and His Church, motivated especially by rebellion against the strict sexual and fiscal morality demanded by Christ, had brought about the gradual destruction of the just economic and social practices which had been typical of Catholic Europe. Instead, the Protestant revolt led to the establishment – first and foremost in England under King Henry VIII and his successors – of a rapacious property-extorting ruling class fueled by an anti-Catholic spirit of destruction of the rights of the common man.

That system, initially based on unjust usury, and for the past century abetted by the fiat-currency fulfillment of the alchemist's dream of unlimited money created out of nothing at no cost, had gradually enslaved the common man, diminishing his rights and property, increasing his taxes, and centralizing the power and wealth of rulers – which in Christendom had always been widely distributed and primarily local. Because the industrial revolution had not come about until this anti-Christian system was already in place, most people wrongly assumed that industrialism, by its very nature, had to develop into the modern system of rapacious international leviathans called “corporations,” which now effectively rule over the governments of the earth.

In time, the loss of faith of whole continents came to pass, until former Christendom had become a secular humanist wasteland in which only a tiny minority of brave souls kept the traditional Catholic Faith alive in belief and practice. The ideas of *practical* atheism and secular humanism were first openly promoted in the Masonic-inspired American and French revolutions, but *formal* atheism first took real root in Russia in the openly-anti-Christian Bolshevik revolution of 1917.

Those “errors of Russia” had been spreading throughout the world ever since, until almost the entire world had become enslaved under the darkness of un-Christian political thinking and practices. Only two or three tiny nation-states still remained that still officially confessed the one true Catholic religion, and their continued existence was tolerated precisely because they were politically inconsequential.

⁸⁹ Hebrews 10:1-7.

⁹⁰ John 1:12-13.

But a new Russian sunrise was about to dawn, and Christendom, with its glorious virtues in both the people and the state, was about to be miraculously reborn in Russia. That was the promise of Fatima. The whole world would watch in wonder, for such an abrupt conversion of an entire nation could not be brought about in this world except by divine intervention.

And, because of the consecration, the world would be forced to note that it was through the intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary that these good things had come to pass. Her words would indeed be reinforced gloriously: “Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call Me Blessed.”

Chapter Seventeen

Sunday, June 21, 2015.

St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican City.

As planned, Pope Nicholas had spent Saturday night in the Rome apartment of Father Ignacio Battista, who had a special papal invitation to come to the sacristy of Saint Peter's Basilica two hours before the consecration, and who was assigned to escort the Pope's old friend "Father Jacob." Before setting out at six o'clock Sunday evening for their walk across Saint Peter's Square, and into the famous basilica housing the central altar of Christendom atop the tomb of the Blessed Apostle Peter, Nicholas permitted himself a brief glance at the Sunday afternoon television news reports. More than one hundred Cardinals and bishops would be gathering in Saint Peter's Basilica for this evening's eight o'clock ceremony. Of some surprise to the media, Filaret III, the Patriarch of Moscow, had asked several Russian Orthodox bishops to attend as observers. Hundreds of Catholic priests and religious from the Rome vicinity had been granted priority seating, and tickets for lay persons had been distributed on a limited basis, including a lottery to ensure that several hundred "non-VIP's" could attend in person. Security would be very thorough and time-consuming, as at the most strict airports, so it was necessary for the crowd to assemble well ahead of the eight o'clock ceremony. The media felt this was understandable. A modest dress code would also be enforced, and there were notices in major Rome newspapers as well as signs posted about the public areas of the Vatican, explaining that at this ceremony in honor of Our Lady there would be zero tolerance for immodest or otherwise inappropriate attire. The media, naturally, took offense at this, claiming that this would discriminate against the poor and those wanting to express themselves in unique ways.

Tonight, mused Nicholas, Catholics notorious for their last-minute arrival at routine *novus ordo* Masses, would be spending an extended period of time in silence in the basilica. The Pope had issued an order, through his deputy Father Herald, for "Holy Silence" in the basilica out of respect for the Blessed Sacrament and the solemnity of the occasion. Those refusing to cooperate after an initial warning by the ushers, no matter what their worldly station, would be evicted by the security guards. Ample provision had been made for the worldwide media to televise the event, so that anyone who wished could watch world history unfold in their own home or at their parish church. Media comments were made disparaging the strict recording requirements imposed by the Pope on every participating Cardinal and bishop, so that their individual correct participation could be verified after the fact by Vatican officials. There were insinuations that this sort of "heavy-handed tyranny" had gone out of the Church during the long pontificate of the Pope's predecessor, who had preferred to rule by example and cordial invitation. Now "the sudden end of collegiality" was lamented, as the College of Cardinals and the National Conferences of Catholic Bishops were no longer being consulted for their

advice, but rather were being ordered, in minute detail, as to how they were to conduct themselves in this consecration. Nor was participation optional for any Catholic bishop. It was suggested that, whereas Nicholas' predecessor had learned to operate like a modern corporate CEO, Pope Nicholas was "reverting back to the style of a power-hungry medieval monarch."

Nicholas laughed at the ridiculous rewriting of actual history that made such vacuous comments seem plausible. He knew that the kind of mind-control and mounting suppression of politically-incorrect speech which typified modern public discourse was largely unknown and unthinkable until the "errors of Russia" had begun to spread throughout the world. To be sure, there had been some precedents of outrageous thought-suppression ever since the Protestant revolt.

Elizabethan England had outlawed the Catholic religion, and had subjected those who refused to practice the new-fangled Protestant religion to unprecedented penalties for incorrect thinking: the gradual loss of their property through draconian fines for failing to attend Protestant services, and if they continued to resist then eventually they would face the horrors of imprisonment, torture, and public execution. It was not until 2014, when Prince James, Prince of Wales, and his wife had become Anglican Use Catholics, that an embarrassed English Parliament had finally voted to lift the ban on any British monarch becoming or marrying a Roman Catholic. In Ireland, the occupying English empire had tried over several centuries to outlaw and suppress the Catholic religion, imposing Penal Laws that drove the Catholic Irish into poverty and eventual famine while their English overlords assumed control of the land and government. It took until 1960 for Trinity College in Dublin to admit its first Roman Catholic student.

In the United States, President Abraham Lincoln, who for years had openly advocated that the black slaves be rounded up and shipped off to a Caribbean island as unfit to live among whites, had freed the slaves in the south (but not in the north) as an act of economic warfare, and not because he believed in equal rights for them.⁹¹ He began to arrest and jail newspaper editors all across the nation when they publicly challenged his various tyrannical actions violating states' rights and taking to himself powers not granted by the Constitution. Lincoln had even jailed the Chief Justice of the United State Supreme Court when that justice questioned the legality of Lincoln's actions. Pope Pius IX sent a crown of thorns to President Jefferson Davis of the Confederate States,⁹² thereby recognizing which side actually represented the Catholic practice of subsidiarity (strong local rule and weak central government), and which side represented the growing tyranny of big money that would learn to benefit immensely from the inherent evils of an all-too-powerful central government. Yet, because history tends to be written by the victors of wars, Lincoln had gone on

⁹¹ Woods, *The Politically Incorrect Guide to American History*, pages 61-75. See Bibliography.

⁹² <http://catholicism.org/blessed-pius-ix-and-jefferson-davis.html> downloaded on November 22, 2010.

to become one of the ‘gods’ of the official state religion of the American empire, with his Roman-style temple in the United States capital attesting to the modern theory that might makes right. By the end of the Nineteenth Century papal encyclicals issued forth from Pope Leo XIII warning against the evils of modernism – and also against “Americanism,”⁹³ which was essentially an early form of anti-Catholic secular humanism based upon the errors of Protestantism.

Nicholas knew that tonight he would be openly challenging the immensely powerful and wealthy secular humanist establishment that ruled the world. Like “the shot heard round the world” with which the poet Ralph Waldo Emerson described the first volley of the American Revolutionary War, the consecration of Russia would unleash a tide of world-changing events that future historians would remember as the night when the restoration of Christendom began.

For the final hour before their six o’clock departure for Saint Peter’s, the Pope knelt at Father Battista’s *prie-dieu* and sought strength from Heaven. He thought of Christ in the garden of Gethsemane, sweating as it were great drops of blood. And he recalled how, when it was over, angels came and ministered to him.

Then the dreaded but sweet hour came when the Pope could no longer continue to hide from the world. At six o’clock, Father Battista and “Father Jacob” exited the apartment and walked down two blocks of a side street that would bring them out onto the *Via della Conciliazione* just a hundred meters from the opening between the arms of the colonnades that encircled Saint Peter’s Square. As they neared the end of the block, a small television news crew approached them, one holding a microphone with a logo indicating a well-known network, and the other holding a shoulder-style television camera.

“Good evening, Fathers. May we have a word with you?” asked the newsman. The camera lens was on them, with a red light illuminated. “Are you going to the ceremony this evening?”

“We are indeed,” said Father Battista. “Father Jacob and I have been asked to assist in the sacristsy at Saint Peter’s tonight.”

“Then perhaps you would know something about the whereabouts of His Holiness? He was last observed in a remote Italian monastery two days ago, and so far there has been no official confirmation, from the usual Vatican sources, that he is back in the Vatican.”

“Pope Nicholas is an old friend of mine, from way back in our youth,” smiled “Father Jacob.” “In school he was always known for showing up in class at the last possible minute, even though he was never actually late. Perhaps he is still up to his old tricks.”

“There are questions from some quarters wondering whether the Pope has been kidnapped, or whether the pressure was too much for him as the whole world waits to see if he will really strong-arm the world’s bishops who refuse to cooperate.”

⁹³ Pope Leo XIII, *Testum Benevolentiae Nostrae*, 1899, and *Longinqua Oceani*, 1895.

“I am certain the Holy Father will prove to be present on time,” said Father Battista. “Does your network have any estimates as to how many Catholic bishops may refuse to participate in the consecration?”

“Our network polls in the last two hours suggest that as many as one-third of the world’s bishops may refuse to perform the consecration, many of them standing their ground on the principle that they have a collegial relationship with the Pope, and he can no longer just order them around. Some say they can’t believe that he would actually excommunicate them.”

“Well, they may be quite surprised,” said “Father Jacob.” “You know, some people think that the replacement of quite a number of more liberal bishops, by new men completely true to the Faith, is just what the Church needs. They say it is high time to weed out the ‘bad apples’ among the hierarchy. Maybe that is just what the Pope is thinking. It will all be very interesting.”

“Now, you see, we do need to make our way to our posts in Saint Peter’s for the ceremony,” said Father Battista. “If you gentlemen will excuse us.”

“By all means, Fathers. And thank you for your comments.”

In five minutes they reached the perimeter of Saint Peter’s Square, where a Swiss Guard confronted them.

“I am Father Battista, sir. And this is ‘Father Jacob.’ Now, you see, we have special clearance. Check your photos, please.”

The guard studied photos called up on a hand-held device, and then looked closely at each of them.

“Indeed you do. Proceed on to the next guard station over there, and I will radio him that you are on the way.”

Before long the two priests had passed through three more Swiss Guard check points, and were now inside Saint Peter’s Basilica. Two more checkpoints, one along the side of the church and one at the corridor leading into the sacristy, got them admitted to the sacristy where Father John Herald was waiting with twelve Swiss Guards. As the two priests in simple black cassocks entered the room, no one but Father Herald reacted.

“Your Holiness!” exclaimed Father Herald, as he knelt before “Father Jacob,” who drew the Fisherman’s ring out of his pocket and placed it on his finger for Father Herald to kiss, thus displaying his devotion to the office of Peter.

The Swiss Guards immediately took their cue, and surrounded the Pope, protecting him from all possible harm.

“Have I not arrived just as we planned, Father Herald?” asked Nicholas. Then to the altar boys he said: “Please assist me to remove this disguise, and to don the appropriate papal robes for the ceremony.”

At once several older altar boys, trained to assist in the robing of Popes and Cardinals for liturgical events, came to assist as “Father Jacob” underwent a rapid transformation into His Holiness, Pope Nicholas VI, robed in white and ready to obey the ninety-eight year old mandate of Heaven.

“What is the plan, Father Herald?” asked Nicholas.

“There will be a formal procession down the center aisle, beginning at the back. The pipe organ and a brass choir will accompany the Sistine Chapel choir as they lead the congregation in familiar Marian hymns. Four Swiss Guards will lead, followed by the Cross-bearer carrying the ceremonial cross, then the Thurifer carrying the incense. A statue of Our Lady of Fatima will follow next, borne on the shoulders of six laymen selected by my friend Father Gottschalk of the Fatima Herald apostolate in Detroit. Flag bearers carrying the Papal flag on the right, and the flag of the Russian Federation on the left, will be next. After those will come a dozen altar boys, followed by Four Swiss Guards, then Your Holiness and Father Battista and myself, and then four more Swiss Guards. Then about one hundred Cardinals and bishops, who are even now gathered in the back chamber waiting, will follow in procession. Everyone but you and Father Battista has been through a dress rehearsal this afternoon.

“I will be beside you both throughout the ceremony to keep you on cue. Once we reach the altar, exposition of the Blessed Sacrament will take place, followed by The Litany of the Blessed Virgin. Then there will be another Marian hymn while you and all the bishops take their appointed places at special kneelers in the sanctuary for the consecration. Each will have a large-print copy of the required text, which begins with a reminder to turn on their lapel microphones and to clearly state their full name and the city of their cathedral into the microphone before the consecration begins. All will kneel before the Blessed Sacrament while the Consecration is recited.

“Afterwards, there will be Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament concluding with a blessing of all present, followed by recessional Marian hymns while all recess out in the same order in which they first processed. The ceremony will be followed by a private reception in the Apostolic Palace for the bishops and Cardinals who participated, at which Your Holiness will try to personally thank as many of them as possible. There will also be a few private media booths adjacent to the reception, where those who wish can grant television interviews.”

“Excellent, Father Herald. I could not have conceived of any better plan myself. You are a faithful servant and devoted friend to your old and weary Pope.”

“I am also getting on in years, Holiness. But we may both rejoice to think that we have both lived to see such a day as this!”

Suddenly an older Swiss Guard rang the sacristy bell, signaling all to be silent and to pay attention.

“It is now time for everyone to proceed,” explained the Guard. “We will move silently down the side of the church, and gather in the back for the procession. The twelve Swiss Guards will surround the Holy Father until he is in place in procession at the back, and will then take their designated places in the processional lineup.”

In just a few minutes, the organ and brass music began to fill the vaulted arches of the vast basilica, and the choir led the people in the singing of praises to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The procession down the

aisle bespoke the renewed triumphalism of a Church that would no longer remain hesitant to proclaim its authority over errant bishops and nations. The ceremony proceeded exactly as planned, and was watched all over the globe on virtually every major network.

However, this was not to be the only such ceremony taking place at this time. In Moscow, Filaret III, the Orthodox Patriarch of Moscow, had determined to perform the consecration simultaneously with the Pope in Rome. So, at ten o'clock in the evening Moscow time, in the Orthodox Cathedral of Christ the Savior, President Polzin and about one hundred trusted believers heard their Patriarch explain that the Orthodox had always called Mary "All-Immaculate," and that this ceremony would simply invoke Heaven to heal the ancient schism and get the two apostolic branches of the Church working together against the enemies of Christ who run the secular world. At the very moment when a television monitor showed that the Pope was beginning the consecration prayer in Rome, all knelt to pray with their Patriarch as he offered to Heaven his sincere supplication, according to the required text of the consecration, for the conversion of his nation.

Elsewhere in Moscow, at the Roman Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, the Most Reverend Nicholas Bogmolov, Catholic Archbishop of Moscow, would also perform the consecration simultaneously with the Pope in Rome. The cathedral was filled to standing room only with Catholic faithful and others, and, having consulted by telephone with Father Herald in Rome, Archbishop Bogmolov had arranged for a smaller-scale ceremony quite similar to the one planned for Saint Peter's Basilica. Like his Orthodox counterpart, the Archbishop waited until a television monitor showed the Pope begin the actual consecration, and then he led the Moscow congregation in consecrating their nation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, in union with the Pope and all the bishops of the world.

Later, as the exhausted Pope began his duty to thank the Cardinals and bishops at the reception in the Apostolic Palace, consecration ceremonies would also be ending in time zones all around the world. In some places the consecration had been done in the middle of the night, in other places in the morning or afternoon. But all obedient Catholic bishops in the world had completed the mandate of Heaven, simultaneously with the Pope in Rome.

Back in New York, at the Brown Group condominium atop the Waldorf=Astoria hotel, Mikhail and the three Petersons were driven to a private airport early Sunday morning, where the Brown Group jet was waiting to fly them back to Detroit. By eleven o'clock they had landed at Detroit City Airport, and a Brown Group limo drove them up Gratiot Avenue to the Cova rectory, where they were to meet Father Kiril for a trip downtown to Detroit's Blessed Sacrament Cathedral. There, at two o'clock in the afternoon, they would attend the consecration ceremony performed by the Archbishop of Detroit, using VIP tickets that Father Kiril had managed to obtain. The third and youngest Romanov brother, Vladimir Nicholaevich, would also join them along with his wife Olga Gavrilovna

and the two oldest of their six children, ages ten and nine. Vladimir, who was often mistaken for an identical twin of his older brother Kiril, was a well-known Detroit organ builder, and was proud that a historic instrument he had recently refurbished, the four-manual Austin organ at the cathedral, would be heard during today's ceremony.

After the Detroit consecration, the Romanovs and Petersons traveled the short distance to the Peterson's downtown Detroit condominium adjacent to the Wayne State University campus, where they began to watch and discuss the television news reports. The Papal consecration story dominated the news, but occasional brief reports about the Romanov Nobility Ball were interjected, especially since they blended so well given the overall focus on Russia.

Mikhail Romanov was described as a surprise guest, a Michigan doctor who turned out to be a secret Russian prince and who had dominated the ball and won the hearts of many of the Romanov nobility. His date Mariya Peterson was presented as a young Detroit music student who had recently won international acclaim by her award-winning performance in a Moscow competition, and her repeat performance in the Apostolic Palace for the Pope's birthday. She too was a secret European princess, and, like Prince Mikhail, had easily captured the hearts of the Romanov nobility. There were brief clips of Mariya's parents, Prince George and Princess Katarina, who had accompanied her to the ball. They too were descended from European royalty, lived in Detroit, and were both professors, he at Wayne State University School of Medicine and she at the University of Michigan School of Music. Both couples were shown dancing to the wonderful waltz music, and there were clips showing Mikhail and Mariya playing the piano and organ while leading the singing of the traditional hymns, and performing the Tchaikovsky excerpts from *The Nutcracker*. The scene of the youthful couple bowing to thunderous applause and shouts of "Bravo!" was used to close the segment.

Overall, the impression was given that the charming young couple, newcomers to the annual event, had completely taken over the Romanov Nobility Organization, simply "stealing the show" by their attractiveness, talent, and wit – combined with the fact that, by family dynastic rules, Prince Mikhail would be considered first in line for any restoration of the Russian throne.

Mikhail suddenly realized that he was quickly losing his privacy when the television aired pictures of his little Nazareth medical clinic, showing piles of flowers surrounding the "Romanov Medical Clinic" sign in the front yard, flags of the Russian Federation and the House of Romanov hung between double poles, and signs reading "We Love You Prince Mikhail!", "Michigan's Russians Love You!", and "Long Live the Next Tsar!" George was sufficiently concerned by this that he decided to peek out the condominium window. Nothing was visible in the courtyard below, but this was, after all, an inner city gated complex. They entered through a secure garage portal off the back street, and then ascended inside

the secure area to their condominium entrance. So they had not actually been out on the Woodward Avenue public sidewalk that ran alongside their complex. The fitness center windows did overlook Woodward Avenue, so George excused himself long enough to have a look. To his dismay, it was just the same as at Mikhail's clinic in Nazareth: there were piles of flowers, Russian flags, a few candles, and various signs which he could not read from his vantage point, except for one which said "Detroit Russians Love Princess Mariya!"

"My friends," said George upon returning. "We have a problem."

"Flowers, flags, and signs?" quipped Mikhail. "Those can't hurt you."

"Yes, but with all this television news exposure, people will start to recognize us. And how can we go to work anymore, knowing that our patients will be completely distracted by all this royal ball hysteria? Will it even be safe for Mariya to walk the campus anymore?"

Mikhail pondered whether this would be a good time to tell them about the thug in his clinic who had delivered what seemed to be a Romanov family threat. He decided this was not the right time. His decision deadline, after all, was still twenty-nine days away.

"We are probably not in any physical danger," said Katarina. "We may have some people asking for autographs or photos with us, but, if Russia converts and then restores her monarchy, we may be called upon to learn to live graciously in the spotlight. We may have to accept this as our new vocation."

"Well said, Katarina," said Father Kiril. "Just as the Pope could not know with any certainty how things would unfold following the consecration, neither can you know how the disclosure of your status among Russian nobility will play out. You just have to keep the Faith and trust Heaven."

"I'll be the most isolated, all by myself in Nazareth," said Mikhail.

"You won't be as alone as you think. You remember from your catechism how each soul has a guardian angel, but priests have two?"

"Yes."

"Well, kings and crown princes also have two guardian angels."

"Good. I'll need them," said Mikhail.

The initial television interviews conducted inside Russia were particularly striking. Comments from people on the street were routinely positive, both about the consecration of their nation by the Pope, and about the fact that an American doctor had suddenly emerged as the rightful heir to the Romanov throne. Announcers asked loaded questions, seeking desperately for negative comments about the Catholic assault on the Orthodox Church, or about the American-Romanov family plot to destroy democracy in Russia. But no Russians could be found who would speak negatively about these issues. Most Russians seemed to feel that if the Holy Mother of God wanted to obtain special graces for Russia, they should be the last to complain. And, they said, most people in Russia quietly longed for a restoration of the dignity, elegance, and order of former Russian society under the monarchy, and the moral and cultural leadership

that a Christian Tsar would provide. To have a Christian monarch was in the very soul of the Russian nation. Holy Mother Russia could never be her true self again without a Tsar to lead and protect her. Americans were spiritually impoverished by the fact that they had no history of a Christian king. So, probably they would find it difficult to understand. But Russians were Orthodox, and since Heaven itself has a Monarch, why shouldn't Russia have one? And if the Pope should be converted to be able to oversee the Orthodox Church without modernizing its liturgy, well, he is a monarch too, and what could be wrong with that?

People on the street in the Muslim regions of southern Russia also failed to be negative. Even here, where an anti-Catholic animus was expected, there was striking enthusiasm for the consecration. The Muslims inside Russia noted that they always did have a profound respect for the Virgin Mary. Also, the town where Mary had appeared to the shepherd children was named for Mohammad's daughter, Princess Fatima,⁹⁴ back when the Moors had ruled the Iberian Peninsula. Maybe, they said, there was a reason Mary chose that town for Her visit to earth. Maybe Heaven wanted to bless the Muslims too, when Russia converts or if Russia gets a good king. The media had to resort to interviews with Muslims outside Russia in order to obtain the negative comments they desired.

Interviews with Jews in Russia also resulted in surprisingly positive comments. The Orthodox Jewish believers simply said that it was none of their business if the majority of Russians, being Christians, wanted to pursue rapprochement with Rome or to explore the restoration of Russia's traditional form of government. The Reformed Jews said that, as loyal Russians, they could hardly complain about or oppose the will of the majority, and they would simply continue to strive to be faithful good citizens of their beloved nation. One or two rabidly atheistic Jews, prominent in business, did make some slightly negative remarks, but even they were subdued. And anyway, several agnostic or atheistic Gentile business leaders had already sounded exactly the same. Indeed, the media had unintentionally demonstrated that the determining factor in one's attitude toward the consecration and the idea of restoring the monarchy was not whether one was a Jew or a Gentile, or a Christian or a Muslim. Rather, what mattered was whether one was a believer in God or an atheist.

Reeling in shock from the impossible attitudes of Russians on the street, the international media had eventually resorted to repeatedly-aired interviews with a handful of atheistic, expatriate Russian scientists in London, Paris, and New York, who were willing to speak out against the consecration and against the notion of a restored monarchy. Their irrational hatred of faith and of cultural tradition was palpable. And for the moment, on this signal Sunday night in June, they were the darlings of the secular world media.

⁹⁴ More precisely, the town of Fatima was named after a Moorish princess who converted to the Catholic faith when the Christian knights took back Portugal from the Moors. She lived in that region and took the Christian name of Irene. Her name Fatima was given to her by her Moslem parents in honor of Fatima, the daughter of Mohammed.

Section II: Coronation

“But unto you that fear my name the Sun of justice shall arise, and health in his wings: and you shall go forth and shall leap like calves of the herd.”

— Malachi 4:2, DRV

“And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy: your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.”

— Joel 2:28, DRV

“And he shall judge the nations and rebuke many people: and they shall turn their swords into ploughshares and their spears into sickles. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation: neither shall they be exercised any more to war.”

— Isaiah 2:4, DRV

Chapter Eighteen

Monday, June 22, 2015.

Cyberspace. Initial Aftermath of the Consecration.

When twenty-four hours had passed after the Sunday evening consecration, the world news media presented a formal tally, in election-night style with maps and charts, of which Cardinals and bishops participated in the consecration and which ones did not. The only unknown was whether any Cardinals or bishops had appeared to participate, while refusing to pray the consecration formula correctly.

That question would take several weeks of tedious Vatican analysis to answer, but it would potentially affect at most a very small number. All told, the media reported that exactly one-third of the Catholic Cardinals, and exactly one-third of the Catholic bishops, had refused to participate in the consecration ceremony.

Pundits immediately began claiming that this proved the Pope had lost control of the Church, and that the days of a Pope acting like a monarch were definitively over. They said that since democracy was practiced almost everywhere else, it was high time for the Church to get in step with the times and officially become the openly democratic institution that she had been, in fact and to a large extent, ever since the revolution that followed Vatican II.

Media interviews with bishops who participated in the consecration were routinely favorable to the Holy Father, and respectful of papal authority. Many admitted harboring serious doubts about whether the consecration would have any observable effect on Russia anytime soon, but it was a nice prayer and it seemed to them that it can never hurt to ask Heaven for something good.

In contrast, interviews with Cardinals and bishops who had refused to participate were consistently critical of the Pope, and reflected a certain anger and resentment. When asked if they considered themselves excommunicated, many indicated that they did not, since they no longer considered that the Pope alone could “kick people out of the Church.”

They said that would have to be a collegial decision in consultation with their local conference of bishops, and most of them did not think their brother bishops would go along with their formal expulsion. Interviews of this sort persisted through Wednesday evening.

But by Thursday, news reports began to surface of numerous bishops being evicted from their diocesan centers by their newly appointed replacements. To the horror of the mainstream media, Pope Nicholas appeared to be selecting as new bishops a group of mostly-young parish priests who had become known in their respective dioceses for their liturgical “regressiveness.”

A good many of them were described as being “paleo-conservatives” whose practice was to offer almost exclusively the “formerly forbidden” Tridentine Mass. The remainder were accused of “turning their back on

the people” and “obscuring the meaning of the liturgy with unintelligible old Latin.” These were priests who had established a preference for offering the *novus ordo* Mass in Latin, at the old high altar *ad orientum* – in other words, precisely the way the new Mass had been intended when it was originally promulgated.

In many cases, these holy priests who were being made the new bishops were well known to their predecessors, because they had been routinely called down to their diocesan headquarters to be threatened or disciplined for their incorrigibility as traditionalists.

Quite interesting was a widely-repeated broadcast of an interview with Patriarch Filaret III of Moscow. He indicated that, as far as the Russian Orthodox Church was concerned, many of the Catholic bishops who had excommunicated themselves on Sunday night had been the major obstacles to any consideration of a formal reunion with Rome. The Orthodox Church had been concerned with the preservation of liturgical traditions going back hundreds of years, having preserved such treasures as the Mass of Saint John Chrysostom.

The Orthodox Mass was said in Old Slavonic, a liturgical language that, like Latin, was “dead” and therefore no longer susceptible to change over time. Because of their unspoiled liturgical traditions, the Orthodox bishops had dreaded any affiliation with the likes of wacko modernist Catholic bishops who promoted weird and experimental liturgical practices which were insulting to the dignity of Christ’s Church, and who ripped out magnificent artistic treasures in order to turn their once-holy cathedrals into bland modern “worship spaces.”

Such extreme disorder and dysfunction in the post-conciliar Catholic Church had long horrified the Orthodox bishops. But now, with these ‘bad apple’ bishops being rapidly replaced by young, tradition-oriented new bishops, it seemed clear that a new springtime of cooperation and unity was suddenly possible.

Patriarch Filaret even suggested that Russia had once been Roman Catholic, from the years 988 until 1054, when the Great Schism had tragically occurred. To be in schism from the Pope of Rome was a great error, and, if such a consecration could in fact heal the schism between East and West, then what harm could there possibly be in such a miracle from Heaven?

Chapter Nineteen

Wednesday, July 1, 2015.

Ten Days after the Consecration.

Romanov Medical Clinic, Nazareth, Michigan.

Luke, the medical student, was not especially cool, but he was normally calm and collected. On this sultry Wednesday afternoon in July, as thunder boomed outside and lightning flashes brightened the clinic windowpanes, Luke appeared uncharacteristically anxious as he knocked on the door of Doctor Romanov's consultation room.

"Come in," said Mikhail.

His eyes were pouring over a patient chart, and at first he did not look up. Then suddenly, he broke his concentration and smiled.

"Ah, Luke, it's you. Are you ready to present your last case?"

"Uh ... yes, ... sir."

"You aren't scared of a good old-fashioned Michigan thunderstorm, are you?"

"No, sir. It isn't that. It's this patient, Mr. Kuznetsov. He seems, I don't know ... well, spooky."

"Might that be Alexander Petrovich Kuznetsov?"

"Yes, that's right."

"Let me guess. He's here about his blood pressure, but also another matter which he refuses to discuss with you."

"Why, yes. That's it. How did you know?"

"I met him once before. On an afternoon when we were all trying to get out of here on time, so I saw him myself and spared you and Monica the pleasure of meeting him."

"Well, his blood pressure seems well controlled, and his labs are all normal, so I don't see any reason to change his meds. He's doing well on hydrochlorothiazide and lisinopril."

"And what is hydrochlorothiazide?"

"It's a diuretic. It lowers pressure by reducing the fluid volume in the vascular space."

"Correct. And what is the concern about it?"

"It can cause some potassium loss."

"Correct again. And what is lisinopril?"

"It is an ACE inhibitor."

"How does it work?"

"Well, the kidneys secrete renin, an enzyme which converts angiotensinogen into angiotensin I. Then angiotensin converting enzyme, or 'ACE,' converts angiotensin I into angiotensin II, which causes a rise in blood pressure by making the blood vessel walls tighten. An ACE inhibitor such as lisinopril blocks the ACE so that angiotensin I is not converted into the more active angiotensin II."

“Okay, good. Any other benefits?”

“Yes, lisinopril protects the kidneys against the progression of diabetic nephropathy, and it prevents the ventricular remodeling of the heart which can lead to congestive heart failure.”

“Right again. Any usual side effects?”

“Orthostatic hypotension, urinary urgency, and a dry cough are common complaints.”

“Excellent, Luke. Why don’t you give Mr. Kuznetsov a refill, and send him on his way?”

“He won’t leave until he sees you.”

“Okay, let’s go.”

“Uh, he told me not to come back in the room with you. He wants to see you alone.”

“But why? I still have twenty days left.”

“What?”

“Oh, nothing. I’m just muttering to myself. I’ll finish him up, and you can take off early today.”

The thunderstorm which had been brewing finally unleashed its sudden fury. Rain mixed with intermittent hail pounded the clinic roof, and the wind howled around the corners of the building, blending with the thunder and lightning which were now almost continuous. Not one to believe in the significance of natural portents as if he were some superstitious ancient Roman official, Mikhail nevertheless noted that the sudden sense of impending doom which enveloped him on the way to meet Mr. Kuznetsov was entirely consonant with the wild, uncontrolled weather outside. Having reached the exam room door, Mikhail took a deep breath, and entered abruptly. His military training made it natural for him to take the offensive in any confrontation, posturing as if he were in total command of the situation.

“Hey, doc. Nice to see you again. I’ve been seeing a lot of you lately, all over the television news.”

“You wanted to see me alone?”

“Yeah, doc. See, the people who sent me here before just wanted me to let you know where things stand now, you know?”

“No, I don’t know.”

Mikhail was feeling a mounting sense of dread inside, but was behaving as he was trained: trying to keep the punk on the defensive.

“Remember how I told you before? That I had a message from the Romanov Nobility Organization? Uh, that is, from certain members?”

“Yeah. So what?”

“Well, doc, now they want you to know that you can stop worrying.”

“Oh?”

“Yeah, there’s not going to be any thirty-day deadline anymore. You don’t have to decide whether to revert to your old Faith or renounce the throne.”

“Really?”

“See, doc, the family are good people. They see that most people in Russia have had a sudden change of heart about Catholics. Plus, people over there are already beginning to talk about restoring the monarchy. And not only that, your picture is showing up in the Russian news every day as the most likely candidate for the new Tsar. So you see, even the part of the family that didn’t really want you, well, now they can’t be seen trying to stand in your way.”

“So then there is no deadline?”

“That’s right. Most of the family really likes you, doc.”

“So let me get this straight. You say that I no longer have to give up either the throne or my religion?”

“That’s right. Not as far as the Romanov’s are concerned.”

“So is that what you came to tell me?”

“Well, there is one more thing, doc.”

Now Mikhail felt a pang of dread in his belly. Punks like this guy always kept the bad news for the very end, just for effect. So Mikhail adopted a menacing stance, just to remind him who would win any physical altercation that might ensue.

“Yeah, well tell me about it, punk.”

“Hey, doc, relax. I know I had to bring you some pretty bad news last time. But things have changed. This is good news.”

“You sure?”

“Yeah. See, there is already talk of having another Romanov Ball in the fall. But for the first time since 1917, it would be in Russia.”

“Wow. Where?”

“Just outside Saint Petersburg, in the Alexander Palace at Tsarskoe Selo. Where the last Tsar lived. It would kind of symbolize the Romanov dynasty picking up right where the family left off.”

“How soon?”

“They’re talking about having it on Friday night, November 4, which is Russian Unity Day.”

“Yes, that’s a major national holiday in Russia. It has something to do with all levels of Russian society pulling together, regardless of their class or position, against a common enemy.”

“Right. That was back in 1612. And in the next year, 1613, the Romanov dynasty was founded, when the first Romanov Tsar, Michael, at age sixteen, took the throne.”

“It seems to me, if I remember my history correctly, that young Michael had no desire to be Tsar, and cried when they told him he had been chosen to take the crown. His mother was a very holy woman, and comforted him with some icon, I believe.”

“Yes. After Boris Godunov was elected king, he punished his too-powerful Romanov rivals by forcing Filaret and his wife Martha to take religious vows and be locked inside religious houses. So young Michael’s mother became a nun, and his father was imprisoned in a monastery. But when Godunov fell from power, Filaret was released and was made the

Patriarch of All Russia, with his young son ruling as Tsar. It was the Icon of Our Lady of Saint Theodore, also known as the Black Virgin of Russia, that Michael's mother Martha gave him when he became the first Romanov Tsar. So, that icon became the Patroness of the Romanov Dynasty."

"A king cannot do better than to have deep devotion to the Mother of God," said Mikhail, suddenly feeling amazed at how this dreaded encounter had turned, almost, into the beginning of a friendship.

Mr. Kuznetsov reached down and opened his briefcase, extracting a gold-framed picture.

"The family wants me to present this to you, doc. It's an expensive copy of the icon. The Black Virgin of Russia."

Mikhail was deeply moved. He fought back tears of profound joy and wonder, and realized that his military "tough guy" technique had by now been completely neutralized.

"Tell them I am very grateful. Tell them I plan to do everything I can to bring honor to the family name. Tell them that, if I am called, it will be to be the servant of the Russian people."

"Okay, doc, I'll tell 'em. And listen, if I want to come back to Russia someday, and they try to give me immigration problems, do you think you could help me?"

Mikhail took out one of his clinic business cards, and wrote on the back: "Alexander Petrovich Kuznetsov is my friend, and is to be afforded every kindness and consideration. Mikhail Nicholaevich Romanov. July, 2015."

"Here, you keep this, Mr. Kuznetsov. Who knows, perhaps one day it will be of some use to you, and may even be worth a bit more than the paper on which it is printed."

Chapter Twenty

Thursday Evening, July 16, 2015.

Three Weeks after the Consecration.

The Royal Eagle Restaurant at Saint Sabbas Russian Orthodox Monastery, Harper Woods (northeast Detroit), Michigan.

The posh Royal Eagle Russian Restaurant⁹⁵ in northeast Detroit was an operation of Saint Sabbas the Sanctified Russian Orthodox monastery.⁹⁶ Situated in the near northeast suburb of Harper Woods, Saint Sabbas was an old-calendar monastery following the Russian Typikon. Its beautiful traditional church was filled with elegant iconography written by local experts, and was surrounded by peaceful gardens with ponds and gazebos which afforded the best possible atmosphere for a place of spiritual refuge and retreat. The restaurant, managed by an in-house Russian chef trained in Eastern Europe, permitted diners seated at quiet linen-covered tables to look out upon the monastery gardens through tall arched windows. The dining room, dedicated to Tsar Nicholas II and Tsarina Alexandra, was graced with large portraits of the last Romanov couple to rule the Russian empire. And, in a monastery setting, it seemed particularly fitting to honor these Passion-Bearers who were declared saints by the Russian Orthodox Church. Above the dining room fireplace, a silent video monitor displayed scenes of Moscow's architectural treasures. The dinner menu reflected an eastern European theme, with such dishes as Chicken Kiev, Bulgarian lamb kebobs, and a mixed platter including potato pancakes, homemade sausage, stuffed cabbage, pierogi, and sauerkraut. *Hour Magazine*, Detroit's guide to the metropolitan region's finest, noted that The Royal Eagle made it seem as if a bit of old world Russia had been transplanted right into suburban Detroit.

It was to just such a setting that Mikhail had felt it was appropriate to take his new love Mariya for a romantic dinner and conversation. They had been talking every day on the telephone, many times on some days, and had been rapidly growing both in their fondness for one another and in their sense of being called to a joint and very unique vocation. Romantic cards and little gifts had been exchanged several times, and Mikhail had made trips to Detroit every weekend and at least once each mid-week. Mariya had long resisted allowing her cherished friendship with her beloved Mark to blossom into a romance, fearing that might cloud the issue of their true vocations. But she had felt strangely free to follow the romantic lead of her heart with Mikhail, and in the process suspected her own vocation was unfolding before her.

The restaurant manager had provided them with a sheltered corner,

⁹⁵ <http://www.theroyaleagle.org>, link verified November 22, 2010.

⁹⁶ <http://stsabbas.org>, link verified November 22, 2010.

behind a screen, but both Mikhail and Mariya were growing accustomed to their loss of anonymity. To reduce the tension in the dining room, they had circulated and greeted those dining at other tables, mostly Russian Americans who were only too aware of the identity of the attractive young couple. Then, when everyone was satisfied with having met them, Mikhail and Mariya settled into the quiet of their own table, and began a multiple-course dinner for two, specially prepared for them by the chef.

“How long has it been since we met?” asked Mariya.

“It was the night of your recital at Miller Auditorium in Kalamazoo. That was in mid-May, and now it is mid-July. So about two months, I’d say.”

“Two and a half months ago I was a typical American college student, traveling to my mother’s native Russia for the first time in my life. I was all worried about performing in the organ competition, and was enthralled with the architecture and history of the Romanov dynasty so evident in the Kremlin. I was a young tourist. It was a lark, and then I would return to my real life as a music student at Wayne State. Then they added on the performance for the Pope’s birthday, so I flew to Rome with my parents, and felt that I was starting to grasp how the old world is fundamentally different from modern America. But I still thought I would return to my real life as a student, with my best friend Mark.”

“And then?”

“And then the Assistant Dean of the music school pressured me into doing a repeat of my Moscow performances in Kalamazoo. That was my fatal mistake.”

“Fatal? Why?”

“Because! That was the night I met you. And then my whole world got turned upside down.”

“It was that bad?”

“Okay. Well, right-side-up, then. But everything changed all of a sudden.”

“Would it surprise you if I were to tell you that I feel just the same way?”

“But you’re older. You’ve been through things.”

“Music school, medical school, residency, wartime service, and now private practice. Throw in some part-time organ and voice work. But I have not been through a romance, my dear. I have kept so busy in my life that I have never taken the time to fall in love before. I always intended to, mind you. But always next month, or next year.”

“What made you change?”

“You did. You were irresistible from the moment I laid eyes on you during your recital. I could not stop thinking about how I could manage to meet you and get to know you without scaring you away because I was such an old man.”

“But you don’t seem old at all. You’re in perfect physical condition, and a part of you seems like a scared teenage boy.”

“Not just *seems*, Mariya. A teenage boy – that’s right about where I left off in developing the romantic side of me. People look at me and see me as a thirty-five year old retired military tough guy, but inside I’m as scared and insecure as a seventeen year old boy trying to get up the courage to ask a girl he desperately admires for a date.”

“That’s what is so lovable about you, Misha. You and I are really just two kids trying to make it though their first romantic experiment with ‘going steady.’”

“By the way, Mariya Fyodovsky Peterson, I’ve been meaning to ask you: would you go with me and be my steady girl?”

“Of course, silly,” she smiled. “How long did you have in mind? Through the fall semester? Or all the way until summer vacation? Or for the rest of our lives?”

“Are you proposing to me, you young liberated American girl?”

“Yes. I’m proposing that we should start talking about whether you should be working on figuring out whether and when to propose to me.”

“Wow.”

“Well, romance is great, but Catholics have to use their head as well as their heart when they begin to think about keeping steady company with a member of the opposite sex.”

“Now you’re even bringing up sex,” laughed Mikhail. “How is a scared boy like me ever supposed to deal with today’s liberated women?”

“Like I was saying, we have to use our heads to guide our hearts. It’s easy to be attracted to an adorable person like you, Misha. But the question is whether our vocation is consistent with that attraction.”

“I guess I’ve probably been attracted to a number of women,” admitted Mikhail. “But, as you say, I always repressed my feelings because it never seemed like the right thing, it never seemed like it could possibly be my vocation.”

“How about now?”

“Now, I’m terrified. Everything about you seems exactly right, Mariya, and all of a sudden I can’t see any escape route for myself. I’m captured, disarmed, defenseless, and there is no hope of escape. I’m a prisoner and I love it!”

“You’ve got it bad, Misha. I’m so glad. Because a lot has happened in the past two months that seems too good to be true. It’s almost like a fairy tale. I met this impossibly handsome and intelligent and talented older man who seems very youthful, and who just happens to be a crown prince. I have only recently been informed that I am a princess. He falls in love with me, and takes me to a fairy tale ball in New York where we dance the night away and steal the show and end up all over the television and newspapers ever since. I begin to dream of spending my life with him, and then I sense that, if we don’t watch out, we will end up as a king and queen, living in a royal palace and ruling over a Christian nation.”

“It does sound a bit like a fairy tale, I admit. But that is what the human heart is made for. Life in this world is always full of heartache,

pain, sickness, and sorrow. But life also provides glimpses – foretastes, if you will – of that perfect world that is to come, when God will wipe away our tears, and we will truly live happily ever after.”

“My parents say that those who make their love endure for a lifetime do it by always looking at things on a higher, spiritual plane. Even while they are temporarily angered, or irritated mightily by some imperfection in their spouse, they continue to see, in their hearts, the fundamental love and goodness and faithfulness that their spouse possesses. They realize that it is just the same for their spouse, relative to their own faults. They are committed to growing old together, to being faithful until death, no matter what it takes. And so it ends up becoming surprisingly easy, the more so the longer they stay together, because each new trial or setback becomes an ever-smaller portion of their overall life together.”

“They’re probably right. The purpose of marriage is not fundamentally to make the partners happy.”

“Misha, you and I know what our Faith teaches us. The purpose of marriage is the procreation of children, and the rearing of them in the one true Faith so that their souls may have hope of Heaven. Any happiness which the spouses may share in that project is an added blessing, but is entirely secondary to the fundamental purpose.”

“Every husband is called to be a king in his own household. But that does not mean he gets to lord it over everyone and order them around for his own pleasure. No, to be a king is to have a vocation to serve, to sacrifice oneself for the welfare of others. A Christian king fears to take the throne, because he knows it will mean taking up the cross. Saint Paul wrote, ‘Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and delivered himself up for it.’⁹⁷ It is in sacrificing himself daily for his family that a real man, as head of his household, will find the happiness which endures.”

“Saint Paul also instructed wives to be obedient to their husbands, just as the Church is subject to Christ. A woman who has a faithful Christian husband, who is constantly seeking to sacrifice himself for her and their children, will be truly happy in obeying such a man, just as our souls can only be truly happy when we are obedient to God.”

“So, Mariya, I want to begin asking if we might have a vocation together as husband and wife. Neither one of us can answer that with certainty just yet. But we can be openly discussing it, even while we seek the guidance of Heaven.”

“Yes, Misha. Humanly, I would already love to marry you. But we must seek spiritual direction, and we must pray, and fast, and wait upon God.”

“The stirrings in Russia are already most amazing. Even CNN shows Orthodox and Catholic churches crammed with people, and reports that in Russian cities many extra Masses have to be added to accommodate everyone. Orthodox and Catholic priests are being flown in from other

⁹⁷ Ephesians 5:25, DRV.

countries, to help with the seemingly endless long lines of people wanting to go to confession, most of them for the first time in years. And there is already public discussion at high levels about restoring the monarchy, as a logical part of establishing an officially Christian government. Foreign reporters are almost speechless as they interview Russians at random on the streets, and find that they are concerned about reforming their lives, practicing the Faith, and doing what they can to cooperate with reordering their entire society according to the social teachings of Christ and the Church. Average Russians now talk about wanting to reclaim the glorious Christian traditions of pre-revolutionary Russia, no longer as a stubborn separatist empire, but rather as part of the universal Church based in Rome. So, there is every reason to believe that you and I will come under increasing public scrutiny, and that our quiet private lives will soon come to an end.”

“I could escape all that by declining to marry you, Misha. Then the press would forget about me. I could still marry my Mark – if he would have me, after all the hurt I have unavoidably caused him by spending so much time with you – and retreat into a quiet life somewhere in a Detroit suburb.”

“Yes, but you would have to make certain *that* is God’s will, just the same as if you *do* agree to marry me! Obstinate refusal of one’s true vocation and insisting upon another often results in enduring unhappiness. We have seen far too much of that in certain women, and in certain men with the disorder of same-sex attraction, who obstinately insist they have a vocation to the priesthood even though the Church has always plainly taught that they do not.”

“Our lives are not our own, Misha. While that is true for everyone, it seems to be doubly true for those who can foresee a vocation to lead a Christian nation. We would have to be like a father and mother not only to our own children, but to the nation as well.”

“That’s why Christian kings and queens, like priests, are assigned two guardian angels instead of the usual one.”

The waiter interrupted their conversation, exchanging their traditional Russian “Tower of Basil” salads for the main course: a trio of Bulgarian lamb kebobs, lemon-roasted Alaska salmon, and chicken Kiev, with appropriate accompaniments.

“Misha, how will we find the time to collect ourselves, and to determine the course that Heaven is asking of us? I am beginning to feel as if world events are accelerating, and soon I – we – will be engulfed.”

“Someone very good has already thought of that. Sometimes I think he is my third guardian angel. Do you know Don Brown, the auto-parts magnate?”

“Well, I don’t *know* him. He’s famous here in Detroit. He’s one of the richest men in the world, and he says he wants to give away his entire fortune for Catholic causes before he dies. Right now his big project is building tuition-free Catholic schools for inner-city Detroit. Those who

can pay something do, and those who can't attend anyway.”

“Right. Formerly he was the mayor, and before that he was an NBA star. But most importantly, he puts his Catholic Faith first in everything he does. And recently he has been working behind the scenes with my brother, at the epicenter of world-changing events.”

“You mean Father Kiril?”

“Yes. Mariya, can you keep a secret? Something the Vatican has thought it best not to disclose just yet? But which you, as a potential Russian Tsarina, should probably know?”

“Of course, Misha.”

“Where do you think the Pope wrote his proclamation ordering the consecration of Russia, the thing that unleashed this whirlwind that is changing our lives and the modern world?”

“The papers said it was in some remote monastery in Italy. They had telephoto pictures of him walking in the garden.”

“Yes, that's what they said. But do you know it wasn't Nicholas you saw in those pictures?”

“What?”

“No, it was his identical twin brother, Fredrick, posing as the Pope to divert media attention.”

“Why?”

“Because Pope Nicholas was here at the Cova for a week, in disguise. He needed a quiet retreat where no one would find him.”

“Wait – you mean that ‘Father Jacob,’ who was always accompanied by Father Belarus? He didn't look much like Nicholas ... or did he? Oh my, you mean I played the Mass for the Pope!”

Mikhail laughed, and now his eyes twinkled.

“He was quite impressed with you, Mariya. He told Kiril you were a fine musician, and a most dignified young Catholic woman.”

“Did you meet him when he was at the Cova?”

“Yes, just once, at the rectory. The day he told me he did not think it was any coincidence at all that, just before he returned to Rome to do the consecration, he should happen to meet the true crown prince of Russia. He took it as an added sign from Heaven that all would be well.”

“My parents met him in Rome on his birthday, and had a private audience with him. And *they* did not recognize ‘Father Jacob.’”

“Remember, he pretended to speak very little English?”

“Mom did say she felt like she knew that priest from somewhere ...”

“Anyway, Don Brown made it all possible for His Holiness. He offered his private jet for the transportation, and his security detail for the Pope's protection. And now he is offering his private yacht for you and me to go on a romantic cruise, from Detroit to Chicago, so we can ‘collect ourselves,’ as you said. A cruise will be perfect, because everywhere we go on land, now, people are beginning to recognize us.”

“I get sea sick on boats sometimes, Misha. Especially if the waves are big.”

“Not on the Standart, you won’t. It’s the largest private yacht in the world. Don Brown gave me a private tour this week. It is docked near his mansion on Belle Isle.”

“Wow.”

“When Don Brown designed the new Standart, he was inspired by the last royal yacht of Russia, of the same name, which was the most magnificent royal yacht ever launched. The English royal yacht *Britannia*, now a floating museum, is only four hundred twelve feet long, and the United States Presidential yacht *Sequoia*, retired in 1977 but now a national historic landmark, is only one hundred four feet long. Don Brown’s Standart is four hundred fifty feet long, and is furnished like a five-star hotel.

“On the outside it appears as sleek and modern as any contemporary yacht, except for its old-fashioned teakwood motor launch. Its mechanical and communication systems are state of the art, and it has wireless Internet and cell phone service throughout. But its interior décor was designed to emulate the traditional elegance of ships from the turn of the Nineteenth to the Twentieth Century, like the original Standart and the Titanic.

“It boasts a royal-style dining room with two fireplaces. A two-story ballroom, which can double as a theater, has a stage that can accommodate an orchestra of twenty-five players including a Steinway concert grand piano and a gilded Lyon and Healy concert grand orchestral harp. In the rear of the ballroom is a two-manual pipe organ, specially braced – by Vladimir’s Detroit organ shop – for a sea-going vessel. Opening off the ballroom is a small traditional-style Roman Catholic chapel, with the Blessed Sacrament reserved on the antique high altar, by special permission of the Archbishop of Detroit. When closed it serves as a private adoration chapel, and when opened up to the ballroom it can accommodate everyone on board for Mass. There is a large wood-paneled library with a fireplace, filled with traditional Catholic classics and computers with Internet access, and comfortable reading chairs and writing tables.

“On a lower floor is a modern fitness center, a handball court, and an emergency medical suite. On the upper deck is a one-eighth-mile running track, a tennis court, a lap pool, a hot tub, a sun deck, and a helipad. The four luxury guest suites all have separate living rooms with private balconies, wet bars, and full private baths, and the master guest suite has all those features but adds a private dining suite, a grand piano, and a private study with a fireplace. The yacht also contains twenty standard double staterooms for guests, all with private full baths, and on a lower deck thirty double cabins for up to sixty staff and crew members.

“Formal old-world decorum is maintained on board at all times. The crew and service staff are all uniformed. A traditional Catholic dress code is enforced. All invited guests receive a pamphlet well in advance outlining the rules, and the yacht carries a large stock of appropriate formal and informal clothing and swimwear in all sizes for those caught unawares. Don says that people who cruise on his yacht feel like they have returned

to the elegance of pre-World War I Europe. What he especially enjoys hearing, he says, is that instead of feeling stifled by all the tradition and rules, they feel uniquely free. Men feel more like men, and women feel more like women. And they feel that the staff, who are all Catholic, and come from many nations, seem more like family and friends than typical employees.”

“But if Mr. Brown wants to give away all his money, why does he live in a mansion and keep a huge yacht like that?”

“He and I talked about that the other day. Don quoted Heinrich Pesch,⁹⁸ the great Jesuit economist, who helped develop the Catholic concept of Distributism as a pro-family, pro-community alternative to the harsh materialism of capitalism and communism. Pesch said that luxury is a relative concept. He argued that there is a proper, dignified luxury that is appropriate to a person’s station in life. The ongoing and quite proper progress of mankind toward a higher and more refined culture, and an increasing beautification and nobleness of life, confirms this. Highly-developed civilization increases dignity and glamour, and adds richness and good taste to life. Unlike the pagan Diogenes, who lived in a barrel and dressed in rags, the Christian seeks to have simplicity of soul and purity of spirit, but accepts material blessings consistent with his place in society, provided they are not obtained through unjust deprivation of others.

“Don points out that his mansion and yacht are both like small communities, where a large number of working people are employed in dignified surroundings, and are paid living wages in exchange for their honest service. He says what makes it work so well is that they are all Catholics, most of them members of his parish at the Cova, and so they all share a unified vision of their purpose and mission. Years ago, some of them were unemployed and on welfare, or trapped in minimum-wage jobs where they were treated with no respect. Now they understand that the mansion and the yacht are used for others: to entertain and educate people of influence, and to reward those who have served the community well.

“Don only sails on the yacht for vacation twice a year, two weeks in July on the Great Lakes, and two weeks in the Mediterranean in the winter. The rest of the time, it is providing reward cruises to those who have served the community with honor and dedication. The teachers and staff of his Catholic schools get to take their families for a week each summer. There are a couple of cruise weeks for religious to go on vacation. And sometimes Don will host world leaders at the mansion or onboard the yacht, as a way of getting their ear to listen to Catholic principles.”

“That’s very impressive. And how did the Tsar use his yacht?”

“Much the same, actually. Two weeks each summer for family vacation, and the rest of the year the Standart was kept busy with state functions.”

“Misha, do you know much about the original Standart?”

⁹⁸ Pesch, Fr. Heinrich, S.J.: *Ethics and the National Economy*, page 65. See Bibliography.

“Okay, just a bit of history, then. Russian history. The original Standart⁹⁹ was ordered by Tsar Alexander III in 1893 and was launched in 1895, after Alexander’s unexpected death from kidney failure in 1894. It was 420 feet long, and was outfitted like a floating royal palace, with teak decks, mahogany paneling, crystal chandeliers, and a full crew of servants. It was manned and operated by an elite corps from the Russian navy, and was escorted at sea by naval vessels for protection. Alexander’s son Nicholas II added an Orthodox chapel, since he and his family went to Confession, heard Mass, and received Communion daily.

“Each June, the royal family would go on a two-week cruise along the coast of Finland in the Baltic Sea. They would go ashore on remote islands where they could spend the day in privacy, swimming, picnicking, and hiking. Sometimes Nicholas would show up in person unannounced at private coastal estates, and respectfully request permission from the gentleman of the house to use the tennis court.

“Of course, when World War I broke out, the Standart was dry-docked, only two decades after it went into service; and after the revolution it was stripped and converted into a military ship used for laying mines. In the 1960’s it was scrapped, and no longer exists.”

“So in its day it was as magnificent as Don Brown’s yacht, and was used for purposes very similar to how Don Brown uses the new Standart.”

“Of course. The royal yacht was a place for entertaining foreign heads of state, and for bestowing honor upon those who served the nation well. And who knows, perhaps one day some future Tsar will revive such customs.”

The waiter arrived to ask if they were ready for dessert. He presented them with a tray of tempting delicacies, including chocolate mousse with berries, crème brûlée, dark chocolate lava cake, and crepes with raspberry filling. Both being natural athletes who were trim and fit, they did not hesitate to indulge. But when Mikhail ordered American coffee, the waiter momentarily winced, just enough to cause Mariya to laugh.

She then also ordered кофе американский [“cof-yeh Am-yer-ee-kan-ski”], pretending that by ordering it in Russian she could mitigate the offense of being so flagrantly un-European. They both knew that a European restaurant in America can’t survive long without serving American coffee in large cups with several free refills, and they were calling the chef’s bluff.

“That will be my first official edict as the new Tsar,” whispered Mikhail, feigning a look of regal imperiousness and taking pen and note pad from his pocket. “American coffee will be always available in all the royal offices, with unlimited refills. Everything else can be traditional Russian. But no modern kingdom can possibly be properly governed without American coffee for the leaders.”

Mariya laughed out loud, and her eyes twinkled.

“I can already see why the Russians might be skeptical about placing

⁹⁹ Described online at <http://www.yachtstandart.com/standart-mainframe.htm>, link verified March 26, 2011.

an American on their throne.”

“Well, we can expect to be interrogated extensively, both by friends and adversaries. And it will all be published, for the entire world to ponder.”

“Misha, when can we go on this wonderful cruise?”

“Don and I are thinking that just after Labor Day will be the best time. On the Great Lakes, summer doesn’t really set in until July when the lakes have warmed up, and then they retain their heat and keep things lovely until late September.

“Labor day this year will be Monday the seventh of September. We will set sail up the Detroit River on Wednesday the ninth, crossing Lake Saint Clair, and by the weekend we’ll be at Alpena on Lake Huron. We will visit a private hunting club in the northeastern Michigan wilderness, where I plan to do some shooting, and we’ll go touring on the Standart’s fleet of Harley-Davidson motorcycles.

“Then on Monday we’ll dock at Mackinac Island, in the straits where Lake Huron joins Lake Michigan. On the island, no motorized vehicles are permitted, so we will go by horse-drawn carriage from the boat dock to The Grand Hotel, the world-famous historic white-columned hotel boasting the world’s longest porch.

“Don has arranged for a Tuesday evening formal ball with a live orchestra playing waltzes, just like at the Romanov Nobility Ball. Most of the Romanov’s have been invited, in fact. Leading politicians and business people are also invited, and Don has bought out the entire hotel, which was easier to arrange during mid-week.”

“How magnificent! But ... another royal ball so soon? People will begin to think we are an item.”

“Who can tell, perhaps we will be, after a few days at sea together.”

Mariya blushed, beautifully.

“Now wait ‘til you hear the rest of the agenda,” Mikhail continued. “On Wednesday, which begins our second week, we will set sail for Chicago, stopping off at Beaver Island for a day of hiking and cycling on Thursday, and then on to Charlevoix for the night, where we will water-ski on sandy-bottom Lake Charlevoix on Friday.

“Some say it is the most beautiful lake in the world. On Saturday we’ll dock at Traverse City, and drive the fifteen miles out to the Interlochen Arts Academy, where you will repeat portions of your organ and piano performance from Moscow and Kalamazoo. It’s already been announced to the students there.”

“Oh I will, will I? And what will you perform?”

“Excerpts from Tchaikovsky’s ‘Nutcracker’, arranged by Kiril Romanov for four hands and two feet – you on piano and me on organ, like we did together in New York.”

“But no solo for you?”

“Oh, I may also sing a popular Russian-themed love song, also recently heard at a certain ball in New York, if I can find anyone to accompany me.”

“I see.”

“Yes, and then we set sail for Ludington on Sunday after Mass on board, arriving Monday. We can climb the huge sand dunes at the state park there. Tuesday night we will dock off South Haven, and on Wednesday we’ll take a day trip to a local winery. Then on Thursday we’ll dock at Benton Harbor and have dinner at your parents’ favorite restaurant, Tosi’s, in Stevensville. Early Friday morning we will set sail for Chicago, arriving on Friday afternoon.

“From the Chicago Harbor we will be transported by stretch limousine to the Chicago Hilton Hotel for another royal ball, again arranged by Don Brown, with an orchestra playing waltzes. A number of Romanovs and leading Chicago dignitaries will attend, including the Governor of Illinois, the Mayor of Chicago, and the Russian Consulate for Chicago. Our party will all stay at the Chicago Hilton Hotel Friday night, and then on Saturday afternoon Don Brown’s jet will fly us back to Detroit.”

“You don’t think these royal ball photo ops are designed by Don Brown’s public relations people as obvious backdrops for any special press conferences, just in case we have anything to announce, do you?”

“Not a chance!” laughed Mikhail. “Don and I would never dream of such a plot. A romantic ten-day cruise on the Great Lakes in the world’s largest private yacht hardly seems like an obvious scheme to sweep a young girl off her feet.”

“Uh huh. And what will my parents say when their eighteen-year-old daughter is whisked off for ten days – and nights – on a world-class yacht with a dashing former Marine war hero?”

“Hopefully they will say ‘Yes’ to Don’s invitation for them to come along with us. My brothers are coming along too. Vladimir will bring his wife Olga, while their six young children stay with friends from the Cova homeschool enrichment program. Kiril will say daily Mass for us. We’ll have formal meals together most of the time with both our families. Your parents will get the master luxury suite, and the other four luxury suites will be assigned to you, Vladimir and Olga, Kiril, and me.

“The twenty guest staterooms will be occupied by singles and couples from the Cova parish whom Don wishes to thank for their dedicated service to the parish. His household staff are organizing a two-week homeschool camp for their children at Camp Sancta Maria¹⁰⁰ up in Gaylord, which is unoccupied after Labor Day. The children will have daily Mass, and outdoor sports activities including horseback riding, intermingled with their homeschool study sessions.

“So we will sail the Great Lakes in the company of our families and good friends from my family’s parish, which is also your two brothers’ parish. Good company and private time together when we want it. By the time that trip is over, I will be defenseless against you, Misha. Then you’ll pop the question and I won’t be able to say ‘No.’”

“There is no legal drinking age enforced on board a private yacht at sea. Hopefully that will help to lower your resistance, and impair your

¹⁰⁰ www.campsanctamaria.org

judgment just enough.”

“We are going to be praying every day for Heaven’s guidance.”

“There will be daily Mass and Rosary on board. And priestly consultation will be available at all times.”

“Can I trust the advice of a priest who is your brother?”

“No. He may reveal too many things about me, since he will be bound to look out for the good of your soul. So probably I won’t stand a chance of convincing you to marry me.”

“It’s God Who has to do the convincing, Misha. So far, I think He’s already made a big head start.”

“Now, don’t terrify me before we even set sail, young lady.”

The waiter grunted slightly as he poured Mikhail’s fourth cup of American coffee, and Mariya’s third. Mikhail indicated that they were finished except for an after-dinner shot of vodka for him, and sparkling grape juice for her, to toast the end of their evening.

Soon the youthful couple were back in Mikhail’s BMW and on their way downtown to the Peterson condominium. Once home, Mariya enthusiastically recounted the exciting news of the upcoming cruise to her parents. Given the intense press scrutiny that they were all beginning to experience, there was no chance that either George or Katarina or Mariya was likely to encounter any opposition from important superiors at their respective universities for their sudden September absence.

If anything, their emerging popularity in the public eye would only be good for the reputations of their already-well-respected schools. And if insanely jealous colleagues who were not their superiors should become disgruntled, well, that was all in a day’s routine at any university on the planet.

Chapter Twenty-One
Monday, July 20, 2015.
A Month after the Consecration.
Orthodox-Catholic Cathedral of Christ the Savior,
Moscow, Russian Federation.

It was late July in Moscow, a far northern capital where summer nights last about seven hours and average summer temperatures range from the fifties to the seventies Fahrenheit. At noon, a brilliant blue sky glimmered in the celestial vault above the Russian capital metropolx. Lately, it seemed, the sun had shone with an unusual intensity upon Holy Mother Russia: today, the gold leaf shimmering on the onion domes of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior almost blinded hapless motorists passing by on the riverfront parkway.

Inside the cathedral complex, Patriarch Filaret III of Moscow and all the Russias was convening a historic luncheon meeting. He was joined by the Most Reverend Nicholas Bogmolov, D.D., the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Moscow; Vasily Alexandrovich Polzin, President of the Russian Federation; and several trusted staff assistants from each Church and from the federal government. The topic of their meeting was how to bring about the practical aspect of the reunion of their two Churches.

From a spiritual standpoint, the reunion had taken place already, suddenly and obviously miraculously. But from a practical perspective, the mechanics of uniting the two huge bureaucracies would take time. The Holy Father had asked these men to draft a set of regulations for the Orthodox Rite in the Roman Catholic Church, so that nothing would need to be changed for the Orthodox except those few very minor matters that actually clashed with Catholic doctrine. They had already agreed to study the recent transition of the Anglican Use Catholics, who had returned to Rome from the Church of England and had kept their traditions and liturgy. The main practical issues seemed to be rules for marriage, both for the laity and for priests.

In terms of marriage, the Orthodox had always frowned upon divorce as a necessary evil, and agreed easily that they could establish a tribunal parallel to the one operated by Rome. The issue would be whether a particular marriage could honestly be declared never to have been valid in the first place, since in the Catholic view divorce from a valid marriage was impossible. Contraception also proved to be an issue easy to reconcile: the true Orthodox view always was the same as the Catholic view, except among a minority of liberal Orthodox clergy. When *Humanae Vitae* had been issued by Pope Paul VI in 1968, condemning artificial contraception, it had been lauded by Orthodox hierarchs and theologians all around the world. Here, noted Filaret, was an obvious area where Rome was going to help the Orthodox people get back on the track of true Orthodoxy. And the

recent self-elimination of the liberal wing of Catholic bishops would help enable the Catholic Church to get back on the same correct path as well.

Another issue was marriage for the clergy. In the Orthodox tradition, married men could be accepted as priests; but once ordained, unmarried priests could not later choose to marry. A bishop could only be chosen from among unmarried priests, and priests who became widowed could not remarry. These same rules had been agreeable to the Anglican Use Catholics when they returned to union with Rome. The Orthodox would maintain these same rules, since the Roman Rite rules against married priests represented custom within that rite, and not universal doctrine. All agreed that the best condition for a priest was celibacy, since he could devote his full time to his flock.

The largest areas for discussion involved tenets of the Faith that had been declared dogmas by Rome after the tragic schism of 1054. On close examination, it was not that the Orthodox actually denied the Catholic dogmas. They simply had grown accustomed to saying that they could not know definitively whether or not the dogmas were correct, because after the schism the Orthodox, not having the Pope, had never been able to convoke a valid Church council at which they could settle any doctrinal questions. Historically, two issues had loomed great: whether the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, or only from the Father; and whether the Blessed Virgin Mary was Immaculate from the moment of Her conception, or only after She conceived the Son of God in Her womb. Now, with no status of separation to defend, the Orthodox at all levels were finding no problem admitting that the Catholic position was entirely consistent with the Orthodox liturgy and with opinions of the ancient fathers of the Church which Catholic and Orthodox had always claimed in common.

President Polzin noted that, up until now, the Russian Federation had been officially Orthodox, but that it was not an Orthodox Confessional State. The government had simply acknowledged that the majority of Russians self-identified as Orthodox, even if most had been non-practicing. But the government had also listed several other religions with a long history in Russia, which were officially recognized and allowed to function without any strict limits. These included Islam, Judaism, and some Protestant sects. Catholics had been viewed as breakaway Orthodox, seeking to steal sheep from the one true Church of Russia, and so were officially restricted. Now, the vast majority of the Russian people was reverting to the practice of the Orthodox Faith, and were clamoring for Russia to become a confessional state.

“Almost all the people being interviewed on the streets are saying they want Russia to once again become an Orthodox Confessional State, but this time in union with the Pope in Rome. They want the government to be run according to Orthodox principles, and they even want to have their Christian king back. What is new is that they want the Pope to come from Rome and crown the new Tsar, and they want to make sure that

the policies of the Orthodox government are completely in harmony with Catholic social teaching.”

“Truly, what we are witnessing is a miracle,” agreed Filaret.

“How do the news organizations explain it?” asked Archbishop Bogmolov.

“The best answer is that they can’t,” said President Polzin. “But they do admit that, if one takes at face value all that was reported about Fatima, one can only conclude that, very shortly after the consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary by the Pope and all the Catholic bishops in union with him, the overwhelming majority of the Russian people underwent a profound change of heart. The Fatima literature explains that when Jesus appeared to Sister Lucy in Spain, in 1936, He told her that He wanted the whole world to know that Russia had been converted by the intercession of His Blessed Mother, so that the world would come to place devotion to Her Immaculate Heart alongside devotion to His Sacred Heart. What has happened can’t be explained by any human means. It is obvious that we have witnessed an unprecedented miracle from Heaven. The people in the mainstream media all know this, because they are intelligent people. But they can’t bring themselves to say so explicitly.”

“You know what is remarkable to me?” asked Archbishop Bogmolov. “The Immaculate Conception was one of the two bogus reasons used to justify the independence of the Orthodox Church from Rome. And Heaven placed that very issue, the Immaculate Heart of Mary, at the epicenter of Russia’s miraculous conversion.”

“The other issue was the *filioque* clause of the Nicene Creed,” noted Filaret, “saying that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son. Now, suddenly, the Orthodox no longer have any problem about this. People can never get the truth about Jesus quite right until they first get the truth about the Blessed Virgin Mary right. ‘*Ad Jesum per Mariam,*’ you Catholics would always say: ‘To Jesus through Mary.’ Now, at last, we Orthodox get it right too.”

“Your Excellencies,” said President Polzin, “we must address some practical issues. One, people are clamoring for a Christian government, and they remember that Russia has a deeply-rooted tradition of Christian kings dating back to the Baptism of Prince Vladimir in 988, when Russia first became a Christian state. They say the Romanov’s ruled Russia well for three hundred and fifty years, right up until godless, unchristian infiltrators from outside the nation came and engineered the atheistic revolution in 1917. They remember that God always chose the king by dynastic succession, and they have been noticing the recent surfacing of the American physician, Mikhail Romanov, in the world news.”

“Could he be a plant by the enemies of Russia?” asked a Russian presidential aide. “They say he was an American war hero. Russians don’t trust the United States military machine. After the Cold War Russia kept its word and withdrew its military presence from all of Eastern Europe. But the United States reneged on its part of the agreement, and moved

right in, expanding NATO right up to the borders of Russia. That is hardly a recipe for preparing the Russian people to accept an American Tsar.”

“There is no chance at all that Dr. Romanov is a United States government agent,” said Filaret. “We checked out his genealogy, and he is without doubt the foremost candidate for the Romanov throne according to the rules of the dynasty as they existed up until 1917. What impresses me is this: until very recently, he had absolutely no interest in claiming any position among the Romanov family in exile. He spent his life in service to others: a talented musician thrilling others with the beauty of his music; a consummate athlete and United States Marine who was wounded in battle rescuing others and was decorated by the United States President for his valor; a skilled physician who teaches both in America and in Russia, and who has organized compassionate medical missions to some of Russia’s most remote and underserved backwaters. No, he has all the characteristics one would expect in one chosen by God to lead Russia into a new era of Christian peace and prosperity. Up until recently, the fact that he converted from Russian Orthodox to Roman Catholic as a teen would have been an impediment. But now, the fact he is grounded in both traditions is a huge advantage.”

“Well, what about his girlfriend, then?” persisted the aide. “She might just be a ‘gold digger’ hoping to go along for the ride. It is all just too perfect.”

This remark caused President Polzin to remember that this aide was a personal protégé of his anti-religious Prime Minister, Daniil Mikhailov.

“Not a chance there, either, my friend,” replied Filaret. “We also thoroughly investigated her genealogy, and discovered that she is a full European princess of royal blood, and a suitable consort for a Tsar. If Mikhail Romanov marries her in the Orthodox – uh, or Catholic – Church, their children would inherit full rights to the Russian throne. She didn’t even know about her royal heritage until I myself informed her parents, who are now friends of mine.”

“Too weird,” said the aide. “And now even Prime Minister Mikhailov is beginning to soften on this religion thing. Where are we going to get practical heads who can run a modern country instead of dreaming fairy tales?”

“I can see that only the vast majority of Russians have converted, and not every last one,” said Filaret, scowling at the aide.

“Right now, gentlemen, Russia is still officially a secular democracy,” said President Polzin. “Since it seems obvious from the daily polls that the majority of the Russian people want to restore the Romanov dynasty to power, we should set up a special referendum so the people can vote for the new Tsar. We could have one candidate, and the option to write in anyone else people might like. At the same time we can ask what form of government they prefer: Christian autocracy; Christian constitutional monarchy; or a Christian republic with a ceremonial monarch, like Great Britain. Again, people could also write in any other idea they might prefer.

That would settle two questions at once.”

“The polls are showing a growing desire for Christian autocracy,” said Filaret, “like Russia always had in the past. People are saying they are tired of ‘the best government money can buy,’ because it always gets bought by ‘big money.’ So-called ‘democracy’ can’t ever work properly at the national level, because it always becomes a slick disguise for an oligarchy of un-elected money-changers. A republic can work, but carries the same danger of ‘big money’ buying out the political parties, as has happened in every Western ‘democracy.’ The Russian people want to avoid that. Some are talking about a parliament to serve as an advisory body to the Tsar, to help him know what each local region wants and needs. But they want one good man, chosen by God, who is a devout Christian and above party politics, to make and enforce the laws.”

“Some are talking about the former Holy Roman Empire and its successor, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, as a good model,” said Archbishop Bogmolov. “It was an autocratic Catholic Confessional State. There, more than one hundred local ethnic groups enjoyed self-rule in almost everything, while the empire mostly provided protection against encroachments from neighboring groups or from external aggressors. Taxes were minimal, and served to provide military protection, roads, and a few other empire-wide projects that could not be done better at the local level. The Catholic principle of subsidiarity was followed explicitly: all decision-making was done at the most local level possible. There was no expectation of uniformity among local regions, except that all were required to provide freedom, justice, and equity, and to officially confess the one true and universal Catholic religion. The degree of freedom and local self-rule and self-sufficiency can hardly be imagined by those who are oppressed to live in today’s modern ‘democracies.’ Today’s so-called ‘free’ governments try to micro-manage everything from on high, and to enforce a stifling sameness in all localities through endless regulations and enforced uniformity of thought.”

“So you think a Christian autocracy might actually fly in a national referendum?” gasped the aide. “Can you imagine what the news media would say?”

“Do we actually care what they say anymore?” countered Filaret. “I am much more interested in what Heaven has to say.”

“And, all of a sudden, most of the Russian people seem to agree with you,” said Archbishop Bogmolov.

“Okay, so we hold a referendum soon,” said President Polzin. “But what about some sort of parliament?”

“Well, we’ve all seen what an unmitigated disaster modern nations have gotten with elected bodies of full-time career politicians,” said Filaret. “Now modern Russia is heading in the same direction, with emerging political parties seeking to sell special favors in exchange for obscenely excessive funding from ‘big money’ interests.”

“Even under the last Tsar, there was a parliament,” noted the aide.

“Yes,” said President Polzin, “after the revolutionary uprisings of 1905, when outside agitators stirred up riots, Tsar Nicholas gave in to a partially-elected, partially-appointed ‘Duma.’ But the Tsar retained the right to override this legislature, and so remained an autocrat. When problems arose, he disbanded it to make clear who had the power.”

“The real point is for the ruler to have accurate, unbiased information about what is going on, and what needs to be done, in each local region,” said Archbishop Bogmolov. “Tsar Nicholas attempted to send personal scouts out into his empire, but they tended to be bought off and corrupted, so that it was difficult for him to gather accurate information. Like Austro-Hungarian Emperor Franz Josef, he tried to meet with common people on a regular basis, but corruptible aides largely controlled access to him.”

“What is needed,” said President Polzin, “is a national advisory body, composed of persons who cannot make politics into a career, and who must lead productive and highly moral lives back in the communities they claim to represent. Such an advisory body should only meet twice a year, for no longer than a month, and might also be on-call in case of a national emergency. Each member should be elected directly by the local community, and should be required to be self-employed full-time in a small business employing a moderate number of workers.”

“Yes, and such members should have to pass a religious test, and be certified by their local bishop,” said Archbishop Bogmolov. “In a Christian Confessional State, no one can be forced to convert to the one true Faith, but neither can they be trusted with an important office if they are unwilling to submit to the stringent moral requirements of the Faith. Those who reject the Faith are rejecting the truth, and therefore are not to be trusted with high office. The same holds true of professed Catholics who are unrepentant public sinners, who publicly flaunt or deny Church teaching.”

“The sort of advisory body you gentlemen propose would naturally consist of persons of exceptional integrity,” said Filaret. “With people like that to rely on for information, a Christian Tsar could make good decisions that would be well accepted locally.”

“In modern democracies,” said President Polzin, “candidates seek elected positions because they crave power and money. Then once they get in office, they try to find ways to enrich themselves in exchange for unjust favors to others. After they leave office, they are often given enormously over-paid positions requiring no real work, as a payback for their corrupt favoritism while in office. ‘Big money’ also rigs the elections, so that only candidates who can be bought, and have been bought, can ever get elected. Russia needs to find a better way, and what you gentlemen describe seems like the answer. A religious test for office would never be acceptable to the mainstream media outside Russia, but I believe it would be very much to the liking of the newly-converted Russian people.”

“So what have we decided, gentlemen?” asked Filaret.

“We’re going to have a national referendum to choose a Tsar,” groaned

the aide, “and to choose whether he will be an autocrat. We’ll also ask whether the people want a new part-time Duma, strictly as an advisory body for the Tsar. Duma members have to have real jobs and have to be certified by their local bishop, so they must be Catholics in union with Rome, either Orthodox Rite or Roman Rite or any of the other Catholic Eastern Rites.”

“Okay. Now the next issue is the economy,” said President Polzin. “You can’t base a Christian state on fake money and usury.”

“What?” said the aide. “That’s how the whole world works nowadays!”

“Precisely. But Russia is not the whole world. Russia is about to become the modern world’s first Christian Confessional State. Russia will be different. Russia will lead the way in looking out for the interests of the common man and his family. And the first way a nation can do that is to have real money as money.”

“And what is real money?” asked Filaret.

“A real commodity which has a universally agreed stable value and which is easily exchangeable in divisible quantities,” said President Polzin. “Something you can’t create out of nothing in unlimited quantities. Something that imposes the discipline of fundamental honesty upon all sectors of the economy equally, including the government and the banks.”

“Sounds suspiciously like the barbaric relic, gold,” moaned the aide. “Or maybe silver, which is just as bad.”

“The Sacred Scriptures take it for granted that gold and silver are money,” said Filaret. “It was gold from the Magi that funded the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt. Thirty pieces of silver were enough to buy the betrayal of Christ from Judas. The Roman coin with Caesar’s image and superscription, which was presented to Christ for inspection when He was asked about the lawfulness of paying taxes, was certainly made of precious metal. It was not until the latter third of the Twentieth Century that anyone seriously imagined that real money could be paper instead of precious metal.”

“Letters of credit existed even in the ancient world,” said President Polzin, “but they represented the fact that real money existed on deposit somewhere and could be exchanged for the paper on demand. Counterfeit certificates of deposit were criminal, and severely punished, because they threatened the integrity of the economy. They threatened to reward the vice of avarice and to mock the virtue of diligence in labor. The Church has always condemned usury, the practice of loaning out money and then demanding back more than was loaned. Such a practice tends toward the same problem: rewarding avarice and punishing honest labor.”

“The Catholic Church has held that the lender must be at risk with the borrower,” said Archbishop Bogmolov, “so that the lender will be motivated to help the borrower succeed in his endeavor. That way, the lender would have a just claim to his share of the profits. But if the enterprise should fail, then the lender must forfeit what he has loaned out. That motivates lenders to perform due diligence and only loan where

there is a realistic likelihood of success for the borrower. Lenders at risk can't enslave hapless borrowers by enticing them into bad loans, and then demanding payment even when the enterprise fails. Investing in stocks is completely moral, because the lender is at risk with the borrower. But blindly lending money at interest is a sin, which means that interest-bearing bank accounts, risk-free by government insurance, are probably unethical. But money market funds are relatively ethical, because one presumes the fund management is doing due diligence before they lend funds to enterprises, and the fund is at risk with its borrowers if they go bankrupt."

"The real problem is one of scale," said Filaret. "When most businesses are locally owned and operated, local investors can be directly involved. Small local businesses might be a little bit less efficient than huge, centralized conglomerates, but the social benefits they produce far outweigh that deficiency. Small, locally owned businesses employ people whom they know, and they tend to value them as human beings and often as friends. They tend to keep basic wages higher, and to reasonably limit compensation to the upper management. Small businesses normally don't expend a lot of energy in policy and procedure, because management works right alongside the front-line workers. Actually, excessive government regulation of business tends to make the cost of doing small business prohibitive, by requiring excessive policy and procedure, so that only huge conglomerates can afford to comply with all the regulations."

"Back to money," said President Polzin. "Imagine this: there was a period of more than one hundred fifty years, when the British Empire was on the gold standard, without any inflation at all. Actually, there was very gradual deflation, which tended to slowly enrich the common man who saved a little bit over time. Saving was rewarded, whereas debt was deadly because the unpaid balance actually increased in value over time. But in the corrupt money system in place in the world now, saving is punished, and debt is rewarded, because of continuous inflation. And that inflation, caused by a constant steady increase in the amount of money in circulation, is a stealth tax levied on the common man, and is possible only with worthless paper money that can be created out of nothing without limit. In contrast, the amount of gold and silver mined increases only very slowly over time, and so the value of gold and silver money tends to remain fixed and reliable. Real money protects and rewards the common man, and drastically limits the ability of avaricious money-changers to extract wealth from those who produce real goods and services through their labor. The new Russia must have gold and silver as money. God's money."

"But if the rest of the world remains on a fiat-currency, fake-money basis, how can Russia survive?" asked Archbishop Bogmolov. He seemed surprised the aide had not asked this, but then supposed the aide was reluctant to call the world's fake money by its real name.

"Russia is unique," said President Polzin. "She is blessed with

unmatched natural resources, including fresh water, oil, natural gas, vast mines for precious and industrial metals, and vast agricultural lands. She is both the breadbasket and the major supplier of energy for herself and also much of Europe. Since the implosion of the Soviet Union, she has strictly limited her military expenditures, and as a result she has no significant national debt. She has quietly amassed one of the world's largest reserves of physical gold and silver, as a potential basis for a sound new currency. She is poised to become industrialized, and stands at a crossroads where she can either opt for takeover by huge international corporations, or she can opt to favor small, locally-run productive enterprises that favor humanity over mammon. In one sense, Russia does not really need other nations. Possibly no other nation is as ready as Russia to adopt Christian principles for her new social organization, because Russia is uniquely ready to be completely self-sufficient for a good long while."

"Every nation ends up having to buy some things," retorted the aide.

"Well said. But if Russia goes on a gold standard, it will mean that she will try to buy from other nations only as much value as she sells to them. That's known as 'balance of payments.' She will demand payment in gold from nations that buy more from her than they sell to her. She won't accept anything but real money, gold, in payment. She will also avoid buying more from any one nation than she sells to them, because she would also have to pay them in real money, gold. As Russia's production of quality products increases, then her ability to buy more will increase as she sells more. But Russia's wheat, oil, gas, coal, and other natural resources are already in such high demand from other countries that Russia can take time to develop the small, local business model, and easily keep her payments balanced."

"In other words, the national economy will be run just the same as a household budget," observed Filaret. "With complete honesty."

President Polzin then spoke.

"Okay, to sum up, gentlemen: we elect a Tsar, make him a Christian autocrat, set up an advisory body excluding career politicians and persons resisting the one true Faith, establish gold and silver as money, outlaw usury, and encourage small, locally-owned businesses. What about education and health care?"

"Education is the primary responsibility of parents," said Archbishop Bogmolov. "Parents have complete rights to oversee the education of their children, and they will answer to God for it. So homeschooling would be the natural form of education. But local cooperative efforts can be good, provided they are based upon the Faith. Government schools are inherently dysfunctional, and tend toward evil outcomes. So, the government's business in education is to stay out of it. It needs to be left up to parents and to the Church. Schools operated by the Church may be ideal, but they too must be directed at the most local level possible. Now, higher education may require universities and trade schools, but these too should be locally run and guided by the Church rather than the

government. Universities were invented by the Catholic Church, because the Church has always been about the pursuit of truth.”

“But don’t people need the government to pay for education?” asked the aide.

“No. Local communities can figure out how to fund what they need. Possibly there can be a national scholarship system to reward high academic achievers pursuing needed fields that do not pay well. But if primary and secondary education have been excellent, most men will be better off to attend a trade school, and then enter a labor guild that protects their employment and guarantees a living wage for honest work. Only a minority of men are gifted scholars who should go on to a university.”

“Well, everybody has a right to health care,” said the aide. “So the government has to pay for that.”

“You can’t have a ‘right’ to the fruits of another man’s labor,” countered Archbishop Bogmolov. “Health care comes from the work of doctors and nurses and research scientists. Men have a right to social justice, and justice demands that communities find ways to take care of those who cannot take care of themselves, such as widows, orphans, and the infirm.

“But most of the high cost of modern health care comes from the profit-skimmers, money-changers who produce nothing of real value, and from greedy lawyers who pretend that life should be risk-free and that money (a good percentage of which always goes to the lawyers) can somehow compensate for physical or psychological injuries. Health care cooperatives run in local communities, and supervised directly by those who use the local system, seem to be the best plan.”

“Does anyone ever think that the very concept of a ‘corporation’ is demonic?” asked Filaret. “I mean, is it good to pretend that a company can go on existing as a fictional ‘legal person’ apart from real souls who must answer to God on judgment day for what they have done and what they have failed to do?”

“I see what you are thinking,” said Archbishop Bogmolov. “We moderns have all been brainwashed into thinking that fake money and fake persons are the greatest advances in economic history. And really, corporate governments are just as bad. The government in Heaven is personal – One God in Three Persons. Earthly governments should reflect that reality, and also be persons, real souls who must answer to God.

“And companies should be real persons too. Now, if you avoid inheritance taxes, then when people who run companies die, their heirs, who are also real people, can easily continue the enterprise. But you always have someone in charge who must answer to God. And finally, if you replace fake money with real money, then natural limits on the amount and value of the currency promote a fundamental honesty that becomes universal throughout the economy. It gives the little man a level playing field with the rich.”

“Summary time again, gents,” said President Polzin. “We elect a Tsar, make him a Christian autocrat, set up an advisory body excluding career politicians and persons resisting the Faith, establish gold and silver

as money, outlaw usury, and encourage small, locally-owned businesses. And we make education a parent-based enterprise with local cooperatives permitted, but no government involvement. Finally, we make health care a local enterprise to be worked out by local people as they see fit. Anything else?"

"Well, of course the Tsar may see fit to enforce a social code of conduct that is becoming to a Christian nation," said Filaret. "The Church will simply advise him if he is making any serious errors which could place his own soul in jeopardy before God. No doubt he will limit free speech in certain areas, since error cannot have equal rights with truth. There will be complete freedom for the one true religion, but not for other religions, which all contain at least some error.

"They may have to be tolerated but cannot be officially promoted in any way. Also, pornography would be forbidden, because it advocates immorality and is destructive of family life. The Tsar will also have to try to limit certain common but immoral behaviors that have caused Western civilization to implode, such as prostitution, homosexual acts, abortion, and unnatural methods of contraception.

"Equally important, laws will have to be enacted to positively encourage right behaviors. Marriage will be held in high esteem, and there will be a presumption that those entering into a sacramental marriage in the Church have consented to forfeit any right to a future divorce. Only non-Christians in a civil marriage could have a civil divorce.

"Local guilds will be encouraged, in order to foster the practice of a living wage that increases with the size of one's family, so that the generous procreation of children in large families is made practical, and so that women called to the vocation of full-time motherhood can be liberated from the need to work outside the home. And these ideas only represent a beginning, a few first thoughts."

"I propose that we form a work group," said President Polzin. "We can have regular weekly meetings at the Catholic cathedral. There is a vacant modern office building almost next door, which the government should lease as a temporary ministry to help facilitate the transition. The government, the Orthodox Church, and the Catholic Church should all work together in the new transitional ministry.

"I think we should name the ministry in honor of the Black Virgin of Russia, the Patroness of the Romanov dynasty. And we should invite the Pope to come to Moscow eventually as our honored guest, to bless the new work group and the nation. As soon as the new Tsar has been elected, he can become chairman of the group. Until then, I suppose I, as President, can be the acting chair."

There was immediate consensus that this seemed to be the right approach for the time being. The three leaders and their aides agreed to meet again in a week, and in the meantime to storm Heaven with prayers for wisdom and grace, so that they might serve the people of Russia with true honor and integrity.

Archbishop Bogmolov counseled them to remember young King Solomon, and read aloud the following passage from the Old Testament:

And behold that night God appeared to [Solomon], saying: Ask what thou wilt that I should give thee. And Solomon said to God: Thou hast shewn great kindness to my father David: and hast made me king in his stead. Now therefore, O Lord God, let thy word be fulfilled, which thou hast promised to David my father: for thou hast made me king over thy great people, which is as innumerable as the dust of the earth. Give me wisdom and knowledge that I may come in and go out before thy people: for who can worthily judge this thy people, which is so great?

And God said to Solomon: Because this choice hath pleased thy heart, and thou hast not asked riches, and wealth, and glory, nor the lives of them that hate thee, nor many days of life: but hast asked wisdom and knowledge, to be able to judge my people, over which I have made thee king, Wisdom and knowledge are granted to thee: and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and glory, so that none of the kings before thee, nor after thee, shall be like thee.¹⁰¹

“We must pray for our new Tsar,” concluded the Archbishop, “whomever he may prove to be, that, like Solomon, he will seek the will of God and the good of the people over whom God has called him to rule, rather than to preferentially serve himself and his immediate friends.”

“We must also be praying specifically for Doctor Romanov, the heir apparent,” said Filaret. “He appears to be a man of stellar character and profound Faith. Please remember, gentlemen, that Doctor Romanov was Orthodox in his youth, became Catholic on the threshold of young adulthood, and will be uniquely able to bridge the remaining gaps as we Orthodox grow into complete union with our Catholic brethren.”

“And we must begin praying for our Pope, too,” added President Polzin. “We Orthodox are not accustomed to this, but it is clearly the will of God. We must pray that the Holy Father will soon plan his first visit to Russia.”

All nodded in agreement, except the aide, who pretended not to have heard these closing remarks. And after that, they departed in silence, contemplating the momentous work before them and being moved to seek the face of God in prayer and supplication.

¹⁰¹ 2 Chronicles 1:7-12, DRV.

Chapter Twenty-Two

**Sunday Afternoon, August 9, 2015.
Federal Reserve Bank of New York,
Financial District, New York City.**

Dark storm clouds hovered over Manhattan Island, with frequent flashes of lightning and mounting winds that moaned and howled as they rounded the corners of the island's massive skyscrapers. Torrential rains began to fall, and men and women on the streets of the New York financial district, their umbrellas turned inside-out by the intense gusts, scurried for cover. Soon the streets were filled with water, as the storm sewers proved unable to keep up with the sudden outpouring of celestial wrath. Ten prominent American financial leaders, who had been *en route* to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York in limousines, experienced sudden trepidation as their vehicles became bogged down in traffic stalled by local flooding. Various objects that had broken loose from tall buildings came flying through the air, menacing their very bodily integrity. These were men accustomed to being in charge, men who had all practical concerns of daily life handled for them. They had staff who shopped, cooked, ran errands, cleaned and organized their homes and offices, and who arranged their schedules and transportation. They were the darlings of the mainstream financial media, celebrated for their "brilliance" and "savvy" and "consummate skill" in keeping the world's economy running smoothly. They were also routinely mocked, by a few very incisive commentators relegated to the fringes of cyberspace, as "the masters of the universe." But today, trapped in vulnerable automobiles in the midst of the most violent storm to blow through Manhattan in decades, they were being reminded that they were mere men, and quite mortal.

The Federal Reserve Bank of New York, at Thirty-Three Liberty Street in New York City's financial district, has long been the place where monetary policy in the United States is implemented, even though policies are mostly determined in Washington, D.C. by the Federal Reserve System Board of Governors. The current limestone edifice, opened in 1924, towers fourteen stories tall with an additional five stories below ground. Its stone exterior, suggestive of a Renaissance palace, has a fortress-like appearance intended to engender trust and confidence. The vast gold vault lies eighty feet below street level and fifty feet below sea level, on Manhattan bedrock, since its enormous weight could not be supported by any other foundation. The 'Fed,' as the bank is commonly called, claims that almost one quarter of the world's physical gold reserves lie secure within this vault. The reported gold stores include more than two hundred million troy ounces, weighing more than seven thousand English tons and valued at more than two hundred billion dollars. This gold reportedly belongs to more than thirty-six foreign governments, central banks, and official organizations, so that ownership of the gold can be transferred

between such owners on the books of the Fed without actually having to physically move the gold outside the vault.

However, the GAME organization (Gold Anti-Manipulation Exponents), headed by Patrick O'Malley, had long questioned whether the United States' gold in the Fed vault and in the Fort Knox repository was actually still there; and, if it was, whether much of it officially remained the property of the United States. Bizarre new terms such as "deep storage gold" had crept into the Fed's gold accounting reports in recent years, suggesting attempts to obfuscate and to divert attention from the fact that actual United States gold reserves had probably dwindled precipitously. The GAME organization believed that the Fed had loaned out much of its gold to bullion dealers, who then paid a miniscule rate of interest on the loans, and sold the gold into the physical metals markets at huge profits to themselves. The Fed would continue to list the gold on its books as an asset, because, theoretically, the Fed could call in the gold loans anytime it wished. In reality, the borrowers could not possibly buy back the gold they had borrowed and sold, since the price of gold had continued to increase substantially over time. In fact, over recent decades physical gold had shown a far better annual rate of return than either stocks or money markets, especially after adjusting for the real inflation rate of Federal Reserve Notes (commonly called "dollars"). This process of loaning out gold to be sold by bullion dealers served the interests of the Fed, because it kept the market value of gold suppressed by supplying physical metal to meet the growing global investor demand. If the demand could not be met, the price of gold would skyrocket, revealing the crumbling value of paper currencies. According to GAME, the Fed's "creative" accounting methods regarding United States gold reserves amounted to a huge Ponzi scheme.

More than a decade now past, international scandals had broken out when large gold bars sold through reputable dealers were found to be filled with cheap tungsten, which has a mass almost exactly equivalent to that of gold, and therefore could fool all but the most savvy inspectors. The Fed encouraged public tours of its gold vaults, during which visitors would view towers of gold bars stacked floor to ceiling in the manner typical of brick walls. The problem was, even if these bricks were covered with real gold on the outside, no routine independent audits were done to ascertain what these bars contained on the inside, or to determine whether large room-size piles of such gold bars were filled with real gold bars in the center of each pile, or only around the outside and on top. It would probably never occur to the average tourist that, in the Fed's vast, deep-underground vault, there might be substantially less gold than meets the eye.

Another disingenuous technique for suppressing the price of gold, which had been indirectly encouraged by the Fed, was the "paper gold" market. In this scheme, investors would purchase physical gold that was supposedly then stored for them in private vaults, and they would

be charged an annual fee for storage of their precious metal deposits. In reality, these depositories would operate on a fractional-reserve basis, so that by 2010 the London Gold Pool – the world’s flagship precious metals market which “fixed” (determined) the market price of gold twice daily – had to admit that their vaults contained only one ounce of physical gold for every one hundred ounces of “paper gold” that had been sold to investors through their operation. This, too, was a huge Ponzi scheme, since the number of ounces of gold that investors believed they owned in storage was many multiples of the amount of gold which has ever been mined and refined in the entire world in the entire history of civilization.

GAME had noticed a pattern over the previous decade or two, in which the BRIC nations (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) which tended to have no significant national debt, had been quietly buying and taking delivery of vast amounts of physical gold. Russia and China were also internally mining significant quantities of gold, some of which was added to national reserves, and some of which was routinely purchased by their citizens as secure savings. Most Western nations had allowed the Fed to store large portions of their gold reserves for them. But the BRIC nations had long since recognized that most of the Fed’s physical gold very probably was no longer present in its vaults, and that someday the whole corrupt Ponzi scheme would collapse. So the BRIC nations, especially Russia and China, had been amassing some of the world’s largest reserves of actual physical gold, stored within their own borders, and all assayed for purity and audited in complete transparency by independent firms. This was done as a way of increasing public confidence in the integrity of the national reserves.

Certain Arab nations had likewise built credible gold reserves in significant quantities and stored within their own borders. These nations had begun discussions about eventually issuing new currencies convertible into gold and/or silver at a fixed price, but this would mean breaking free from the stranglehold of the current world financial system, in which every nation’s currency was “backed” by the value of the United States dollar. The Arabs had not failed to note that, when Saddam Hussein had dared to begin selling Iraqi oil in exchange for Euros rather than exclusively in exchange for United States dollars, only two weeks had elapsed until the bombs began to fall over Baghdad. The Arabs judged that Hussein had been guilty of audaciously acting as if he ruled an independent sovereign state, rather than being the figurehead of a client state of the United States Federal Reserve. The BRIC and Arab nations knew that the United States would eventually destroy itself financially, like every previous empire in history, through military over-expansion leading to bankruptcy. When that happened, they would be ready with the physical gold needed to launch a new world financial system based on honest money.

GAME had not only pointed out the Arab insight about the fate of Iraq, but had noted that, just six months before he was shot, President John F. Kennedy had issued Executive Order 11110, calling for the issuance of

United States Notes. These were to be backed by the gold and silver of the United States Treasury, and would have a fixed value based on the value of the precious metals. This June 1963 order constituted a potential death warrant for the Federal Reserve (“Fed”), which is in reality a privately-owned bank having a monopoly on the right to counterfeit for profit. The Fed creates money out of nothing, calls it Federal Reserve Notes, and then loans it to the United States Treasury at interest. The interest, extracted from the United States taxpayer, goes back to continually enrich the fabulously wealthy, very private international families who own the Fed. Executive Order 11110 was intended to strip the Fed of its power to loan money to the United States government at interest.

Kennedy’s new United States notes were consistent with the Founding Fathers’ intent that the dollar had to be readily convertible into silver, a “dollar” having been defined in the original Coinage Act as a specific weight of silver at a specific purity. Most modern Americans have never seen a “silver dollar,” the standard of monetary value that was always in wide circulation prior to 1964. Common United States coins minted prior to that date were actually ninety-percent silver, and for obvious reasons have all disappeared into private collections. Four billion dollars worth of the new United States Notes had rolled off the printing presses at the United States Mint by the time Kennedy was assassinated in November 1963, but for reasons never publicly released they were taken out of circulation almost immediately after his death. Under his successor (the former governor of the very state wherein Kennedy was shot), Federal Reserve Notes, which have no basis in the Constitution, continued to serve as the official United States currency.

By 1968, old “silver certificates” remaining in circulation were no longer redeemed for silver coins, but only for paper Federal Reserve Notes. Like Hussein much later, Kennedy’s continued existence apparently could not be tolerated by “the masters of the universe,” the modern alchemists who had finally mastered the age-old quest to create paper “gold” out of base materials at very little or no cost. Whether these “alchemists” had any hand in Kennedy’s death remains unknown, but his sudden and untimely death had certainly been no cause for enduring sorrow in the marbled corridors of the New York Federal Reserve.

GAME had also noted the history of the founding of the Federal Reserve. In 1910 a well-documented but little-known secret meeting had taken place at a private hunting club on Jekyll Island, off the coast of Georgia.¹⁰² Several leading bankers and government officials had met there under the guise of a duck hunting expedition. Their real agenda was to devise an entirely new financial system for the United States, supposedly to prevent boom and bust cycles. The secret group included a powerful senator, a Harvard economist, several top bankers from New York, and representatives of Europe’s oldest and wealthiest banking families. Out

¹⁰² Griffin, G. Edward, *The Creature from Jekyll Island: A Second Look at the Federal Reserve*. See Bibliography.

of this meeting, steps were taken to replace Constitutional money, which had to be convertible into silver (and by implication gold), with a new currency, which eventually came to be called “Federal Reserve Notes.” These new notes represented loans from a new privately-owned “Federal Reserve Bank.” The United States Treasury, which would receive these notes, would then have to pay perpetual interest to the new private bank. When these plans were being railroaded through Congress, some argued that the new debt-based monetary system these men devised would rob the American people of their wealth – by stealth over time – through endless inflation, and would be able to support an agenda of perpetual warfare which would otherwise bankrupt any government. In 1917 Minnesota Congressman Charles A. Lindberg, Sr. (father of the famous aviator) introduced Articles of Impeachment¹⁰³ against the Board Members of the Federal Reserve, alleging conspiracy to violate the Constitution, but saw his efforts buried by a powerful Congressional committee. Gold was still to be retained by the United States government and the Fed as a theoretical reserve, but after 1933 the American people would no longer be allowed to own gold or to use it for transactions. After 1964, silver was also removed from circulation. Private gold ownership remained illegal for Americans until 1974, and by that time an entire generation had been conditioned to take worthless “fiat” currency for granted and to be suspicious of gold and silver as money.

Since gold is the traditional barometer alerting financially savvy investors to real inflation (i.e. excessive increases in the amount of money in circulation), and since the Fed had been inflating the supply of fiat dollars at astronomic rates in recent years in order to cover the mushrooming United States budget deficits, the Fed needed to hide its practice of massive inflation by suppressing the market price of physical gold. That way they could prevent, or at least delay, the inevitable “crash” of the United States dollar (and all of the world’s other “fiat” currencies “backed” by the United States dollar) into worthlessness. GAME had long asserted that this gold price suppression scheme, and the profligate production of Federal Reserve Notes which it was intended to mask, constituted the world’s absolute ultimate Ponzi scheme and could only come to a very bad end.

The meeting of the financial leaders at the Fed had been scheduled for twelve o’clock noon, but had been delayed until one o’clock because of the traffic snarls caused by the severe storm. In the Board Room of the storied bank, ten of the most powerful men in the world took their places around the massive board room table. Made in 1935 of solid walnut, the table bore the seal of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York in a finely crafted burl-mahogany circular inlay set into its center. Ornate metalwork and glass chandeliers flooded the room with light, contrasting

¹⁰³ Lindberg, Charles A., Sr, *The Congressional Record*, February 12, 1917, pages 3126-3130. See Bibliography. One might note that, in the same year as the Russian Revolution and the apparitions by Our Lady of Fatima, a *de facto* quiet revolution also took place in the U.S. – unconstitutionally laying important groundwork for a new world financial system, which in time would facilitate the emerging New World Order, the secular humanist leviathan which is based on “the errors of Russia.”

with the gray gloom seen through the tall windows. The street outside was littered with broken pieces of buildings, damaged automobiles, and scattered tree branches. The flooding had mostly subsided, but traffic was still slowed by these many large obstacles. A somber tone could be sensed in the silent chamber, as men in expensive suits silently took their places and waited for the anonymous chairman of the meeting to arrive.

When a trim, elderly man dressed in a very expensive suit strode briskly into the room and took his seat at the head of the table, the silence persisted, and for two minutes no one spoke. Most of the men at the table thought they recognized him as the scion of a fabulously wealthy European banking family whose vast global financial dealings had helped to shape world history for at least two hundred years. Suddenly the chairman broke the silence, and a stenographer began transcribing a secret record of the proceedings.

“Gentlemen, thank you all for coming together on short notice on a Sunday afternoon. Our business is sudden and serious, and in my judgment could not wait until we could clear our weekday schedules. Let the record reflect that it is Sunday, the ninth day of August in the year two thousand fifteen of the Common Era, at one o’clock in the afternoon, Eastern Daylight time, in New York City, in the Board Room of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. Present around this table are eleven men representing the apex of international finance. I am an anonymous senior member of a European family which prefers no media attention, and which is a major stockholder in the Federal Reserve System. Also present are the Chairman of the Federal Reserve System, the Secretary of the United States Treasury, the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, the President and Co-Chief Operating Officer of the New York Stock Exchange, and the chairman or chief executive officer from each of the three largest banks and three largest corporations doing business in the United States.

“Recent world events have unfolded in a manner entirely inexplicable to all the models by which we have operated for the past several decades. Our computer-driven economic schematics suddenly have proven unable to adjust to the swift changes in the politics of the Russian Federation. Pronouncements coming out of the new ‘Ministry of the Black Virgin of Russia’ suggest an imminent Russian offensive against our worldwide financial hegemony. The Russians appear to have suffered a bizarre sea change in the dynamics driving their decision-making. Previously, like every modern nation, they were guided by the ‘bottom line’ – that is, by what would produce the most profit for those elite investors astute enough to ‘manage’ the markets for the benefit of their stockholders and top-level employees. Men of particular intelligence found ways to amass sufficient capital to form corporations large enough to keep the government under their control – government that would be amenable to enforcing rules that served their interests to the detriment of their competitors. Each of us came to the pinnacle of power in our respective organizations through a ruthless respect for the bottom line, and an acceptance of the need for most

capital in the world to be controlled by a small number of visionary men of legendary capabilities.

“It is such men who are gathered around this table. We have understood that the function of money was changed forever by the founding of this august institution in whose hallowed halls we are meeting today. In the past, money was merely a medium of exchange, a device for ensuring honesty and fairness in all transactions. While this transparency was popular with the little people, it also prevented the natural leaders – men who understand that those who control the money control those who appear to govern – from fulfilling their proper role as the inevitable masters of the world.

“Gentlemen, men who know how to maximize the production of money can wield power over everyone else. Now, some old-school economists still try to argue that real wealth is not money but valued goods and services in abundant supply, more than enough to meet the basic needs of all. But such an outdated view harks back to the notion of money as a mere medium of exchange.

“Gentlemen, we have come to understand that modern money is the ultimate source and measure of power. We have long accepted that modern democratic governments serve the purpose of entertaining the masses and diverting their attention from the real rulers, who much prefer to remain unnoticed and anonymous. The modern money system has permitted us to fashion political systems in all modern nations in which big money buys candidates in all parties ahead of elections, so that it matters not to us who wins elections.

“In every election, we always win and the little people always lose, but they don’t even realize it. This beautiful system has enabled a few of us, we who by intelligence and hardened will have climbed to the top, to lead lives of untold wealth and privilege, such as kings and queens of ages past could not even imagine.

“And now, just when the Red Chinese and the former Soviet bloc had finally come under the control of our worldwide monetary system, Russia has made shipwreck. Russia has tossed human wisdom aside, and chased after early Twentieth Century fairy tales and irrelevant ancient superstitions.

“Gentlemen, permit me to enumerate the threats, which Russia now proposes, to our continued control of the world. We have a mole inside the office of the Russian federal government, an aide to Prime Minister Mikhailov, who personally attends every important government meeting in Russia. In late July there was a preliminary meeting involving the Russian President, the Russian Orthodox Patriarch, and the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Moscow. Our mole, who served as an aide at that meeting, has reported the following critical information to us.

“First, Russia is threatening to revert to a hereditary autocracy, which could place real power in the hands of a succession of men who are not for sale to big money. This cannot be allowed to happen, especially in a powerful nation that controls a nuclear arsenal effectively rendering it

untouchable.

“Second, Russia is threatening to establish a new currency, honestly convertible into gold and silver, and completely independent of any other currency except gold bullion. Such a currency would be to the great benefit of the common man; but it would be greatly to the detriment of those who have grown accustomed to wielding the real power, behind the scenes, through calculated manipulation of the artificial ‘fiat currency’ money supply. We all understand that most of our wealth has come from our ability to know in advance what we are going to cause the markets to do, so that our bets on the so-called ‘free market’ almost always win.

“Our Russian comrades in high finance, who extracted much of the wealth of former Soviet era government enterprises for themselves, have learned these methods of surreptitious manipulation quite well. Like us, they too have been able to disguise their greed behind the façade of a fiat currency that continually inflates, thus slowly transferring wealth from the workers who create real products to the financial class who merely manipulate the markets.

“A sound currency would eliminate our ability to rig the markets, and would make our continuous stealth extraction of wealth from the little people exceedingly difficult to perpetuate. Under a regime of honest gold-convertible money we would be in great danger of being detected and recognized by the majority of people.

“Third, Russia is threatening to become a Catholic Confessional State, thus challenging the materialist and relativist principles by means of which we have controlled vast populations and blinded them to the injustice of our *de facto* plutocratic rule. Sexual libertinism, women’s ‘liberation,’ easy divorce, disparagement of traditional religion, vacuous education, and widespread recreational drug use have weakened the will of peoples all across the developed world.

“Any state that actively moves to restore old-fashioned Christian morality and stable social structures would rapidly become a formidable challenge to the continuation of our rule. The danger is that people in other nations would observe the Russian common people grow in wealth and freedom and personal contentment under such an unthinkable regime. Soon, peoples in many other nations would begin clamoring to emulate such a Russia, and our power and wealth would begin to fade. But the greatest danger is that someday such regressive regimes could even think to charge us, the very masters of the universe, with crimes against humanity!

“Fourth, Russia is threatening to hold a referendum to place on the Romanov throne an American physician and decorated war hero whose character appears to be impeccable. His demonstrated selflessness seems uniquely dangerous to our need to control world leaders through greed.

“This man, Doctor Mikhail Romanov, will have natural insight into our methods, since he has experienced the takeover of American medicine and the enslavement of physicians under the newest strong tentacle of our plutocratic empire. He has personal insight into our use of corrupt United States military personnel, men bought with money to serve as agents for

our international illegal drug delivery networks.

“In Afghanistan he uncovered one of our key smuggling rings operating out of his field hospital, and forced the military to actually court-martial some of our best men. He does not realize that when he was shot through the chest while rescuing fallen comrades in battle, it was ‘friendly fire’ from one of our agents that felled him.

“Unfortunately, his wound was serious but not permanently disabling, and he was rewarded with the glamour of a Purple Heart presented by the President. His brother is a very strict Catholic priest, and Doctor Romanov actually takes his Roman Catholic religion quite seriously. We must heed our predecessors’ sad experience with the only Catholic President of the United States, who because of his idealism and bravery actually acted to begin eliminating this very institution, the Fed, which is most necessary to the continuation of our power.

“The June 1963 J.F.K. debacle of United States Notes should serve as a warning: the world cannot afford even one powerful leader who actually places the imaginary Catholic God above the real god of power, which is money. Kennedy wasn’t perfect, but most people believe his character was far more dissolute than it was in reality because of our relentless efforts to taint the reputation of the man who dared to challenge the Fed.”

A discussion ensued, in which various participants expanded on the observations expressed by the anonymous chairman of the meeting. A general consensus was reached that the proposed new Tsar of Russia would constitute a direct threat to the existing financial and social systems of the developed world, systems which worked to the disproportionate advantage of men like those seated around the table.

Most felt that the referendum in Russia should be watched closely, and that, even though the Russian government was going to forbid lobbying and campaign funding, every effort should be made to influence the referendum against autocracy. And if Doctor Romanov should be endorsed as Tsar by the Russian people, steps would then have to be explored to ensure that he did not survive long enough to be crowned. For certain dedicated and talented men who faithfully served the lords of high finance, the elimination of unwanted rulers was, after all, an entirely routine matter.

Chapter Twenty-Three
Sunday, September 6, 2015,
Orthodox Feast of Saint Michael the Archangel.
Vatican City, Inside the City of Rome, Italy.

From an Aeroflot jetliner circling above the center of Rome, Patriarch Filaret III looked intently and with excitement out the window of his first class cabin seat. His heart thrilled as he identified the dome of Saint Peter's basilica, the head church of all Christendom, glimmering in the bright afternoon sun. He noted how the twin colonnades of Bernini, which extended out from the front of the basilica to enclose Saint Peter's Square, reminded him of a mother's arms reaching out to embrace her children as they came home from the far corners of the world.

As his eyes studied the sprawling cityscape below, he located the ruins of the ancient Roman Coliseum, still jutting skyward in oval walls of stone which enclosed the place where early Christian martyrs had been slaughtered by wild beasts as a form of public entertainment. For the first millennium all Christians had accepted the primacy of the successors of Peter, the Bishops of Rome, as the custodians of the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, given by Christ Himself to Saint Peter. Since the tragic schism of 1054, the Orthodox half of the Christian world had never been able to settle any new doctrinal disputes, because, being cut off from the authority of the Pope, they could not convoke a valid Church council. They could only profess doctrinal matters that had been settled by Church councils prior to 1054.

Filaret's breast was bursting with joy as his plane made its final approach into Rome. Soon, for the first time in a millennium, a Russian Orthodox Patriarch would kneel before the Pope and kiss the Fisherman's ring. Filaret felt nothing but sorrow for the senseless centuries of obstinate separatism. In his heart there echoed a silent paean of praise to Mary, She who told Bernadette Soubirous at Lourdes, "I am the Immaculate Conception." Filaret reached inside his shirt to finger the Miraculous Medal, suspended on a neck chain, which had been a recent gift from Archbishop Bogmolov at the Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Moscow.

Today was the sixth of September, which in the Orthodox Rite calendar was the Feast of Saint Michael the Archangel. Filaret prayed that the Holy Archangel would protect him and his nation through the times of turbulent change that lay ahead. Saint Michael and his legions of angels had prevailed against the corrupted heart of Lucifer the light-bearer and his legions of fallen angels. In response to Lucifer's "*non serviam*," Michael and the Heavenly Hosts had cast them out of Heaven and into the depths of hell. Filaret pondered how the world was filled with human souls, the majority of whom daily repeated in their hearts the fatal words of Lucifer: "I will not serve"; or more commonly, revealed by their

behavior their real attitude toward Christ: "We will not have this man to reign over us."¹⁰⁴ Human life was lived out in the physical world, but all the while a parallel warfare was enjoined between the hosts of Heaven and the demonic minions of hell, in a battle waged for the eternal destiny of each individual soul. The real struggle was "not against flesh and blood," Filaret reminded himself, but "against the spirits of wickedness in the high places."¹⁰⁵

As a new Roman Catholic Archbishop who remained a Russian Patriarch in the Orthodox Rite, Filaret was coming to Rome for his first *ad limina* visit face to face with the Pope. Every new Catholic Metropolitan or Archbishop, at some time during his first year in office, was required, if at all possible, to travel to Rome and meet the Pope. While there, a ceremonial strip of sheepskin called a "pallium" was placed on the bishop's shoulders, to represent his office as the shepherd of his local flock. In the Orthodox tradition a wider band of cloth, called an "omophor," was worn by Metropolitans, and Filaret had long since been invested with that. He was pleased to think that Pope Nicholas, after his election as Pope, had changed the form of the Catholic pallium, making it wider to more closely resemble its Orthodox counterpart.

An *ad limina* visit was a quinquennial requirement for all Catholic bishops, and would now include all Russian bishops in the Orthodox Rite of the Catholic Church. Every five years each bishop was expected to visit the thresholds of the tombs of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and to meet with the Pope to report on the state of his diocese. Filaret recalled that these visits were based on Saint Paul's report¹⁰⁶ in his letter to the Church in Galatia, that after three years of traveling abroad evangelizing he went up to Rome to see Peter and stayed with him for fifteen days. Filaret was moved to think that, after a thousand years of schism during which Orthodox bishops had never gone to Rome to see Peter's successors, now he was privileged to be the first among his brethren to make this historic journey. The minions of hell would be seething with rage at this event, and again he prayed to Saint Michael to protect and defend Holy Mother Russia, and to protect him as Russia's chief shepherd.

As Filaret exited the jet way into the crowded corridor of the Leonardo da Vinci Airport terminal, he was immediately approached by two smiling Catholic priests, who extended their arms and welcomed him with warm embraces.

"Welcome to Rome, Your Excellency," beamed Father John Herald, the elderly but spry personal assistant to Pope Nicholas.

"Welcome, Patriarch Filaret," smiled Father Ignacio Battista, the middle-aged pro-life activist who had secretly hosted the Pope overnight, in his Rome apartment, on the eve of the historic consecration. Father Battista was noted for his expertise as a tour guide for traditional Catholics

¹⁰⁴ Luke 19:14, DRV.

¹⁰⁵ Ephesians 6:12, DRV.

¹⁰⁶ Galatians 1:18.

making pilgrimages to Rome, and indicated to Patriarch Filaret that he would be at his disposal to acquaint him with the city and its history, art, and monuments.

“Your Excellency, you will be staying in the *Domus Sanctae Marthae*, within Vatican City,” explained Father Herald. “It is a simple dormitory built for the use of bishops during papal conclaves, with furnishings typical of a monastery. But you will be nearby the Holy Father and Saint Peter’s Basilica, and you will be insulated from the world except when you choose to face the media or to venture out into the city of Rome.”

“That will be perfect,” said Filaret. “I have no interest in a luxury hotel. I have come to pray, to demonstrate my filial submission to the Bishop of Rome, and to explore some of the ancient historic sites that Catholic and Orthodox Christians have always revered in common. I’ll admit that I was tempted to follow the example of the Holy Father, during his secret retreat in Detroit, and go out into the city in disguise. But I am also here before the eyes of the whole world, to demonstrate that the schism between the Catholic and Russian Orthodox Churches has finally come to an end. Therefore, I will have to let myself be seen in public, and will accept being hounded by the press and by enthusiastic faithful as my duty to Christ.”

Father Battista, the relative youth among the three priests, assisted in the retrieval of two very large suitcases from the luggage claim carousel. He understood that an Archbishop coming to Rome has to travel with multiple liturgical robes and various bulky cassocks, especially if he cannot count on borrowing anything because he will be staying among clergy from a different rite. Father Battista texted the two Swiss Guards, waiting in the airport’s cell phone lot in a black Vatican State SUV, to come around and pick them up at curbside. As they neared the exit from the luggage claim area, Filaret was approached by two Russians, a man and woman, who knelt to kiss his hand (the Orthodox counterpart to the Catholic custom of kissing a bishop’s ring). With tears in their eyes, they thanked him for his courage in coming to Rome to formalize the end of the schism.

“Do not thank me, my daughter and my son,” said Filaret. “Give thanks to the Theotokos, the Holy Mother of God, Mary All-Immaculate – uh, She Who identified Herself as the Immaculate Conception – for it was by Her intercession that this great miracle has come to pass in our day.”

Outside at the curbside, they stood for a moment waiting for their ride. A disheveled man with a Bulgarian accent walked briskly toward them, and as he approached said, “So here is the traitorous bishop who sells out the one true Orthodox Church to commit spiritual fornication with the Catholic whore of Babylon! Begone, you devil! May you burn forever in the fires of hell!”

Filaret smiled benignly at the man, and made the sign of the cross to bless him. Father Battista moved between the man and Filaret, and was grateful to see that the Vatican SUV was arriving just at that moment.

Jacques, a Swiss Guard wearing civilian clothes, jumped out and opened the middle door, assisting Patriarch Filaret into his seat. Meanwhile the driver, Michel, had opened the rear tailgate, and was placing the two large and heavy suitcases into the back. Father Battista climbed into the third seat, and then Father Herald seated himself beside Filaret. Once they were underway, Filaret breathed a sigh of relief.

“Russia may have converted,” he said, “but not the whole Orthodox world.”

“My perception was that the man suffers from some sort of mental disorder,” said Father Battista.

“Perhaps. That is a kind assessment. But you must realize that in many Eastern European nations, a jealous nationalism remains inseparable from the local Orthodox identity. It was so in Russia until after the consecration, when people began to change miraculously in their views about the Catholic Church. You Catholics have always been reasonable toward us Orthodox, wanting to include us and welcome us back, but we have been defensive and separatist. In some countries the Orthodox once seemed to worship their nation and their king more than God Himself. In Russia they would say, ‘The Tsar is next to God!’ and they would expect him to appoint bishops and to direct the Russian Church.”

“But what else could they do, without a Pope?” asked Father Herald.

“You have a point, Father. But now Mary Immaculate has obtained the grace for Russia to come to her senses. I want to share something with you from great Russian literature, from the novels of Dostoevsky. In real life Dostoevsky’s best friend was Vladimir Soloviev, the great Orthodox theologian who died a Roman Catholic, and Soloviev was the model for one of Dostoevsky’s main characters in *The Brothers Karamazov*. So Dostoevsky was certainly acutely aware of the great spiritual issues. I often think of the passage near the conclusion of Dostoevsky’s great novel *The Possessed*, or *The Devils*, where Stepan Trofimovitch is half-delirious as death approaches. He thinks about the parable of the man possessed with demons, and how when Christ cast them out they entered into a herd of swine that rushed downhill into the lake and were drowned. In Dostoevsky’s story, Stepan realizes that Russia is like the man who was possessed. I know the passage by heart:

You see that’s exactly like our Russia, those devils that come out of the sick man and enter into the swine. They are all the sores, all the foul contagions, all the impurities, all the devils great and small that have multiplied in that great invalid, our beloved Russia, in the course of ages and ages ... all those devils will come forth, all the impurity, all the rottenness that was putrefying on the surface ... and they will beg of themselves to enter into the swine ... and perhaps I at the head of them, we shall cast ourselves down, possessed and raving, from the rocks into the sea, and we shall all be drowned – and a good thing, too, for that is all we are fit for. But the sick man will be healed and ‘will sit at the feet of

Jesus,' and all will look upon him with astonishment....¹⁰⁷

"I now realize that, in that passage penned in 1872, Dostoevsky was inspired to foretell the Fatima promise. That great exorcism by Christ has finally come to pass, and it has happened, exactly as the All-Immaculate Mary promised to the little shepherds at Fatima, through the intercession of Our Lady of Fatima. The crazy man is Russia. All the craziness of Russian Orthodox excuses for separation from Rome, and the caesaropapism, and doctrinal denials of things settled in Catholic Church councils after the schism, kept Russia cut off from the life of the vine of the true Church in Rome. And because of that, Russia was spiritually weak, and was the first Christian empire to fall under the dark night of atheistic Communism. But now, the devils have been cast out, and the craziness is over, and Russia is once again in her right mind, sitting at the feet of Jesus, and ready to become the Orthodox-Catholic Confessional State she was always meant to be."

"That is truly amazing," said Father Battista. "To think that Dostoevsky was inspired to see that deliverance would someday come to Russia."

"But you can also see that the other Orthodox states have not yet converted," countered Filaret. "That is why the Bulgarian man was so inflamed against me. He is still thinking like the Orthodox who have always placed nationalism and devotion to their king above Catholic unity. Quite commonly, such nationalists even doubted the validity of the Orthodox Church in other Orthodox nations."

"But in America the Orthodox from various nations commonly share a single Orthodox church in any given community," said Father Herald. "They often don't identify themselves with any particular European nation."

"Ah, but the United States has always been a pluralistic society," said Father Battista. "Unlike European nations, it has no history of any cohesive culture that for centuries overwhelmingly agreed upon a single Christian tradition. So when people move to the United States, they are taught to be 'tolerant' and in time they come to believe that is a virtue. But in reality it is the vice of religious indifferentism, the idea that 'I have my truth and you have your truth and neither one is better than the other.' If truth could be relative rather than absolute, then no one would fight or die to defend his religion."

"Well, Americans tend to be perplexed by the 'radical' assertiveness of the Muslims," noted Father Herald.

"The Muslims exhibit many of the virtues which should be commonplace among Catholics and Orthodox faithful," said Filaret. "They believe their religion is true, and therefore all others must be at

¹⁰⁷ Dostoevsky, Fyodor, *The Possessed (or The Devils)*, Chapter VII, Part II, with selected omissions, public domain in The Gutenberg Project, downloaded on September 12, 2010 from <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/8117/8117-h/8117-h.htm>. This idea of the Fatima prophecy in Dostoevsky's novel is based on a lecture given by Dr. David Allen White at the *Last Chance for World Peace* conference in 2006. See Discography for details.

least partially false. Based on this logic, in Muslim-majority nations they pass laws to suppress other religions and to encourage Islam by enforcing its moral code. They dress with modesty to protect chastity, and they jealously guard the virtue of women. They disallow contraception, and have large families. They forbid abortion, homosexual behavior, and pornography. They pray regularly and publicly. And in Arab nations they are even moving toward restoring honest money, convertible into gold.”

“And yet, by their very zeal, they show the danger of allowing a false religion to have free rein in a society,” said Father Battista. “Because, as Christians, we have to believe that Islam is a false religion. If we Christians took our Faith as seriously as they take theirs, we would seek to outdo the Muslims in our zeal to spread the Faith in our societies, and to draft laws that would encourage Christian virtue and discourage vice. And we would not be so welcoming of those who believe our religion is false.”

“I have noticed that many modern people find it offensive to speak of any religion as being true or false,” noted Father Herald. “Sadly, people no longer know how to think with precision or how to analyze issues in depth. They think that if a religion has *some* truth in it – and all religions do, of course, or else no one would be attracted to them – then it must be good. Modern people will say, ‘Well, it’s not all bad, it has *some* truth in it, so it *has* to be good.’ And then when you claim that any one religion is *all* true, they deny that is possible. They assume that since most religions are only partly true, then all religions must be partly false. They become offended when Catholics – or Muslims – claim that their religion is completely true and therefore is meant to apply to everyone in the world.”

Father Battista had not failed to note that Michel, the driver, had been watching the rear view mirror intently.

“We are being followed, Jacques,” said Michel suddenly. “By a big black SUV containing two men. I’ll radio for backup.”

Michel pulled a microphone off the dashboard, and called the Swiss Guard central dispatch. In two minutes, he suddenly made a sharp right turn into a narrow alleyway between two ancient Roman buildings. The black SUV followed right behind them, and then Michel made a sudden stop. Immediately, a white Vatican SUV also entered the alley, trapping the SUV that had been tailing them between the two Vatican security vehicles. Michel activated his four-way flashers as a signal, and immediately he and Jacques jumped out of the front doors, while four young men simultaneously exited the white Vatican SUV in the rear. In the middle SUV were two men, about thirty years of age, clean-shaven, muscular, and attired in unremarkable street clothes that would attract no particular attention. Michel ordered them to exit their vehicle with their hands up. When they declined, their windows were smashed, and the two men were dragged out and subdued by the six tough young Swiss guards. After just enough rough handling to make clear who was in charge, their hands were cuffed behind their backs. Michel and Jacques searched them, and determined these men, who refused to speak, carried no identification papers whatsoever. However, in the glove box of the SUV Jacques found

papers indicating that the vehicle was registered to one of the two largest banks doing business in Italy.

“Tell your bosses that their days of ruling the world are ending,” said Michel. “You two boys should consider becoming Catholics. Then you’ll have a Boss who orders you to do good rather than evil. Considering how short life can be, it’s the only intelligent thing to do.”

The Swiss guards handcuffed both men to a heavy pipe astride one of the buildings, and stuffed a Catholic Truth Society booklet into a pocket of each man. Then they piled back into the respective Vatican vehicles and sped off, one going forward and the other going in reverse out of the narrow alley. The bankers’ men could try to explain their predicament to the Italian police. By that time, the Vatican vehicles, protected by diplomatic immunity, would be back inside Vatican City.

“You will be under surveillance by sinister worldly forces while you are here, Your Excellency,” noted Jacques. “But, as you see, we will be able to keep you safe.”

Suddenly Michel turned the SUV off the busy street and entered a steep down-ramp underneath a towering ancient wall.

“This will be the Vatican garage, Your Excellency,” said Father Herald. “It is just after twelve o’clock noon. An elevator will take you up directly into the bishops’ dormitory, where you will have a corner suite overlooking the Vatican gardens, and with a good view of the dome of Saint Peter’s. A private Orthodox chapel has been set up one floor below, where you can say your daily Mass. I will be staying just down the hall from you, and you will have my cell phone number so that I will be able to assist you with anything you may need. You will have a few hours to rest and pray, and then you will meet the Holy Father at four o’clock in the Apostolic Palace. He will grant you a one-hour private audience. Then you will have three hours free before dinner at eight o’clock, which will be with the Holy Father and me in the Pope’s private dining room.”

“So before we sleep this historic night,” said Father Battista, “the Patriarch of ninety-five percent of the Orthodox world will have kissed the Fisherman’s ring, and the Holy Father will have laid his hands upon his head and blessed him as a Catholic bishop in the Orthodox Rite!”

“And what sweet sleep it will be,” said Filaret, “to have traveled so far, and yet to have come home at last!”

Filaret settled into his room, rested for an hour, and then phoned Father Herald to see if he could go for a walk in the Vatican gardens. He also wondered if he might have access to the tomb of Saint Peter, where he wished to pray, without being exposed to the press or the public. Father Herald took him on a stroll through the gardens, passing the Statue of Our Lady of Fatima at which Pope Nicholas had meditated on the afternoon of his birthday, not yet knowing that before he slept that night he would receive “The Russian Request”. Filaret knelt at the weatherproof outdoor kneeler set in the lawn facing the statue, and, after making the sign of the cross, silently thanked Our Lady for the recent public miracle in Russia which

made even the 1917 Miracle of the Sun pale by comparison. The Russian Patriarch's own presence in the Vatican today was in no way the cause, but only and entirely the result, of Her intercession in Heaven following the consecration. True, grace had been flowing for decades through Her faithful servants. It had been especially the work of Father Nicholas Gottschalk in Detroit, and of the various traditional Catholic scholars whose writings had been published by his Fatima Herald apostolate, that had opened the hearts and minds of Patriarch Filaret and of President Polzin. Together they had studied Father Gottschalk's publications and viewed his conference lectures posted on YouTube, and had thereby been moved to issue "The Russian Request" to the Holy Father. Filaret felt that the smile on Our Lady's face almost came alive to him, and his heart thrilled as he noted the outline of Her Queenly figure against the bright azure of the Roman sky, as if the world was being enveloped in the sweet safety of Her blue mantle.

Hearing distant voices calling, he looked up and realized that he was so close to the dome of Saint Peter's basilica that he could see the people walking around the cupola at the very top of the dome, and could even hear them shouting in wonderment at the panoramic vistas of Rome. His heart thrilled to realize that, directly below them, the bones of Saint Peter the Blessed Apostle lay in repose, amid the ancient Roman cemetery on Vatican hill. Archaeologists believed that criminals and other undesirables had been buried at one end of the cemetery, in the less desirable area adjacent to a stadium-like racetrack that had once stood on the future site of the basilica. Father Herald led Filaret along a garden pathway toward the back wall of the basilica, where a stairway set in an outdoor brick well descended to a metal door well below ground level.

"I carry a key, as I often come here at odd hours to pray in the Confessio, the chapel which contains Saint Peter's tomb, directly below the main altar and the massive dome," volunteered Father Herald. "This private route will take us through some of the archaeological excavations beneath the basilica, and then into the Confessio from the back. The chapel will not be open to visitors at this time, so you will be able to pray in private."

Father Herald switched on a string of construction-style light bulbs, so they could find their way through dusty pathways among tombs and monuments of what was obviously the ancient Roman necropolis of Vatican hill. Filaret's heart thrilled as he felt himself coming back to the very beginnings of the Church, to the roots from which had sprung the evangelization of the empire, and, in time, of the very ends of the earth, even Kievan Rus.¹⁰⁸ Before long they came to another metal door, but this one did not require the use of a key from inside the excavation area. Father Herald opened the door, and switched off the construction lighting. They stepped into a dimly lit marbled chapel, where Filaret at once recognized the Niche of the Pallium, which contained a silver casket

¹⁰⁸ The name of embryonic Russia, with headquarters in the city of Kiev, at the time of the baptism of Saint Prince Vladimir in 988 A.D, when Russia first became a Catholic nation.

behind which lay the tomb of the Apostle Peter. In the casket were kept strips of fabric woven from lamb's wool and blessed annually on the Feast of Saint Agnes, January 21. Each *pallium* was destined to be given by the Pope to a newly appointed Archbishop or Metropolitan. They were kept here, at the Apostle's tomb, to symbolize the unity of all bishops who professed their submission to the current successor of Saint Peter, the Bishop of Rome.

Filaret was deeply moved as he approached the kneeler set before the tomb of Peter. Behind him were the curved marble steps that led up out of the sunken chapel to the floor of the basilica just in front of the high altar, which was directly overhead. Towering above was the Baldacchino of Bernini, the ornate Baroque canopy covering the high altar; it was supported on four spiraled bronze pillars that, it was rumored, contained the bones of thousands of ancient Christian martyrs retrieved from the catacombs. High above, the dome of the basilica reached upward toward Heaven, flooding the scene with light from above – and reminding the faithful that here, as on every Catholic altar in the world, eternity penetrates time as Christ descends daily to make Himself present – Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity – under the appearance of bread and wine in the Blessed Sacrament.

Filaret knew that the early Church had been forced, because of vicious persecution by the Roman Empire, to celebrate holy Mass in the underground burial passages called catacombs. It became a custom to set up an altar on the tomb of a martyr or saint. In later centuries, when the Church was permitted to operate openly and it became possible to celebrate Mass in typical Roman buildings called basilicas, relics of saints were placed in the altar stones to continue the ancient custom. In the Mass, the prayers of the saints “whose relics are here” were always invoked, as it had been noted from the earliest days of the Church that special graces were sometimes associated with the proximity of holy relics.¹⁰⁹

And here, thought Filaret, were the first-class relics of the Blessed Apostle to whom Christ presented the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Filaret recalled the Latin inscription that encircled the base of the dome, high above the tomb:

Tu es Petrus, et super hanc petram ædificabo ecclesiam meam,
et portæ inferi non prævalebunt adversus eam. Et tibi dabo claves
regni cælorum.

He whispered to himself its translation:

Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and
the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto
thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven.¹¹⁰

Filaret thought of how often Holy Scripture proved to be true in

¹⁰⁹ Acts 5:15; 19:12.

¹¹⁰ Matthew 16:18, DRV

multiple senses. The Church as the Body of Christ was built upon the rock among the disciples, Saint Peter, who, when asked by Jesus “Who do you say that I am?” replied:

Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God.¹¹¹

And in response, Jesus told Peter he was blessed, because flesh and blood had not revealed this truth to him. It was the Father in Heaven Who had granted Peter the grace to see this truth. Peter was the first among the apostles to make this confession. And so, the chapel at his tomb was traditionally called the “Confessio” in honor of that momentous event.

But the words of Christ were also fulfilled literally, in that the central church of all Christendom, Saint Peter’s Basilica, was built in Rome upon the tomb of Saint Peter. And, as the ancient Church grew and developed, being transformed from the tiny seed of the first believers, into a great tree that filled the whole world, it was always Peter (and his successors) that kept it all together. It was the Bishop of Rome that was the basis of catholic (universal) unity. *Ubi Petras, Ibi ecclesia, Ibi Deus.*¹¹² “Where Peter is, there is the Church, there is God.”

Filaret knelt and began to pray. He asked Saint Peter to intercede for him, and for Russia, and for all other nations, that the miracle recently obtained by the Mother of God might bring great blessings upon all mankind in these days of profound spiritual darkness. Filaret considered that, during the Twentieth Century, former Christendom, in both East and West, suffered a spiritual annihilation so extensive that men of the Nineteenth or earlier centuries could not have believed it could happen so suddenly. Therefore – just as in the first centuries after Christian missionaries travelled to far off lands to proclaim the message of Christ, and to build a new civilization – so now, Filaret realized, it would have to be done all over again. It would begin in Russia. But Filaret prayed that, from Russia, the new Christendom would once again spread out over all the earth. He prayed that countless young men and women would once again become inspired to sacrifice their lives as religious missionaries. He prayed that their lives of loving sacrifice – their “walk” upon earth – would once again become a thing of great beauty, a wonder to the world:

And how shall they preach unless they be sent, as it is written:
How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace,
of them that bring glad tidings of good things!¹¹³

Filaret realized that he was among those now being called to begin this process. Russia was going to become a Christian nation, miraculously, because of divine intervention obtained through the intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Our Lady of Fatima. First Russia would set her own

¹¹¹ Matthew 16:16, DRV.

¹¹² Latin phrase attributed to Saint Ambrose.

¹¹³ Romans 10:15, DRV.

house in order, becoming a Catholic Confessional State. Then Russia would be the fountainhead for the re-evangelization of the once-Christian, now-essentially-pagan world. And Filaret was being called to lead Russia in this historic endeavor, under the guidance of the Chief Shepherd of all Christians, the Bishop of Rome. Fervently, he prayed that the All-Immaculate Mother of God, the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and the Blessed Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, would pray for him, for His Holiness Pope Nicholas VI, and for all the Catholic bishops of Russia – both Roman Rite and Orthodox Rite – from their lofty seats in the Courts of Heaven.

Before long Father Herald tapped Filaret on the shoulder, and whispered that it was now time to head back to the bishops' dormitory, to get ready for his private audience with the Pope. As they made their way back through the necropolis, and up the stairs into the sunlight of the Vatican gardens, Father Herald sought to encourage Filaret.

"You know, Your Excellency, that the number of bishops in the world has increased to the point where it is logistically impossible for the Pope to see every bishop every five to ten years, as has been required since 1911. Bishops from farther away than Europe had a ten-year requirement, and even that has proved difficult in recent years. But the Holy Father prioritizes things. He sees the Metropolitans, in the West more commonly called Archbishops, at least every five years in person. And he also calls those bishops who have reputations as troublemakers, such as those who 'wreckovate' beautiful historic cathedrals by stripping them of their classical art. Or bishops who still attempt to sabotage the restoration of the Tridentine Mass by any priest who desires to use it."

"So if it is troublemakers who get precedence, then can it be that all Metropolitans tend to be troublemakers?" quipped Filaret.

"Oh, you will be a big troublemaker, alright. But for the secular world, not for the Holy Father or the Church. And you will be a troublemaker for those liberals in the Western Church who do not want to permit the restoration of tradition in liturgy and doctrinal clarity. You will be a sign of contradiction to the world."

"Ah, but to be a 'Sign of Contradiction' is always a good thing. It is one sign of probable election, of being among the elect of God who appear to have reasonable hope of eternity in Heaven after a time in purgatory. It is how Simeon described the Child Jesus when He was presented in the temple at the age of forty days: 'This Child is set ... for a sign which shall be contradicted.' All who follow Christ will be challenged by the world."

"Yes, and another sign of probable election is devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. So said Saint Louis de Montfort."

"Archbishop Bogmolov in Moscow presented me with a Miraculous Medal, which I now wear to remind me continually of my devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. On the back, it depicts the Sacred Heart of Jesus, crowned with thorns, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, pierced through by a sword as Simeon foresaw at the time of the Infant Christ's

Presentation in the Temple. I thrill when I think how that connects to the Fatima promise concerning Russia: my native land has been miraculously converted so that the whole world will place devotion to Mary's Immaculate Heart alongside devotion to Jesus's Sacred Heart."

"Your Excellency, the Pope will not find you a troublemaker at all. You will console his heart and rekindle his zeal – his apostolic fervor to restore the Church in all those lands which were once Catholic and are now secular, turned aside to serve the prince of this world."

As they stepped off the elevator into the dormitory corridor leading to their rooms, Father Herald explained the schedule. In thirty minutes they would meet at the elevator, and would walk together to the Apostolic Palace, where they were to meet the Holy Father at four o'clock. The Metropolitan should wear his formal robes and mitre, and carry his bishop's staff, as there would be an official Vatican photographer present to record this historic meeting for posterity. Today's meeting with the Pope, including the private dinner this evening, would constitute the *ad limina* visit of the Metropolitan of Moscow and All the Russias. The next day, Filaret would return to the Confessio with the Pope, where the Metropolitan would receive the Roman Catholic *pallium*. For that occasion, Filaret was to wear his liturgical robes and carry his Orthodox bishop's Episcopal staff with the cross and serpents.

At four o'clock Patriarch Filaret III of Moscow and Father John Herald were seated in the foyer outside the private office of Pope Nicholas VI. Two Swiss Guards stood at attention beside the office doors. When a grandfather clock chimed four times, the guards opened the double doors.

"Your Excellency, the Holy Father will see you and Father Herald now," said one of the guards.

A Vatican photographer was discreetly positioned to capture the historic event in a series of snapshots, which would be cropped and then issued to the worldwide media together with a carefully drafted press release approved by the Pope himself.

As Filaret entered the papal office, the Holy Father, dressed in white with red shoes and a white biretta, came toward him, a great smile on his face, and joined the Patriarch of Moscow and All the Russias in a brotherly embrace.

"Welcome home, my dear brother in Christ," said Nicholas. "May the peace of Christ be with you."

Then, for the first time in a millennium, an Orthodox Archbishop knelt on both knees before the Holy Father, and kissed the Fisherman's ring on the third finger of his right hand. The ring featured a bas-relief of Saint Peter fishing from a boat, symbolizing the fact that the Pope is the successor of Saint Peter both as Bishop of Rome and as a "fisher of men." Around the bas-relief were raised letters that read "Nicholas VI, PP." The kiss symbolized Filaret's filial affection for the Pope, and his sincere episcopal submission to the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome.

"Your Holiness," said Filaret, struggling to hold back his tears, "I come

as your most obedient and devoted son, seeking your help and guidance as to how I might best rule my vast flock for the sake of their eternal salvation.”

“Arise, my brother,” said Nicholas, assisting Filaret with both hands, “and come visit with me. I want you to tell me all about the wondrous news I hear coming from the regions of the north. We have an hour now, and dinner tonight, and as much time as you wish in the days to come.”

Father Herald had been present at hundreds of private papal audiences, and did not recall ever hearing such an open-ended offer of papal time and attention. Truly, this was historic. In front of the Pope’s desk, there was an informal seating area with upholstered chairs and ottoman footstools, and side tables with lamps. Father Herald, knowing the routine, assisted Filaret to settle into a chair at a right angle to the Pope’s chair, directly across from Father Herald’s chair. The photographer departed just as a nun in full habit entered and brought a tray with tea, coffee, and cookies.

“Please tell me what is happening in Russia, and what the Pope in Rome can do to help.”

The trim and energetic Holy Father then reached forward to the center coffee table, poured a cup of tea with three spoonfuls of sugar, and took four cookies off the tray. Then he settled back in his chair, put his feet in the red shoes up on the Ottoman, and smiled at Filaret as he sipped his tea and took a first bite of his first cookie.

“Your Holiness, I hardly know how to behave at such a time as this.”

“Please be at ease, Your Excellency. We are brothers, and this is my home, and you are my honored guest. My job is to help you in any way I can. Please relax.”

Filaret was astounded. He realized that he still struggled inwardly against lifelong conditioning to be wary of “The Pope of Rome.” He had to remind himself that this was now a new world, 2015, post-consecration, in which Russia was miraculously converting to the Catholic Faith at breathtaking speed.

“Holy Father, today I have come to Rome, the first time in a millennium that any Orthodox leader has demonstrated his submission to the successor of Peter. I find that it is good to be here. In Russia, most of the common people are returning to church, with long lines for confession, and a growing national consensus that our government and economy must be re-designed in conformity with the Social Kingship of Christ. The people are realizing that for a thousand years they have been like sheep without their real shepherd, and now they want to remake Russia as a Catholic Confessional State.”

“And what do they mean by ‘Catholic’?” asked Nicholas.

“We Orthodox have always used the word ‘catholic’ to mean the universal or worldwide Church. The bone of contention always was whether the Pope of Rome was part of that Church, or whether he was in schism. But now people realize that it is we Orthodox who have been in schism from the Pope, and they want to be back in union with the true

Catholic Church. They are grasping that it is being in union with the Pope that truly defines Orthodoxy.”

“And what about the liturgy?”

“There is no thought of changing the liturgy, because there is actually nothing in the Orthodox Mass of Saint John Chrysostom that is contrary to Roman Catholic doctrine.”

“So the Russians want to keep their liturgy, but come back in union with the Pope?”

“Exactly, Your Holiness.”

“I can’t see any real problem with that. It makes perfect sense, just as it did for the Anglicans.”

“May I be blunt, Holiness?”

“Please. That is how we arrive at truth, which is the purpose of all we do.”

The Pope bit into his third cookie, and smiled.

“Ever since the liturgical revolution which followed Vatican II, and the growing laxity of catechesis which went with it, we Orthodox have lived with the fear that we alone were left holding the line of resistance against the modern world. In the Nineteenth Century and before, our caesaropapism and stubborn determination to shut any foreign influence out of our Eastern Orthodox nations, caused us to reject the authority of the Pope in Rome. But by the latter half of the Twentieth Century, two things had changed: First, much of the Orthodox world had come under the dark night of atheistic communism, and had to concentrate on preserving what could be preserved. Second, the Catholic Church in the ‘free’ West seemed to be self-destructing through what Pope Pius XII had foreseen and feared: ‘The suicide of altering the Faith in her liturgy.’”¹¹⁴

“So, by adamantly refusing to reconcile with Rome, the Orthodox felt they were preserving their doctrinally sound tradition?”

“Exactly. And we were – except in those bogus doctrinal disputes which had long been used to justify our separation.”

“And now things have changed again.”

“Yes. The Holy Mother of God has obtained for us Orthodox the grace to convert, to change our minds, and to see things according to the complete Catholic truth.”

“And the young people in Russia, who are returning to church, are not all clamoring for modern music in church, and for Mass in modern Russian instead of Old Slavonic?”

“No, Holiness. The whole nation seems to realize that in the past Russia had a rich tradition of high Christian culture, not only in the ancient liturgy and the ancient traditions of ecclesiastical art and architecture. We also had rich Christian tradition in our government, schools, and mainstream culture. Right up until the godless Bolsheviks enslaved us in darkness.”

“Well, how can I help?”

¹¹⁴ Pope Pius XII, quoted in Kramer, Fr. Paul, *The Suicide of Altering the Faith in the Liturgy*, page i. See Bibliography.

“The Russian people will need you to come to Russia soon, Holy Father. They will need to experience the thrill of having the chief shepherd of all Christians come to bless our nation and our people.”

“Two or three of my predecessors long desired to go to Russia,” said Nicholas. “And they were not welcome there.”

“But now all that has changed. Now people see that to be truly Orthodox means to be Catholic.”

“And when do you think the Pope of Rome should plan to come?” asked Nicholas, smiling.

“Now it is early September. I would think that by next spring arrangements could be made. Everyone knows a papal trip cannot possibly be made on short notice.”

Not unless Father Herald should happen to arrange one again on less than two days’ notice, thought Pope Nicholas.

“I will make it a priority, and will assign Father Herald to work with you on finalizing the details. Father Herald is a master at getting things done even with a dozen modernist Curial Cardinals always seeking to obstruct his every move.”

“Holy Father,” interjected Father Herald, “the photos and press release from today’s meeting, as well as tomorrow’s ceremony when you place the Catholic *pallium* on Patriarch Filaret, will begin to help the Russians feel their unity with the Pope. We should try to issue an apostolic constitution for the Russian Orthodox Church, modeled on the autonomous particular Churches. There are twenty-two Eastern Catholic Churches, each having their own rites and their own canon laws, but in full union with Rome. The Orthodox Church will become number twenty-three, and by far the largest, of those Churches. Before Vatican II they were called ‘Eastern Rite’ Churches. But now they are simply called Eastern Catholic Churches. They have their own autonomous liturgical practices and disciplinary rules, which date back many centuries and which have a history of organic development. But all these Churches accept all the doctrine that the Catholic Church holds and teaches.”

“So what would you call us?” asked Filaret.

“It would seem logical,” said Father Herald, “that the Russian Orthodox Church, under its new name, will simply be called ‘The Russian Orthodox Catholic Church.’”

“Not ‘The Orthodox Rite in the Catholic Church’?” asked Nicholas.

“No,” replied Father Herald. “Historically, the Russian Orthodox Church has long been a completely separate Church, not just a liturgical variation that has always been within the sphere of Roman Catholicism. That will not change. The Russian Orthodox Church will continue to be an autonomous particular Church. What will change is that the Russian Orthodox Church will become Catholic, by formally accepting every doctrine of the Catholic Church, and by acknowledging the supreme authority of the Bishop of Rome.”

“I think that will be very much to the liking of the Russian people,” said

Filaret. "Once they realize the Vatican will not try to alter the Orthodox Faith in her liturgy, they will be most happy to come under the spiritual protection of the Pope in Rome."

"I suppose there is a precedent for that," said Nicholas, "in the story of Blessed Leonid Feodorov. Recently I have been studying his life. He was born in Saint Petersburg in 1879, and privately studied the Church Fathers while in the seminary of St. Aleksandr Nevsky, an elite preparatory school from which very few boys actually pursued religious vocations. Young Leonid's private study convinced him of the need to be in union with Rome. After befriending Father Jan Stitslavsky, a Catholic priest who quietly ministered to Catholics in Russia, Leonid left for Rome in 1902, at age twenty-two. He was formally received into the Catholic Church that summer at the Gesu in Rome, and as a unique Russian Orthodox convert was granted a private audience with Pope Leo XIII, who agreed to finance his studies for the Catholic priesthood. Leonid soon noted the egocentric arrogance of the Latin Rite Catholics toward the Eastern Rites, as he began to feel his soul drawn back to Holy Mother Russia and to the beauty of the Byzantine Rite. The Pope supported his desire to remain a Catholic but return to the Russian Rite and traditions. And in 1907 Pope Pius X, the future saint, accepted Leonid as a Roman Catholic in the Byzantine Rite. Before the revolution of 1905, to be a Catholic in the Byzantine Rite in Russia had been considered high treason. But after 1905, Russian Rite Catholics in Saint Petersburg were free to offer the divine liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, and they were quietly protected by the Tsar's Interior Minister, Pyotr Stolypin."

"Stolypin was a just man, but in 1911 he was shot by rogue members of the Russian secret police," said Filaret. "Ultra-conservative monarchists disliked his efforts to push reforms to better the lot of the common man. He was shot at the Kiev opera house, where Tsar Nicholas II was also present. As Stolypin fell to his knees, having been shot in the stomach at close range, he turned and blessed his sovereign with the sign of the cross, and shouted that he was happy to die for the Tsar. The next day Tsar Nicholas knelt at his hospital bedside and wept, knowing Stolypin was a good man who fell victim to evil forces within the upper ranks of the nobility. The Tsar begged his forgiveness on behalf of the Romanov's, but within a few days Stolypin died of his wounds and Russian Catholics lost a benevolent protector."

"Meanwhile, Leonid continued his 'treasonous' studies for the Catholic priesthood in Switzerland," continued Pope Nicholas. "He used a pseudonym to hide from the Russian secret police, and was ordained to the Roman Catholic priesthood in the Bulgarian Greek-Catholic Church in Constantinople in 1911. In 1914 he returned to Saint Petersburg to find his mother terminally ill. His status as a Catholic priest saying the Byzantine Rite officially made him a traitor to the Russian Empire, a rebel against the established Russian Orthodox Church. Tsar Nicholas II was the *de facto* head of the Russian Orthodox Church, but, being no

theologian, usually followed the advice of his bishops in religious matters. The bishops wanted Father Feodorov sent to the infamous Lubyanka prison in Moscow, but Tsar Nicholas feared to raise his hand so harshly against an anointed priest of God, and so sent him into a gentle internal exile in a pleasant town in Siberia. This sort of exile was more like a reading holiday than a punishment. The Tsar wanted to protect his Russian Orthodox flock against the dangers of any ‘schismatic’ influence. Father Feodorov received a monthly allowance from the Tsar, had to report to the local police station once a month to verify his obedience to the Tsar’s orders, and was respectfully treated as an honored guest by the locals. He spent much of his time studying the ancient Church fathers in the library of the local Russian Orthodox monastery. Such was the ‘tyranny’ of Tsar Nicholas II.

“When Nicholas abdicated in 1917, Father Feodorov was free to return to Saint Petersburg, and may have been made a Roman Catholic bishop. He remained free during the short rule of the socialist Provisional Government of Alexander Kerensky, but once Vladimir Lenin and the Communist Bolsheviks staged their violent *coup d’etat*, the practice and teaching of the Christian religion in any form became illegal. By 1923, Father Feodorov was put through a show trial, imprisoned in Moscow, and then in 1926 was transferred to Solovki, a former monastery on an island in the far north that had been converted into a prison camp, part of the infamous ‘Gulag Archipelago’ documented by Alexander Solzhenitsyn. In 1933, after he fell ill, the wife of Maxim Gorky intervened with Stalin and obtained Father Feodorov’s release into internal exile. But he was so debilitated that by 1935 he died, in a private home, of an untreated cough and fever. In 2001 he was beatified by my predecessor.”¹¹⁵

“So both Pope Leo XIII, and the future saint Pope Pius X, personally approved of a Roman Catholic priest from Russia adopting the Russian Orthodox Rite and the divine liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom,” noted Father Herald. “Given that history, I have been thinking that perhaps the Holy Father should automatically allow bi-ritual faculties for Russian Orthodox priests,” said Father Herald. “The Vatican already sometimes authorizes certain priests to celebrate Mass in more than one rite, where circumstances so require. It is rarely necessary, but I believe that will gradually change in the case of the Russians.”

“Please continue,” said Nicholas, as he bit into his fourth and final cookie.

“Well, think how the Irish, living on an island off the coast of Protestant England, responded to the intense persecutions imposed on them by the British penal laws. They sent tens of thousands of their sons and daughters as religious missionaries to every corner of the world. Whether you went to India, or the Americas, or the Far East, or Australia, you would find Irish priests leading parishes, and you would find Irish nuns and religious

¹¹⁵ King, Brendan, “A Heart for Russia: The Life of Blessed Leonid Feodorov (1879-1935), Bishop and Confessor,” *Catholic Family News*, Vol. 16, Nos. 7 and 8, July & August, 2009.

brothers teaching in Catholic schools or providing nursing care in Catholic hospitals. Ireland became a blessing to the world by becoming so fervently Catholic, in response to persecution, that she helped the Faith to blossom and grow globally. Well, I think that is just what Russia is going to do in the next fifty years. Out of the dark night of Communist persecution, aided by the special graces now obtained by the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Russia will spread the renewal of the Faith over all the world.”

“Please, God, may it be so!” said Nicholas.

As Nicholas swallowed the last bite of his cookie, and reached for two more, he pondered how often Father Herald seemed to see things afar off, sensing what would be in the future, as if the saints and angels who could see things from the perspective of eternity were whispering hints about the future into his ear.

“Yes, and if I am right,” Father Herald continued, “innumerable Russian religious will spread out across the world, rebuilding the Catholic Faith upon the ruins of Western Christendom, which now lies spiritually desolate and in shambles. But they will be spreading the Catholic or universal Faith, not one particular ritual. In formerly Catholic nations, many of them will need to provide the sacraments in the Roman Rite. So the time will come when they will need to be allowed bi-ritual faculties.”

“That will be no problem,” said Nicholas. “Obviously, we will do whatever is for the good of souls. That is the ultimate law of the Church.”

“But I cannot imagine good Russian Orthodox Catholics wanting anything to do with the *novus ordo* liturgy,” said Filaret. “That ecclesiastical disaster has been one of the reasons the Orthodox so strongly resisted the ecumenical advances of the Catholic Church in the late Twentieth Century. We could see that the fruits of the new Mass in the West were mostly bad: declining Mass attendance; loss of faith in the Real Presence; emasculation of the priestly vocation as women took over the sanctuary; loss of the sense of sin resulting in infrequent use of sacramental Confession; and, ultimately, loss of insight into why one ought to be Catholic rather than settling for the much easier Protestant religion.”

“His Holiness knows that I can’t argue with what you have said,” replied Father Herald. “Therefore, I would think that if Orthodox religious were someday going to help re-evangelize the West, they would need to function bi-ritually – the Russian Orthodox rite at home, and the Roman Rite in the missions. But for them the Western rite would have to be the Tridentine Mass, and not the New Mass.”

“Absolutely right,” said Filaret. “The Orthodox will have no interest in a dumbed-down, half-Protestant ritual, artificially concocted in the 1960’s. It was forced upon the Catholic faithful using the same totalitarian methods by which the Communists pretended to allow freedom of religion while punishing everyone who dared to exercise that ‘freedom.’ Anyone who objected to the Communist rules in Russia was called a ‘refusenik.’ And in the Catholic Church, those few who dared to resist the unprecedented liturgical revolution were disparaged and marginalized as ‘disobedient

traditionalists.”

“Of course one cannot openly speak this way in the West,” said Father Herald. “Most Catholic people will not hear it, even if it is true.”

“But we are looking into the distant future, I think,” said Nicholas, finishing off his fifth cookie. “First we have to finish with the conversion of Russia. That will take some doing, and will probably keep all three of us busy for whatever years we have left on this earth.”

“Another difficult issue in reconciling our two Churches will be divorce,” said Father Herald. “The Catholic position has always been, and remains, that divorce is impossible. A marriage validly contracted before the altar of God cannot be undone by man. Couples may legitimately separate under certain limited and very unfortunate conditions, but they are not then free to remarry if they wish to remain in a state of grace. The only way a couple could separate and then remarry is if the Church finds that their marriage was never valid in the first place, due to certain impediments which had not been disclosed at the time of the wedding. This latter possibility has, of course, been scandalously abused in the West, and particularly in the United States, in recent decades. Critics of the Church have come to call it ‘Catholic divorce.’ One simply hires a canon lawyer, finds some psychological ‘experts’ to testify that one or both parties were psychologically immature or afflicted, and a liberal bishop’s marriage tribunal will find that an annulment is warranted. About seventy-five percent of the annulments issued in the world each year take place in the United States. But this does not mean that Americans abuse the rules of the Church more than other nations, and it may well prove the opposite. American Catholics care about being right with the Church, about being in a state of grace. In Europe, people have simply stopped practicing the Faith and so get civil divorces and remarriages, ignoring Church rules.”

“We Orthodox have also struggled mightily with divorce,” said Filaret. “In Russia the divorce rate is said to be sixty-five percent, versus forty-five percent in the United States. In Russia, about eighty percent of people self-identify as Russian Orthodox, but until the consecration only ten percent of those attended services as often as once a month, and only about three percent were actively involved in parish life.”

“So Russia was quite similar to Western Europe,” observed Father Herald.

“Sadly, yes. And so most people neither married in the Church, nor did they seek divorce through the Church. But of course now, in Russia, the general failure to practice the Faith is changing, almost overnight.”

“But the Orthodox have permitted divorce,” said Father Herald. “This will be a stumbling block to reconciliation, since Catholic doctrine holds divorce from a sacramental marriage to be impossible.”

“Our position has been that the Lord Himself, in Matthew’s gospel, allowed divorce in cases of unfaithfulness.¹¹⁶ We have viewed divorce as a tragedy, and as a concession to fallen man’s sinfulness and to the

¹¹⁶ Matthew 19:9.

broken world in which people must live. Likewise, we have permitted remarriage for the same reasons. But we have always discouraged divorce and remarriage.”

“One could argue that the Orthodox practice has not been fundamentally different from the liberal marriage tribunals in the United States,” said Nicholas. “You have attempted to help souls to Heaven by acknowledging that keeping Christ’s law is exceedingly difficult when one must live under a godless government and in a social system that is anti-Christian.”

“The problem for people is that when society is not structured according to Catholic social principles, then following the laws of Christ becomes increasingly difficult,” said Father Herald. “We can hope that the new Christian Russia will show us how things work out in a Catholic Confessional State. I recall that Portugal, after 1930, passed laws to stipulate that when persons were married sacramentally in the Catholic Church, the couple explicitly acknowledged – before they proceeded with the sacramental marriage – that they legally forfeited any right to a civil divorce. The result was that by the 1950’s, ninety percent of couples marrying chose a sacramental marriage, and the numbers of divorces plummeted.”

“May it prove to be so in Catholic Russia!” proclaimed Filaret. “Then, in practice, our Churches will have little difficulty reconciling our differences in our approach to divorce.”

“How will the Russian government adapt to the new reality of a converted people?” asked Nicholas.

“Have you heard of Mikhail Romanov?” asked Filaret. “People in Russia are beginning to ask about him.”

“I have met him, once,” said Nicholas. “Why, is there active talk of restoring the monarchy?”

“Very much so. Russians love autocracy, and have always viewed it as a reflection of the government of Heaven. What is your impression of Dr. Romanov?” asked Filaret.

“He is a remarkable man. Recently I heard him play the organ masterfully in a concert on short notice, and also heard him sing the bass solo parts in a difficult Haydn Mass. And I have become well-acquainted with his brother Kiril, who is a Catholic priest in Detroit.”

“The Romanov’s are a solidly Catholic family,” said Father Herald. “I spend half my time at Father Kiril Romanov’s parish in Detroit, and I can vouch for them.”

“Mikhail’s credentials seem unimpeachable,” said Filaret. “But he is an American, and Russians are suspicious of Americans.”

“The future will not be with America,” said Father Herald. “America is fast going the way of the British Empire, and in truth her people will be better off concentrating on getting their own house in order at home. The new Christian empire that changes the world will be Russia, and her main antagonists are likely to be atheistic Red China, and the Muslim Arab bloc.”

“Are you suggesting that Mikhail’s being an American won’t seem important for long?”

“Exactly. Mikhail Romanov has been proven legitimately to be the first man in line for any restoration of the Romanov throne. He was Orthodox until age sixteen, and now is Roman Catholic, and is very devout. He is completely fluent in both English and Russian. He is a decorated American war hero, a physician and medical school professor in America, and a respected visiting medical professor and medical missionary in Russia. Few men in the world could bridge the gap between the Catholic and Orthodox traditions as well as he can. He will easily fill a critical role as Russia reunites with – and in time helps to lead – the Catholic world. I have little doubt that he is Heaven-sent for just such a time as this.”

“In Russia, miracles almost seem to be routine of late,” quipped Filaret.

“How do you plan to introduce Mikhail Romanov to the Russian people?” asked Nicholas.

“Well, the Romanov family has already begun the process, through the news coverage which followed the latest Romanov Nobility Ball in New York City. Now our government is planning to host a repeat Romanov Nobility Ball, on Russian Unity Day, November fourth, in the Alexander Palace in Tsarskoe Selo, just outside Saint Petersburg.”

“So that would bring the Romanov heir home to the palace where Nicholas and Alexandra lived up until the revolution,” noted Father Herald. “There is excellent symbolism in that: Christian Russia picking up right where she left off in 1917. Mikhail looks so much like Nicholas II that people will intuitively feel the lost world of pre-revolutionary Christian Russia is once again within their grasp.”

“Yes, and Russian Unity Day is a popular national holiday that celebrates a time when all classes of Russian society strove together to save Russia from a common external threat. We think there could be no better date for the ball.”

“But how will you determine if it is the will of the Russian people to restore the monarchy?” asked Nicholas. “As you know, the Church does not have an official position on the best form of government. She merely insists that justice must be done and that Catholic Social teaching must be implemented.”

“And of course, neither requirement is ever met in modern secular democracies,” said Father Herald. “Catholic policies have not been implemented since the end of the last Catholic Confessional States.”

“Well, to answer the Holy Father,” said Filaret, “we plan to hold a national referendum, asking the people outright whether they wish to restore the monarchy; whether they wish the monarchy to be autocratic or constitutional; and whether they wish to have Mikhail Romanov as Tsar. For each of the three questions, they will have the opportunity to either vote for the suggested choice, or to write in any alternative they wish to suggest. We think the people will overwhelmingly opt for hereditary Christian autocracy with Mikhail Romanov as the next Tsar.”

“That seems amazing,” said Nicholas. “Or rather, it would have seemed so prior to the consecration, and all that has happened since.”

“When do you plan to hold the referendum?” asked Father Herald.

“We are thinking of December eighth, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Providing the Holy Father would not object, of course. That has never before been a feast day in the Russian Orthodox calendar, and by declaring it a national holiday we can emphasize Russia’s new devotion to the Immaculate Conception of Mary, and to Her Immaculate Heart. We are thinking of not opening the polls until one o’clock in the afternoon, so that most people would be able to go to church in the morning and pray before they cast their vote.”

“Extraordinary,” said Nicholas. “It is beautiful to contemplate even one modern nation beginning to operate according to Catholic principles. Of course I would approve of a national referendum for the stated purposes on this new Russian holy day. But only this once, mind you, under these special circumstances.”

There being no cookies remaining, Nicholas noted that fifty-five minutes of the hour allotted for their meeting had elapsed, and suggested that they could adjourn until dinner. The dinner would be reserved for discussion of topics of personal interest, such as history, music, and philosophy, but no Church business.

Nicholas requested that the next morning they would have a conference to begin going through the Russian Orthodox Mass and catechism, to determine if there were actually any major conflicts or deficiencies in terms of universal Catholic doctrine.

In the afternoon, Nicholas would accompany Filaret to the Confessio, with the Vatican photographer to record the historic event. Both Pope Nicholas and Patriarch Filaret would be attired in their full liturgical robes with mitres and staffs. There, at the tomb of the Apostle Peter, Filaret would receive the *pallium* from Pope Nicholas, signifying Filaret’s office as a Catholic Archbishop.

On the following two days Pope Nicholas, Patriarch Filaret, and Father Herald would work together on solving any remaining doctrinal or disciplinary conflicts between the Russian Orthodox and Catholic Churches. Plans would be developed for the Pope to become properly prepared to celebrate Mass in the Russian Byzantine Liturgy by the time he would visit Russia, and for Filaret to celebrate the Tridentine Mass, as a way of showing to the world the complete unity of faith shared by the two Churches.

Then when Filaret returned to Moscow, a joint press release would be issued to the world, together with photos of their historic visit, announcing the joyful reunion of the two Churches, and announcing that plans for a Papal visit to Russia within a few months had been agreed.

Chapter Twenty-Four

September 9-19, 2015.

Great Lakes Cruise Aboard the Standart, Don Brown's Yacht.

The Detroit Yacht Club on Belle Isle in the Detroit River was a venerable private club founded in 1868, just after the Civil War. The historic Mediterranean-style clubhouse, designed by the same architect as the world-famous Grand Hotel on Mackinac Island, had opened in 1922 and retained the elegance and charm of that era. Facilities included indoor and outdoor swimming pools, and tennis and handball courts. The club sponsored off-site athletic programs including bowling, kayaking, golf, shooting and hunting, and alpine and cross-country ski trips. Members enjoyed access to dining rooms served by award-winning chefs. The elegant ball rooms, where wedding receptions and business meetings were held, normally had to be scheduled one to two years in advance. The yacht club had long been a center of Detroit high society, and its membership rolls had included virtually every famous business and civic leader in the past century and a half of Detroit's storied history. Its harbor had been ranked as the best in Detroit, and was among the finest boating facilities anywhere on the Great Lakes.

Don Brown, celebrated Detroit businessman and philanthropist, had built a special slip at the Detroit Yacht Club to accommodate the four hundred fifty foot Standart, the largest private yacht in the world. The slip was just a short distance from his historic Belle Isle mansion, overlooking the Detroit River. A full-time crew of sixty, housed in thirty crew staterooms, were needed to operate the yacht and to maintain the world-class service provided to every guest on board. The Standart was based in Detroit from mid-April to mid-October, and moved for the other six months to its winter home in Monaco. There, Don had a modest waterfront condominium, but tended to spend most of his Mediterranean time on board.

Tuesday, September 8, 2015, the day after Labor Day, was a day of brilliant sun, calm waters, and perfect temperature. The crew of the Standart were upbeat and excited as they worked preparing the huge vessel for its next Great Lakes cruise, which departed the following afternoon. Like most Americans, the workers generally expressed a firm belief in the superiority of representative democracy, and yet were thrilled at the thought of entertaining European royalty. Except that these royals were Michiganders of European descent. (Or were they Michigianians?)

On Wednesday afternoon, the day of departure, Don Brown held a news conference on the porch of the Detroit Yacht Club. The lawn between the clubhouse and the Standart slip was littered with bouquets of flowers and signs and hundreds of well-wishers, much like the displays outside the Romanov Medical Clinic in Nazareth and the Peterson condominium

in Detroit on the night after the Romanov Nobility Ball. While the cruise guests arrived in chartered limousines, and could be seen waving to the television cameras as they boarded the Standart, Don Brown was interviewed by a leading news anchor. This plan provided privacy for the guests, who were thus shielded from intrusive reporters.

Once everyone and their luggage was settled on board, Don Brown and his wife Theresa held a farewell meeting in the Standart's ballroom, where they mingled with all the guests, made certain they were comfortable, and expressed their regrets at not being free to accompany the guests on the cruise. They did hope to meet up with the guests at the two planned balls, the first on Mackinac Island, and the second at the end of the cruise in Chicago.

As soon as the Browns departed the Standart, the gangplank was retracted, and the whistle blew. The guests lined the top deck and waved at hundreds of well-wishers on the lawn of the Detroit Yacht Club, as the massive ship began to move out of her slip and into the swift current of the Detroit River. Soon the Belle Isle shoreline and Detroit city skyline began to fade, as the Standart moved up the river, with the Michigan shore to port and the Canadian shore to starboard.

Within an hour the water widened and the Detroit River opened into the broad expanse of Lake Saint Clair, about 25 miles in circumference. At its northern end, the waters narrowed once again as the Standart proceeded up the American-Canadian international boundary in the middle of the Saint Clair River. After passing beneath the international Blue Water Bridge between Port Huron, Michigan and Sarnia, Ontario, the Standart entered the southern tip of Lake Huron, one of the five Great Lakes that surround Michigan and constitute the largest collection of fresh water on the planet.

The plan was to cruise slowly through the huge lake on Wednesday night, all day Thursday, and Thursday night, and to arrive at the Port of Alpena by Friday morning. There would then be an excursion inland to a private hunting preserve near Hubbard Lake where the Brown Group had a corporate membership.

On Wednesday evening there was a formal dinner in the grand dining room to welcome all the guests. A string quartet and harpsichord provided background music. Mikhail and Mariya mingled after dinner, visiting various tables, and then joined George and Katarina in the master suite for drinks by the fireplace. The lake was relatively smooth, and the evening air was cool but pleasant. Mikhail and Mariya donned light jackets and, hand in hand went for a stroll on the upper deck. At first, the enormous yellow half-moon was just rising in the east, but within thirty minutes it had ascended enough to assume its normal size and white brilliance in the clear night sky. By now the lake was almost as calm as glass, and a gentle warm offshore breeze combined with the wavelets lapping at the hull to create a perfect romantic atmosphere for a courting couple to share their hearts. Mikhail and Mariya made their way to the bow and sat, arm in arm, on a bench overlooking the water ahead, a trail of glittering moonbeams

leading across the water directly to their position.

“Mikhail, my dear, I can’t believe I am actually here. In May, I went to Moscow as a tourist, and was completely surprised when the Russian government informed us that my mother and I are royal princesses, and my father is a royal prince. Now it is September, just four months later, and I am sitting in the moonlight on the bow of the world’s largest yacht, arm in arm with the Romanov crown prince of Russia and not wanting to be anywhere else. It all seems impossible.”

“The chain of events that brought about the preservation of the royal line in your ancestry was obviously miraculous. In the tumultuous times following the viciously anti-noble Bolshevik revolution, the chances were infinitesimally tiny that secretly royal persons, while successfully hiding their true identity from the enemies of the dynasty, might also manage to meet and marry others of equal station. And yet it happened in your family. Surely this is proof of Divine Providence, and of Our Lady’s special care for Her protectorate, Holy Mother Russia.”

“The same was true in your family, Misha. When your father Nicholas went to New York to study at Julliard, he met and married a royal princess without even knowing yet that he was himself a royal prince. Surely we can see the hand of God in that, for that marriage, mistakenly thought to be morganatic at the time, served to preserve unbroken the Romanov dynasty’s male line of descent. And because of that, your claim to the throne rightfully takes precedence over the female line of Marina Mikhailovna.”

“Many people would say that such coincidences are impossible. But they happened. And every day I thank God for the many miracles that aligned to bring us together.”

On Thursday the sky remained cloudless, and the brilliant sun sparkled on the calm waters. In late morning, the yacht stopped, and an opportunity for water sports was announced. The motor launch was put in the lake, and various guests took turns at water skiing and wake boarding. Mikhail and Mariya took a spin on a pair of the Standart’s jet skis. What most caught her eye was the Brown Scapular which he kept tied around his neck in such a way that it could not come off even when he went swimming or took a sudden spill off his jet ski. Mikhail was a man’s man, who was not ashamed thus to show his profound devotion to Our Lady, and his trust in Her promise to save any Catholic from hell who dies wearing the scapular.

By mid-afternoon, the yacht resumed cruising, and after dinner there was traditional ballroom dancing with a disc jockey playing a few old classics from the 1890’s to the 1920’s, and then favorite oldies from the 1950’s to the 1960’s.

On Friday morning the Standart docked at the Lake Huron port of Alpena, in the northeastern quadrant of Michigan, and a land excursion was announced. Mikhail and Mariya, George and Katarina, Vladimir and Olga, and Kiril and the captain rode in the Standart’s large SUV to a remote private hunting preserve off Hubbard Lake. The club had an exemption from hunting season and license rules, and for a fee one was allowed to

shoot wild game that was expertly managed. Mikhail shot a buck deer, which was dressed out in the woods, and then taken to the club's meat processing hut. The processed venison meat would be delivered to the Standart kitchen before departure on Sunday noon.

On Saturday, the group took a tour of northeastern Michigan on the Standart's eight Harley-Davidson motorcycles. They visited the historic lighthouse at Harrisville, ate lunch at a rustic lakefront family restaurant in the quiet farming town of Lincoln, and circled large, sandy-bottomed Hubbard Lake before returning to Alpena. Mikhail was thrilled by the white birches, plentiful in northern Michigan, which reminded him so strongly of rural Russia.

On Sunday morning, the Standart chapel was opened onto the dining room, so that the guests and staff could attend Mass. At ten o'clock Father Kiril offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in the Traditional Latin Rite, and Mariya played the small dining room pipe organ with Mikhail serving as cantor. Eight singers from the Cova Latin Mass choir also performed polyphonic Latin classics. After Mass, a buffet-style brunch was served at noon, as the Standart lifted anchor and got underway, with an overnight stop planned at Point Aux Pins on Bois Blanc Island. Mikhail loved the reason the French explorers had named the island "White Wood" – its vast forests were filled with Russian-like white birches.

On Monday noon the Standart entered the harbor on Mackinac Island, the world-famous state park preserving Nineteenth Century charm. Motor vehicles (other than fire and ambulance) are banned from the island, except in winter when snowmobiles are allowed for permanent residents. Horse-drawn vehicles provide all usual services, and bicycles are very popular. A collection of Victorian-era "cottages" (that most people would call mansions) had been built by wealthy families in the late Nineteenth Century, on high bluffs overlooking the Straits of Mackinac.

The straits connect Lake Huron to Lake Michigan, dividing the State of Michigan into two peninsulas, separated by five miles of water, but connected by the Mackinac Bridge, a landmark suspension bridge built in the 1950's. Mackinac Island is accessible only by public ferry boat, private yacht, or private airplane.

Upon the arrival of the Standart, the guests disembarked and toured the shops of old downtown Mackinac Island, while horse-drawn wagons carried their luggage up the hill to the Grand Hotel¹¹⁷, a world-famous seasonal destination that had frequently hosted conferences of world leaders. Tonight the hotel had been bought out by the Brown Group, which was hosting a private ball in honor of Mikhail Romanov. Business and political leaders from the Midwest and numerous members of the Romanov Nobility Organization had been given rooms, along with the entire guest list of the Standart. A twenty-five piece live orchestra from the nearby Interlochen Arts Academy would provide ballroom dancing throughout the evening. The usual five-course dinner, included with

¹¹⁷ www.grandhotel.com

one's room and served in the hotel grand dining room, would precede the dancing, with live music provided by a string quartet. Waiters, who mostly came annually from the Caribbean for the well-paid seasonal positions, were dressed in starched uniforms and wore white gloves. They exuded a pride in their service which, combined with the historic hotel itself, transported hotel guests back to the world of the late Nineteenth or early Twentieth Century.

The Grand Hotel opened in 1877, financed by a consortium of railroad companies needing suitable accommodations for well-heeled travelers visiting the unspoiled beauty of northern Michigan. By the 1890's, the immense wood-frame hotel's white-columned front porch – still the longest in the world – became *the* place to meet on the island. Its romantic story continued to unfold uninterrupted, as the hotel became a national landmark and persisted determinedly in operating with the furnishings and style of service typical of an earlier, more relaxed era. In 1980 the Grand Hotel was featured in the motion picture *Somewhere in Time*, starring Christopher Reeve, Jane Seymour, and Christopher Plummer. Always improving, the hotel won an award in the early Twenty-first Century for a unique environmentally friendly air conditioning system. All one hundred seventy rooms were cooled by cold ground water (endlessly replenished by nature on the island) that, once hot, was then recirculated to warm the outdoor swimming pool. The list of famous personages to have stayed at the hotel included United States Presidents; many foreign heads of states, both elected and royal; international celebrities in fields as diverse as cinema, music, athletics, and literature; and a great many of the world's wealthiest individuals. But this would be the first time a Russian crown prince had ever been an honored guest. And it would be the first time that a great many members of the Russian Nobility Organization had made their way north to this elegant hotel, as a group, for such an event.

Five of the hotel's best top-floor rooms, which projected out over the front porch atop the huge white columns and provided a panoramic view of the water, were assigned to Mikhail, Mariya, George and Katarina, Vladimir and Olga, and Kiril. An additional two dozen similar rooms were assigned to Marina Mikhailovna Romanov, Grigory Mikhailovich Romanov, Don and Theresa Brown, and leading Michigan political and community leaders. The Michigan governor, who was in residence at the nearby summer Governor's Mansion, planned to attend the ball. All told, there were more than three hundred guests for the dinner and ball, all required to be attired according to standard hotel policy: elegant evening dress for the ladies, and black tie (preferred) or at least suit coat and tie for the gentlemen. Mariya and Katarina wore the same elegant but modest silk gowns and diamond jewels as at the Romanov Ball in New York, causing many of the Romanov's to rejoice in this October re-creation of that magic June evening in New York.

The dining room was arranged in a fashion similar to the Romanov Nobility Ball in New York, with a head table on a raised platform,

where Mikhail and Mariya sat alongside Marina and Grigory. What was wonderfully different was that the grace of religious conversion recently showered upon Russia also seemed to have extended to the vast majority of the Romanov nobles in exile. There was now an enthusiasm among the Romanov's for Russia's future as a Catholic Confessional State, preserving the Orthodox Rite and, soon, restoring the Christian monarchy. It no longer seemed academic to discuss who was first in line for the throne, and there was almost universal consensus among the Romanov's that Mikhail was God's chosen man.

As the evening of elegant dancing unfolded, Mikhail and Mariya thoroughly enjoyed every dance. Each Romanov partner they encountered strove to make them feel warmly welcome and honored. Dancing with secular American politicians, however, was a different experience. Mikhail and Mariya could sense a certain fundamental disdain that every convinced believer in modern democracy would feel when face to face with a potential royal pretender. The reaction felt when dancing with businesspeople was somewhat intermediate: they felt the same deep disdain for royalty as potential rulers, but the businesspeople were fascinated by the idea of Russia reorganizing herself, and were excited about possibilities to expand their small and medium-sized business models into the new nation.

By half past eleven o'clock, the final dance was over, and many guests began drifting away to their rooms. In the morning, Tuesday, Father Oleg Romanov was going to offer a weekday Orthodox Mass in the hotel ballroom, and the Catholics would all walk downtown to Sainte Anne's Catholic Church¹¹⁸ for daily Mass. The reunification of the two Churches was already underway, but it would take time before the faithful grew accustomed to visiting either rite, as available, when traveling.

By midnight, Mikhail and Mariya had found their way to the Cupola Bar, on the upper balcony level of the hotel's immense two-story rooftop cupola. From their table for two beside a front window, as he sipped Black Russian coffee liqueur while she had coffee, they watched the light of the full moon dancing on the calm waters of the straits. Behind them, an antique Tiffany cut glass chandelier, about ten feet tall, sporting multicolored glass flowers and candelabra bulbs, was suspended from the ceiling above but extended down below the level of their balcony floor. In the back corner, a pianist provided soft romantic music.

"Finally, we have some time for each other!" said Mariya. "In some ways, it is more stressful to attend a ball where everyone accepts us, than it was in New York where we were actively courting the Romanovs' favor."

"That's because, already, many people are looking for ways to ingratiate themselves to the probable next Tsar and Tsarina of Russia. We are no longer just private individuals; now, already, we represent the Crown."

"Still, tonight was thrilling. One would have thought it was 1910 once again, and Nicholas himself had come to America to dance the night away

¹¹⁸ www.steanneschurch.org

at The Grand Hotel. Many people commented to me on how much you remind them of the last Tsar.”

“Nicholas would have felt very much at home here, as northern Michigan bears a great resemblance to rural Russia. Perhaps we – uh, I – shall not feel so homesick living in Russia, when I can so easily pretend I am back in my home state.”

“These few days on the water have helped me to think deeply, and with clarity,” said Mariya. “You don’t have to keep pretending that we are not thinking we will be together for all our lives.”

“Things are developing at breakneck speed in Russia. And, it would seem, in the romantic life of the Russian crown prince.”

Mariya smiled at him, and reached across the table to take his hand. Immediately a photographer’s flash startled everyone in the room. Mikhail glared at the young man as he dashed down the back stairway into the lower level of the Cupola Bar, probably planning to email the photo to a media syndicate for the next-day’s gossip pages.

“Our days of privacy in public are very nearly gone,” said Mikhail. “But I have arranged for one last adventure that will be out of sight of the spying paparazzi. Would you come with me now, on a moonlight carriage ride? I have an open horse-drawn carriage reserved, out in back of the hotel, for twelve-thirty.”

“What a sweet idea, Misha. On the night of a full moon!”

“We have to exit the hotel through the loading dock, and the carriage will meet us right there when I contact the driver’s cell phone. That way we won’t be followed.”

“It really has started, hasn’t it, Misha?”

“I’m afraid so. The whole world is now watching this cruise of the Standart.”

After a brief stop in their rooms to get ready, with less formal clothes and jackets for the cool September evening, they descended to the basement in the service elevator and found their way to the loading dock, by Mikhail’s prior arrangement with the hotel manager. Mikhail texted the driver, and in two minutes they were seated in the carriage with a wool blanket over their legs. The clip-clop of the horse’s hooves on the paved street, the slight breeze off the water, and the brilliant orb of the full moon high above created a magically romantic setting. The carriage took them northbound up the hill on Cadotte Avenue, then east on Huron Road behind Fort Mackinac and down along the East Bluff, a ridge from which the moonlit waters could be seen all along their route. Fireflies winked in the wooded glens behind the open lawns, and the glow of warm candle-lights in the windows of the Victorian-era mansions stirred in both their hearts a desire for hearth and home.

“Mariya, this is the moment I have been waiting for. I suppose it cannot wait any longer.”

As he spoke, he reached into his jacket pocket and withdrew a small box wrapped in shiny white paper and a golden ribbon.

“I am a miserable old bachelor, who squandered his youth on music

and medical school and war. You are a young princess, magnificent in beauty and radiant in your prime. I do not pretend that I feel in any way worthy to ask you this. But, my love, I must know. Will you marry me?"

Tears welled up in Mariya's eyes, as she smiled at Mikhail, and took his hand firmly in hers.

"Of course, silly. I thought you'd never ask."

"Then, as a token of my promise to love you only and always, will you accept this small gift?"

Mariya's hands trembled as she grasped the little package, and struggled to untie the golden bonds that seemed to say she would need to struggle to fully grasp what her heart desired. As the clip-clop of the horse's hooves continued, Mariya opened the little box, and gasped in astonishment as she beheld an ornate golden ring, finely crafted with elegant detail, and studded with larger and more numerous diamonds than she could ever have imagined. On the outer band were engraved the Russian words for "Princess Mariya."

"It is hardly worthy of you, my princess. But it means that I will promise to love you until the day when death must part us."

"Misha, I too will always love you. There is no doubt that God has brought us together, and that our vocation is to lead both our home and our ancestral nation by right example. We are called to be a beacon of hope to millions of ordinary couples, who need to believe that, even in this world, it is possible to live together in love and faith until death."

"Mariya, I am so relieved that you have said 'Yes'! I really thought you would say that you cannot be sure, that there is too much pressure now, with the press beginning to breathe down our necks at every turn."

"As long as I can be beside you, my dear Misha, I can face the world."

For a few minutes they sat arm in arm. Both experienced a profound peace, as one important aspect of their future lives now seemed settled. They both hoped that the security they felt at each other's side would ever strengthen them when misfortune loomed before them, or when danger surrounded them.

"I have asked the driver to bring us down into the far end of town, and to come back along the main street to stop in front of Sainte Anne's Church. We will be there in a few minutes. The driver is the parish maintenance man, and has a key, and he will let us in to pray."

"And of course that is all coincidence, that this particular man would just happen to be our driver."

"Of course."

"Well, it is a wonderful idea, Misha. We have made a promise to one another tonight. Now we need to storm Heaven, asking Our Blessed Mother Mary and Saint Joseph, Her Most Chaste Spouse, to obtain for us the grace we will need to fulfill our vocation."

As they rode, doubling back along the East Bluff and then descending onto Main Street by way of Franklin Street, Mikhail recounted the history of the little church in which they would soon kneel together. Roman Catholicism had come to the Straits of Mackinac through the self-

sacrificing labor of Jesuit missionaries. In 1670 Father Jacques Marquette brought a band of refugee Huron Indians to the safety of the secluded island. A year later, they moved to the north shore of the straits, where they founded the Mission of Saint Ignatius Loyola, today known as the town Saint Ignace, Michigan. The first Sainte Anne's Church on the island had been a log cabin, but the current white wood-frame gothic-revival structure was built in the 1800's and had been carefully preserved.

Despite some modernization including the addition of a new table-style altar for the New Mass, the church still had an intact sanctuary with the old ornate high altar suitable for the Tridentine Mass. And it still retained a partial altar rail, making possible the traditional posture of kneeling for Communion received on the tongue. Ornate side altars honoring the Blessed Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph had also been preserved. On the curved ceiling high above the altar was a tasteful modern mural of a smiling Saint Anne – standing beside her seated Daughter, the Blessed Virgin Mary, on a cloud overlooking Mackinac Island – and holding her Divine Grandson, the Infant Jesus. A small organ in the rear choir loft had been installed several years ago. It was an antique two-manual pipe organ long since removed from a small Catholic church that had been closed, and had been obtained through the Organ Historical Society's organ clearing house. It had been refurbished in Vladimir Romanov's Detroit organ shop, and then installed in Sainte Anne's Church by his work crew. The summer concert series on the island, and the popularity of weddings in the church, had both increased the demand for a suitable instrument. The gradual restoration of traditional church music and Gregorian chant under Pope Nicholas, finally beginning to implement what Vatican II had recommended, had also been a factor. The return to Catholic tradition had been greatly facilitated by the new, accurate English translation of the New Mass that had gone into use in Advent 2011.

Soon the carriage came to rest in front of the historic church, at a position overlooking the harbor. The lights of the immense Standart glowed softly, and her white hull, resting in the peaceful water, shone quietly in the moonlight. The driver led Mikhail and Mariya up the steps, unlocked the door, and switched on the spotlights to illuminate the high altar and the two side altars. The red sanctuary lamp glowed, indicating that the Blessed Sacrament was reserved in the tabernacle.

"I'll lock you two inside, so no one will be able to disturb you," said the driver. "But I do think we completely fooled the press tonight. The doors will open from inside, and when you come out, I'll secure the church before we head back."

Now alone together, Mariya and Mikhail both blessed themselves with holy water from the font at the rear, and then genuflected before the Lord Jesus present in the Tabernacle on the high altar. Then, hand in hand, they slowly approached the front of the church, and took their places in the front pew, where they knelt to adore Christ's Real Presence, and to lift their hearts and minds Heavenward. The moonlight shone through the stained-glass windows just enough for them to discern the images of

symbols from the life of Christ. Mikhail suggested that they pray the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary together, mediating on five early events in the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary, beginning with the Annunciation by the angel Gabriel, and ending with the finding of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the temple, teaching the elders of Israel. Mary's visit to Her cousin Elizabeth; Jesus' birth in Bethlehem; and Jesus' presentation in the temple when He was forty-days-old, came in between. Both Mikhail and Mariya pondered how they too, in accepting their vocation to marry, would be undertaking to bring forth children, one of whom would be born to be king.

After the Rosary was complete, they each moved to a side altar. Mariya went to the left side and knelt before the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She realized that, from the perspective of Christ in the Tabernacle, Mary was at His right hand, the proper place of honor for the Queen of Heaven and Earth. Mariya pondered how Mary, too, had been young, by the standards of Her day, when called to become the Mother of a King. But unlike Mary, Who had made a vow of perpetual virginity and so would be the Mother of only the one Child conceived in Her womb by the Spirit of the Most High, Mariya would marry a man with whom she would hope to have many children, children whose vocation would be to worthily lead a Christian nation as Grand Dukes and Grand Duchesses, and one of whom would someday become the next Tsar. Like Mary, she would spend her life preparing her children to fulfill their roles, and being a worthy helpmate to her husband the Tsar. In all the privilege and grandeur they would enjoy, they would be called to set a high and right example before their people, to give hope to all that, in a rightly-ordered Christian society, enduring love and commitment is possible, and even usual. Mariya prayed that her Blessed Mother, Queen of Heaven and Earth, would intercede for her in the Courts of Heaven, in order that, by grace, she might be found worthy of her role as a Christian queen upon earth.

Meanwhile, Mikhail moved to the right side of the church, and knelt before the altar bearing a statue of Saint Joseph, Foster Father of the Child Jesus and Most Chaste Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He pondered how Saint Joseph must have known, through all the hidden years in Nazareth, that the young Woman he protected and loved, and the Child Whom She had borne, were, like Joseph himself, of royal blood of the house of David the King. Like Joseph, Mikhail had lived his life up until this time in a world that did not welcome a man born to be king. Just as Joseph had first taken the family on the flight into Egypt, and then, after an angel assured him it was safe, had returned quietly to the hamlet of Nazareth; so Mikhail's parents had at first hidden their real family name, and then when it seemed safe they had adopted their true Romanov name, but had still remained hidden in Detroit. And then, suddenly, the time had come for Mikhail to be revealed to the world, just as Jesus had finally, at age thirty, begun His public life. Jesus had felt strong reluctance to perform His first public miracle in Cana. No doubt He longed to pretend that He could continue in His sweet life, with Mary His Mother, in the

family carpenter shop in Nazareth. But time and circumstance forced Him to heed His Mother's intercession for the hosts of the wedding, and in so doing He revealed Who He was. Likewise, Mikhail had enjoyed his daily life in Nazareth, Michigan, as a little-known Adjunctive Professor of Medicine, and sometime assistant organist and bass soloist at the cathedral. But for him, too, time and circumstance had brought those quiet days to an end, and now he knelt, asking the intercession of Saint Joseph, to help him fulfill his role as a father, not only to the children whom God might send him, but to an entire nation now basking in the warm glow of a new dawn of faith.

Suddenly, as they both prayed, their organists' hearts thrilled when the little pipe organ began to play *The Russian Hymn*. Both looked back at the organ loft, and smiled when they saw the silhouette of Vladimir Romanov at the organ. He had come to serenade them on this night of their betrothal. Probably a plot worked out with his brother Mikhail, thought Mariya. As the strains of the glorious hymn filled the church, both were stirred with dreams of Christian Russia, rising from the ashes of its atheistic nightmare as the brightness of the new Russian sunrise unfolded. When the hymn was done, Vladimir launched into Mariya's favorite short work by J.S. Bach, *Nun Danket Alle Gott* ["Now Thank We All Our God"]. Both Mikhail and Mariya felt their souls soar Heavenward, filled with joy and thanksgiving to God, for the great blessing which had occurred this night. Next, Vladimir played J.S. Bach's *In Dir Ist Freud* ["In Thee is Joy"], which likewise thrilled their hearts, this being Mikhail's favorite short work by Bach. Finally, Vladimir played a Romanov family favorite hymn, *Crown Him With Many Crowns*. The words were penned by Matthew Bridges who, like Blessed John Henry Newman, was a member of the Anglican Oxford movement and eventually became a convert to the Catholic Faith. Mikhail and Mariya both sensed that Vladimir was honoring them in view of their own future crowns, while reminding them that every Christian king or queen, in taking up the crown, also takes up the cross. Indeed, every married couple, as king and queen of their own home, likewise take up the Cross of Christ and sacrifice themselves for one another and for their children.

When the music stopped, Mikhail and Mariya left their respective places of prayer and contemplation, genuflected before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and then met Vladimir in the rear of the church where they embraced him as he offered his hearty congratulations. Soon, the happy couple was back in the carriage, warmed by the blanket, and again viewing the immense yacht, the *Standart*, floating in the still water in the moonlight. They watched Vladimir, ever the outdoorsman, ride up the street toward the hotel on horseback. It was now almost two o'clock in the morning, and the downtown street was completely deserted. No photographers lurked behind pillars or just inside doorways. They both felt glad that Tuesday morning Mass at Sainte Anne's Church would not be until eleven o'clock, so that they could have sufficient rest – though Mariya wondered if she could really sleep. Of course she would wake

her parents and spend an hour with them, showing them her new ring and telling all about the moonlight ride and their prayers in the church. That way, her mother Katarina would not be able to sleep much for the rest of the night either, and it would be fair.

On Tuesday morning, breakfast had to be completed in the Grand Dining Room by ten o'clock, so that they could keep the required one-hour fast before Mass. Often, Mikhail and Mariya fasted from the night before, to keep the custom of an earlier time, but today they were famished and Mass would be late. Everyone in the Standart party had been instructed to have their luggage down to the lobby before leaving for Mass, and after Mass they would proceed directly on board the Standart, where lunch would be served soon after they got underway. Their destination would be Beaver Island, in northern Lake Michigan, where they would dock for two nights, spending the entire day on Wednesday exploring the town on bicycles, the vast island on motorcycles, and the inner sand dune heights on foot. This time, they would all sleep on board the Standart, since the island offered no elegant accommodations in the little harbor town of Saint James.

On Thursday the Standart departed the Beaver Island harbor in the morning, for an afternoon arrival in Charlevoix. There, the pier channel would take them inland to the harbor, and then another channel would take them farther inland onto large and beautiful Lake Charlevoix, famous for its sandy bottom and considered by many to be the most beautiful lake in the world. Lakes in northern Michigan grow cold by September, but on Friday there would be a "polar bear" water skiing outing on the Standart's motor launch, and a Friday night stay in the harbor at Boyne City on the east end of the lake.

On Saturday the Standart sailed back out onto Lake Michigan, and docked at Traverse City in the west arm of Grand Traverse Bay. Mikhail and Mariya were scheduled to perform on Saturday evening for the music students at the world-famous Interlochen Arts Academy, set on an isthmus between two lakes in the north woods, fifteen miles southwest of Traverse City. Many world-famous musicians had performed and taught there, but never a Russian crown prince. They would be performing the excerpts from Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker*, arranged for piano two hands and organ two hands and two feet, which they had performed together at the Romanov Nobility Ball in New York City. Mariya would also perform four of the piano and organ works from her Moscow and Kalamazoo recitals, and bass soloist Mikhail would perform a romantic Russian song or two, accompanied by many of the same Arts Academy orchestra players who had played for the ball at the Grand Hotel.

On Sunday, after Mass on board, the Standart departed Traverse City, heading south past the Sleeping Bear Sand Dunes. The yacht docked that evening in the harbor at Ludington, where there would be a beach excursion on Monday, and climbing of the immense sand dunes at Ludington State Park.

Early Wednesday morning The Standart departed Ludington and

anchored off South Haven in calm waters. The afternoon was spent on a walking tour of the quaint Victorian resort town, with a bus excursion to a local winery in Fennville. A sunset dinner cruise on Lake Michigan was held aboard the Standart. After dinner, Mariya thrilled the guests with a performance of Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 17 in D Minor, "The Tempest".

On Thursday the Standart docked in Benton Harbor / St. Joseph, and there was a dinner excursion for Mikhail and Mariya and their families to Tosi's Restaurant at Stevensville, a famous destination restaurant for Chicagoans coming around the south shore to the Indiana and Michigan dunes. George and Katarina were stirred with memories of dining there years ago, in the early days of their courtship and romance.

At one o'clock on Friday morning, The Standart quietly left the port of Benton Harbor, for a crossing of the southern end of Lake Michigan to arrive at the Chicago Harbor in mid-morning. The harbor was a calm expanse of water enclosed by man-made breakwaters of piled rocks. It could accommodate only one yacht as large as the Standart, by prior reservation. A crowd of at least two hundred well-wishers stood near the dock, with placards to welcome the Russian Crown Prince Mikhail and his new fiancée, Princess Mariya. The harbor was in the museum district at the southern edge of downtown, placing it only a short ride from the Chicago Hilton Hotel where the next Romanov Ball was to take place Friday evening. A similar crowd of well-wishers was gathered outside the hotel, shouting warm greetings as Prince Mikhail and Princess Mariya and their party disembarked from their limousines.

The Chicago Hilton Hotel, the twenty-eight story, one thousand forty-four room flagship of the Hilton Hotels chain, was built in 1927 as the Stevens Hotel, and was at that time the largest hotel in the world. It suffered bankruptcy during the Great Depression, and served for a number of years as a United States Air Force barracks housing ten thousand troops. After World War II, Conrad Hilton bought the hotel in 1951 and named it after himself. The Normandie Lounge was fitted out with the wood paneling from the famous steamship of the same name. The largest guest suite, a two-story penthouse of five thousand square feet, had been occupied over the previous half-century by a great many of the world's rich and famous.

Most of the Romanov's who had attended the ball at the Grand Hotel a few nights earlier would be in Chicago tonight. The Illinois governor, the Chicago mayor, the Russian Consulate for Chicago, and prominent politicians and businessmen from the Tri-State region would also attend.

The evening's festivities began with a formal dinner in the Waldorf Room. In traditional Romanov family style, a head table on a raised platform accommodated Mikhail and Mariya, Marina and her son Grigory, and the leading guests of honor. Behind the table, on a large red banner, was the modern Russian Federation coat of arms, still featuring the Romanov double-headed eagle bearing a crown topped with a cross, and holding orb and scepter (hints of past and future monarchy) in its talons. A Hilton podium was placed at the left front corner of the platform, beside

the tricolor Russian flag of white, blue, and red. At the conclusion of the dinner, the Illinois governor and the Chicago mayor delivered master politicians' typical remarks, welcoming everyone to the Great State of Illinois and to Chicagoland, the Windy City.

Then the Russian Consulate announced that Mikhail was to be honored with a certificate of full Russian citizenship, by Executive Order of The Honorable Vasily Alexandrovich Polzin, President of the Russian Federation. The order cited three reasons for the honor: First, Doctor Romanov's record of distinguished academic service as a regular Guest Lecturer in Medicine at the University of Moscow and the University of Saint Petersburg. Second, Doctor Romanov's record of distinguished service to the people of Russia as the organizer of a series of medical service expeditions to medically-underserved communities in several of the most remote areas of Russia. Third, Doctor Romanov's unique heritage as the undisputed heir, according to the last version of the Romanov dynastic laws, to the Russian throne – in the event that the people of Russia should choose to restore the Russian monarchy and Romanov dynastic rule. Doctor Romanov was born a citizen of the United States of America, yet of the most distinguished of all possible Russian ancestry. He had demonstrated a selfless dedication to serving others, both in the United States and in the Russian Federation, and had thus shown himself to be uniquely worthy of the honor of citizenship in the Russian Federation.

Now, therefore, President Polzin had declared that Doctor Romanov would be permitted to hold dual citizenship in both the Russian Federation and the United States of America, excepting only that if he should someday choose to move permanently to Russia and to assume hereditary powers of leadership, he would then be expected to formally renounce any foreign citizenship. The Consulate presented Mikhail with a certificate, encased in a black leather folding cover bearing the Russian Federation seal with the Romanov double-headed eagle.

The audience cheered enthusiastically for the American small-town doctor who, in all probability, would eventually become the new Russian Tsar. Marina Mikhailovna Romanov, previously the heir-apparent until Mikhail's existence had become known and investigated by the Romanov family, made a few fitting comments, indicating her acceptance of and admiration for Mikhail as the previously hidden but rightful heir to the throne. She called upon all noble Romanov's who loved Russia to unite behind Mikhail as the man obviously chosen by Divine Providence to lead their Russia into the new Christian century. Marina concluded by asking Mikhail – whom she had forewarned a week previously – to kindly address the gathering. Dressed in a tuxedo, and sporting the neatly trimmed full beard and mustache that made him appear so strikingly similar to Tsar Nicholas II, Mikhail now approached the podium. He paused for a moment, gathering his thoughts as he scanned the audience. When he began to speak, his sonorous bass voice resonated musically throughout the huge dining hall, and his presence projected at once both profound humility and kingly dignity.

“Distinguished officials, honored Russian nobility, and ladies and gentlemen: I stand before you tonight, humbled by your warmth, and wondering who I am to be standing in this place of honor. Tonight my heart is filled with music and joy, because of the beautiful and talented young princess who has honored me with her companionship this evening. I would like to take this opportunity to announce to you, and to the world, that during the recent Great Lakes cruise of the world’s finest yacht, the Standart, Princess Mariya Peterson of Detroit, of the European pure royal blood, accepted my proposal of marriage, and is now engaged to wed the unworthy Crown Prince of Russia. No date for the wedding has yet been set, but it will not take place until some months after the upcoming December referendum in Russia.”

He motioned for Mariya to stand up and join him beside the podium, and together Mikhail and Mariya held hands, smiled, and waved as the enthusiastic and adoring audience stood up to clap and cheer. Press photographers’ flashes brightened the room, as if offering a display of fireworks. There was stomping of feet and clanging of glasses, as the audience called for a first public royal kiss. Once that joyful duty had been fulfilled, Mikhail motioned for the audience to be seated, and resumed his address.

“Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for your warm welcome. Only a matter of weeks ago, I was an ordinary physician and teacher in the quiet hamlet of Nazareth, just outside Kalamazoo, Michigan. I had always known that, in theory, I was the legitimate Crown Prince of Russia, but I had also believed that such a title would never have any practical significance on the contemporary world stage, at least not during my lifetime. Now, suddenly, the world is watching Russia with amazement. Over these past three months we have all seen the daily television news reports. Since the consecration of Russia by the Pope in June, the Russian people have exhibited a miraculous change of heart. We have all witnessed countless impromptu sidewalk interviews, conducted live, with random Russians from all walks of life, and from cities and villages all across the vast expanse of the Russian Federation. Nothing like this has been witnessed in modern history.

“For the first month, the Western press was giving out that these events were obviously planned and staged. During the second month, the world news media tried mentioning Russia as little as possible. But for the third month now just ending, public enthusiasm in Russia for a complete restructuring of the nation, and the persistence of this profound conversion of heart among Russians everywhere, has become impossible for the global press to ignore. The secular humanist academicians have been at a complete loss to explain how this can be possible. Those of

us who are believers, however, have no problem understanding what has taken place. Our Lady of Fatima, in response to the Holy Father's obedience to Her simple request first made in 1917, has obtained for Russia a most singular grace: Russia has been converted by Heaven. The painful schism between the Roman Catholic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church has been healed. Russia remains Russian Orthodox, yet now she is also Roman Catholic. And, God be praised, Holy Mother Russia appears to be on the fast track to becoming an Orthodox Catholic Confessional State.

"Russia, once the militantly atheistic nemesis of every Christian believer in Europe and America, has suddenly converted. Suddenly, one is hard pressed to find on the streets of Saint Petersburg, or Moscow, or Perm, or Vladivostok, a Russian man or woman who does not express the desire to return to church, and to learn how to order his or her life and thought according to the teachings of the Russian Orthodox Catholic Church. Russians want their nation to be officially Christian. Within the borders of Russia, even those minorities who adhere to the Muslim or Jewish religions admit that under Christian rule they will be treated with justice and respect, and have little to fear, since Catholic doctrine forbids forced conversions and encourages loving kindness as the best means of evangelization.

"Russians are suddenly admitting openly that modern 'democracy' is inevitably nothing but a façade for plutocratic oligarchy. Democracy can function well at the local level, but never at the level of a region or nation. Russians are now clamoring for a restoration of Russia's Christian monarchy. They see that tyranny can occur under any form of government, when power seeks to array itself against the Lord God, and against His Anointed Christ. Russians want a Christian king to lead them in serving Christ.¹¹⁹ They want laws that encourage Christian virtue and discourage or even punish vice and evil. They want decentralized government, with local democratic rule, and businesses on a human scale, all united on a regional and national level by a Christian monarch who stands above politics and money, and works for justice and for the long-term common good.

"Russians are also calling for an end to the domination of the world economy by American 'funny money,' the so-called 'Federal Reserve Notes' which have no intrinsic worth at all, and are therefore known as 'fiat currency.' Lest you think me unpatriotic, my fellow Americans, let me remind you that the Constitution of the United States specifies that only Congress has the power to coin money, and that the Founding Fathers intended that the unit of money would be a specific weight of silver, at a

¹¹⁹ Lucas, *The New Cold War*, pages 120-121. See Bibliography.

specific purity, which the original Coinage Act called a ‘dollar.’ For more than a hundred years you have lived under the tyranny of a privately-owned, unconstitutional central bank which has, in effect, stolen your government – and your savings – away from you. Gradually, our central bank removed all precious metals from monetary circulation, and by 1971 the United States dollar no longer had any real worth at all. Russians are realizing that, through the Bretton Woods Agreement put in place at the end of World War II, this sort of corrupt ‘funny money’ system has been exported by the American financial empire to all the modern developed nations, including the post-Communist Russian Federation. ‘Fiat’ currency systems are nothing but elegant Ponzi schemes requiring an endless increase in debt that can never be repaid. They favor the already-rich and the well-connected, and, over time, effectively enslave the common people. Russians are now calling for honest money, the money that is taken for granted in the Sacred Scriptures. Russians demand a medium of exchange that holds its value over generations, currency which guards and protects the welfare of the common man. History has proved that gold and silver work best as honest money.

“Russians are expressing their weariness and anguish over a hopelessly broken social system. The Russian divorce rate of seventy-five percent exceeds even the fifty to sixty percent divorce rate typical of developed Western nations. And from the liberalism that begets rampant divorce stem all the social evils of immoral lifestyles; cultural suicide through contraception, abortion, and euthanasia; meaningless education without any foundation in Truth; and a secular materialism that denies the human soul access to the only nourishment it truly needs and craves, the Bread of Life, Our Lord Jesus Christ. Russians see that any once-Christian nation that turns its back on the laws of God will gradually self-destruct. There is a new hunger in Russia for truth and righteousness, both in individuals and in the social structures by means of which men work together for the common good. There is a new desire among Russians to once again take up the cross, to live lives of noble sacrifice in doing good for others. Russians want to build up a new Christian world, in the same way the Catholic and Orthodox missionaries of the past two millennia built Western and Eastern Christian civilization upon the noble foundations of ancient Greece and Rome. Russians want to rebuild Christendom beginning at home in Russia, and they hope the whole world will eventually decide to join with them.

“In about two and a half months the Russian people will go to the polls and officially declare whether they wish to restore their Christian king; whether they wish him to be autocratic under Christ and His Vicar on earth, or whether they prefer to bind him by the imperfect wisdom of men through a written constitution;

and, whether they wish that king to be me or some other man. I did not go seeking the position in which I now stand; I was born to it, by the Providence of God. And if Heaven sees fit to call me to that noble station, to be the next Christian Tsar of All the Russias, I intend to do my best – by the grace of God and with daily supplication to Heaven for Divine Assistance – to serve God by serving that great nation of His Christian people, Holy Mother Russia.

“As an American patriot who proudly wears the Purple Heart as a badge of my service to my beloved native land, let it be known that never will I harbor ill will, or wish anything but good, upon the United States of America.”

The audience, stunned and silent up to this point, suddenly erupted in loud cheering, and rose to their feet. Mikhail waited until they quieted down a bit, and then continued.

“As the hereditary heir of the Romanov throne of Christian Russia, I pledge, if I shall be asked by the Russian people to ascend that throne, to make Russia a blessing and a beacon of hope to all the world. I pledge to spend my days as Tsar helping Russia to do good, and not evil, to all men and to all nations, both great and small, both Russian and non-Russian. Ladies and gentlemen, may God bless each and every one of you. May God bless the United States of America, the dear land of my birth. And may God bless Holy Mother Russia, and make her to become a very great and special blessing for all mankind, both now, and for countless generations to come. Thank you.”

Again the audience leapt to their feet, cheering wildly, and nodding with animation. They were struck by the difference between this man who spoke from his heart, telling the truth as he saw it, and the career politicians to whom they had been accustomed all their lives. Perhaps there *was* something to this notion of royalty, this idea that there could be a class of Christian men chosen by God and born to rule, and able to bring about good precisely because, embracing the Faith of Jesus Christ, they did not shrink from carrying the cross.

Now it was time for the Chicago Romanov Ball of 2015 to begin. The emcee announced that everyone was invited to move into the Grand Ballroom, a Versailles-inspired room worthy of a European palace, with colonial French oil paintings, ornate twenty-two-carat gold leaf moldings, huge mirrors, and ten French brass and crystal chandeliers. The Grand Ballroom had hosted kings and queens and every United States President since F.D.R. Don Brown had hired players from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra to provide the live music, with an emphasis on Russian and Viennese waltzes.

In accordance with Romanov family protocol, Mikhail and Mariya began the first dance alone, and then were joined part way through by Marina and Grigory. Each successive couple was announced by the emcee as they entered the dance floor: the Governor of Illinois, then the Mayor of Chicago, then the Russian Consulate for Chicago, and then several prominent politicians and business leaders. Finally, all were invited to dance, and the entire dance floor was filled with elegantly attired, waltzing couples. Mikhail and Mariya once again noted, as they danced through the evening with many different partners, the American commoners' deep fondness for royalty, just as long as they did not actually seek to reign; the businessmen's interest in opportunities to expand into the new Russia; and the Romanov family members' genuine warmth and welcoming toward the future royal couple.

After the ball, Mikhail and Mariya and their families found their way to their block of rooms on the executive floors of the Chicago Hilton Hotel. They slept the sleep of ecstatic dreamers, and did not have to arise until mid-morning. After a ten o'clock private daily Mass, offered by Father Kiril in the Traditional Latin Rite in a hotel meeting room, they enjoyed brunch in the magnificent Normandie Room. Then in the early afternoon, they were driven to a small private airport, where they boarded the Brown Group jet to fly back to Detroit City Airport, out of view of most of the press and the adoring but intrusive public.

On board the plane, Mikhail was suddenly disturbed to notice the following article on the front page of the Saturday morning *Chicago Tribune*.

Russian Consulate Assaulted, Hospitalized

The Assistant Ambassador of Russia to the United States, stationed in the Russian Consulate in Chicago, was assaulted last evening en route from the Chicago Hilton Hotel back to his official residence in the North Michigan Avenue mansion district. After presenting a certificate of Russian Citizenship to American Mikhail Romanov (the current pretender to the Russian throne), the ambassador left the hotel in his Bentley sedan. One block from his residence, he was forced to stop for an apparent emergency street construction project, which appears to have been a roadblock set up by his assailants. After being dragged from his car, he was severely beaten, and has been admitted to the trauma unit at Holy Cross Hospital. He is expected to fully recover. He was not robbed, and police say they are at a loss for any motive.

But Mikhail had no difficulty discerning what moved such men: the dark powers who controlled the current world monetary system were threatened by talk of a Christian Kingdom with honest money and justice for the common man. It would soon be time to implement adequate security for all those he loved.

Chapter Twenty-Five

October 2015.

Detroit, Ann Arbor, and Nazareth, Michigan.

After the Great Lakes cruise of the Standart, Mikhail had returned to his medical clinic in Nazareth; and Mariya and her parents, George and Katarina, had returned to their respective universities. Their hearts were at once joyful and troubled – joyful in contemplation of the great good that potentially lay ahead, but troubled in the knowledge that their lives were undergoing permanent upheaval at an ever-accelerating pace. For one thing, they could no longer go out in public without security escort. The Russian Embassy had arranged with the United States Department of State to send trained FSB security personnel to shadow them. This protection extended to the three Peterson family members, and to all six Romanov siblings and their families – Mikhail, Kiril, Vladimir, and the three older sisters Anastasia, Olga, and Alexandra who were married and living in distant American cities. Since all the children in the Romanov clan were homeschooled, the process of keeping them safe was manageable. But the adults all now grasped that their previous personal lives were gone forever. At work or school, others tried to treat them the same as before, and to pretend that nothing had changed. But now there was an aura of awkwardness in every encounter, as others wondered about the proper protocol for an American commoner in the presence of Russian royal persons. And the royal persons themselves felt just as uncertain.

Mikhail had received a humorous Hematology Consultation report, purporting to analyze his condition, from two creative but anonymous medical students whom he suspected were named Luke and Monica. The report documented his condition of “blue blood,” a rare familial hematologic finding last reported in America sometime prior to 1776.

George had received a spoof Psychiatric Evaluation from a group of the medical students at Wayne State University Medical Center, noting that he suffered from grandiose delusions of being a Russian royal prince. His delusional system was quite extensive, as he also claimed that his daughter Mariya, a totally normal Wayne State undergraduate student, was engaged to be married in a big royal wedding to a future Russian Tsar. Intensive psychotherapy and massive doses of antipsychotic medication might bring him partially back to reality, but the “experts” writing the report predicted that his delusions would probably prove quite resistant to available interventions.

The music students at the University of Michigan were less inclined to roast Katarina, and simply tried to pretend that all was as before. But there was a palpable sorrow among them. Professor Fyodovsky had been loved for her special gifts of teaching and motivating. Many students had come to Ann Arbor from distant states or foreign countries specifically to study with Katarina. Now they realized she would not be able to stay for the

remainder of their college years. Katarina was already promising to develop a foreign study option for her Michigan students at the Saint Petersburg Rimsky-Korsakov Conservatory, Russia's most famous music school that could boast of past graduates including Tchaikovsky, Shostakovich, and Prokofiev. Following the recent *Soli Deo Gloria* festival in Moscow, but before Katarina's royal heritage was publicly revealed, she had been honored by a rare open invitation to join the Conservatory faculty. Since the Conservatory already offered a unique program for foreign music students that included intensive Russian language formation, inviting University of Michigan music students did not seem impossible – particularly for a future Tsarina's mother. In this way, Katarina hoped to keep hold on an important part of her former life. Additionally, Katarina was accustomed to traveling the world giving recitals and master classes, and she hoped that could continue.

Vladimir Romanov had not failed to notice Mark's melancholy mood at work in the organ shop, and had consulted with his brother Father Kiril about their mutual young protégé. They both understood what was happening: God was taking the first love of his life away from him, and Mark was trying to shoulder this heavy cross like a man, quietly and without complaining. He needed to ventilate his sorrow, and to find spiritual hope and consolation, and Vladimir felt Father Kiril would be just the one to help him – even if their oldest brother Mikhail was the very one stealing Mariya away from Mark. Kiril too had once loved, and had sacrificed his love to his priestly vocation. So Vladimir and Kiril concocted a reason for Mark to spend an afternoon alone with Father Kiril, ostensibly assisting him with reorganizing Father's music composition studio in the rectory attic. By the end of the afternoon, a tiny bit of the clutter had been reshuffled, but mostly they had talked at length in private. Mark had shed not a few tears, and had disclosed that he "feared the worst": God had taken Mariya away from him so that he would have to face the possibility of a vocation to the priesthood. But Father Kiril cautioned him not to make a rash decision in the throes of his pain and sorrow. Time would tell, and God would cause His will for Mark to gradually become more clear. He was still young, and all options would remain open to him for several years to come. And who could tell – maybe Mariya and Mikhail would one day invite him to serve in the Russian royal court. In summary, Father Kiril counseled that it seemed best to defer any permanent new commitments for the time being.

The Romanovs and the Petersons had begun to contemplate the inevitable day when they would be invited to relocate to Russia. They knew that it could not be long until formal invitations would arrive, initiating the process of uprooting them forever. All of them were fluent in Russian, from their childhood. Romanov tradition designated the siblings and children of a Tsar as Grand Dukes and Grand Duchesses. They would typically hold special positions of leadership in the nation, if not politically or militarily then culturally. While Mikhail was perfectly at

home in Russia, having made six extended visits in the past two years to teach and to perform medical service work in remote villages, the others had more limited experience. George, Katarina and Mariya had, of course, been to Moscow just recently for the *Soli Deo Gloria* competition, but this had been Mariya's very first trip to Russia. Vladimir and Olga had been to Russia several years earlier for an extended time, when his Detroit organ shop sent its tools and crew to Russia to rebuild a historic mechanical-action Hinners pipe organ in a town hall in southwestern Russia. The Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation had been so impressed that it honored Vladimir's work with a Russian postage stamp featuring the organ.¹²⁰

On the first day of October, the dreaded but desired formal invitations arrived by overnight courier service. The Russian government was requesting the Romanov's and the Peterson's to attend the first Romanov Nobility Ball to be held inside the borders of Russia since 1917. Russian Unity Day, a national holiday on the fourth of November, had been selected. The location would be the Alexander Palace in Tsarskoe Selo, just outside Saint Petersburg. This was the palace where Tsar Nicholas II and Tsarina Alexandra had lived up until the revolution. All travel and lodging expenses would be covered by the Russian government, and they would receive generous daily stipends for incidental expenses. Since the palace was currently a state museum, the Romanov and Peterson families would be housed in the most elegant historic hotel in Saint Petersburg, the Astoria. All members of the Romanov Nobility Organization from around the world were also to be invited, and top Russian political, business, and artistic leaders would also attend. Music would be provided by members of the Saint Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra, with an emphasis on Russian and Viennese waltzes.

The Ball would serve the function of introducing Mikhail and Mariya to the current leadership of the Russian nation. Mikhail would be asked to address the nation on television the evening before the national holiday. He would be invited to stay on in Russia indefinitely and tour the nation, meeting the people and becoming acquainted with the various local regions prior to the referendum scheduled for the eighth of December. Since it was already obvious that the Russian people were going to vote to restore the monarchy, plans were underway to refurbish the Alexander Palace to restore the private apartments as a suitable residence for the new Tsar and Tsarina. Mikhail and Mariya would be consulted as soon as possible, so that any specific preferences they might have could be incorporated, though the actual work would not begin until after the referendum.

The Russian government would provide Mikhail with free travel and lodging throughout Russia, beginning immediately after the ball. If the referendum went as expected, Mikhail would become the official Chairman of The Black Virgin of Russia Ministry of Catholic Social Reorganization

¹²⁰ In real life this impressive work was accomplished by the firm Helderop Pipe Organs in downtown Detroit. See http://www.hporgans.com/about_us.htm for an image of the Russian postage stamp.

in Moscow. He would then oversee all arrangements for the Romanov Nobility, as well as for the restructuring of the entire economy and society. In short, he would begin to rule the day after the referendum.

Historically, coronation ceremonies did not usually take place immediately after a Tsar assumed office, and often were delayed for as long as a year in order to make possible arrangements for a suitably magnificent national event. Mikhail was informed that most likely a coronation ceremony would take place in the latter half of July of 2016. The Pope would not be able to come earlier, and the first two weeks of August were a period of traditional fasting before the Orthodox Feast of the Dormition of the Blessed Virgin on August fifteenth. For the first time in Russian history, it would be the Pope of Rome who would crown the new Tsar. It was even already suggested that, for the good of the nation, a date for a royal wedding should precede the coronation by at least two months, making a May or June wedding date optimal.

Archbishop Bogmolov and Patriarch Filaret had already agreed that the royal wedding should take place in the Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Moscow, in the Traditional Latin Rite of the Roman Church. The Coronation, however, should take place in the Orthodox Rite, following the ceremony last used for Nicholas II as closely as possible, except for minor adjustments to reflect the new reality of complete union with Rome. The Romanov Tsars were traditionally crowned in the relatively small Cathedral of the Dormition in the Kremlin, but Filaret felt that it was now more appropriate to use the huge new Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow.

Mikhail began to realize that kings don't plan their own lives. Everything becomes ceremonial, and of great importance to the entire nation. Their wedding would be a worldwide spectacle. Every detail of their honeymoon would be fodder for the paparazzi and the gossip columnists. When they moved into the royal apartments, they would be sleeping in rooms that had been a national museum, and postcard pictures of the royal apartments would be circulated to every corner of the globe.

It was already the first of October, and by the first of November Mikhail would need to move to Russia, probably permanently. Therefore it would not be realistic to keep working very much longer. For decorum, he decided to announce a three-month leave of absence, just in case he should lose the referendum and still need his medical job after all. He didn't really believe that would happen, but he feared it might appear impulsive to quit his "day job" permanently a month *before* the Russian referendum.

Then too, being human, perhaps he was finding it difficult to definitively end his practice, knowing that he might never again find time to practice medicine. Mikhail would pay the rent on his medical clinic building and on his Gull Lake home through December; he was thankful he did not own any real estate. Buying a house had made no sense during his years of military service, and he had been back in civilian life only two years as a bachelor. Now it appeared that he might end up living in

government-issue public housing for the rest of his life: the Alexander Palace in Tsarskoe Selo.

Mikhail and Mariya began to seek spiritual direction from Kiril, both individually and as an engaged couple. As Mariya's home parish pastor, Father Kiril provided them with the usual instructions for couples engaged to be married, and announced the formal wedding banns in the Cova parish, since it would be awkward to do so once they had moved to Russia. Banns are a public announcement that a marriage is going to take place, and serve the purpose of allowing sufficient time for anyone to raise any canonical or civil legal impediment to the proposed marriage, in order to prevent invalid marriages.

The tradition was to publish the banns for at least three Sundays prior to the marriage, but in so important a matter as a royal wedding it seemed prudent to move ahead now, while both parties were still living in the United States. Probably the Archbishop of Moscow would see fit to repeat the banns in Moscow during the weeks just prior to the royal wedding. Father Kiril found it a pleasure to instruct these two souls, since they both were already fully aware of, and in complete agreement with, the teachings of the Catholic Church concerning the sacrament of Holy Matrimony.

They understood that they would be promising to be faithful to each other exclusively, in the duty of Christ-like self-sacrificing love, until death would one day separate them. They would freely accept all the children that God would see fit to send them, and would abhor contraception. It was up to God to decide when and if they would conceive children. They noted that the tradition of hereditary monarchy served to elevate this principle, since the entire nation thereby professed belief in God's exclusive right to select the heir to the throne through His control of conception and birth order.

They would have the primary responsibility for the education of their children and their formation in the Faith, and they would be responsible to maintain a balance between the demands of their official responsibilities and their sacred duty as parents. A Tsar and Tsarina who would run a nation properly must first of all run their own household well.

Mikhail began to talk with Mariya and her parents about their options for the next few months. Mikhail would have to stay in Russia after the ball in early November, in order to introduce himself to the people of Russia prior to the early December referendum. It seemed ideal for Mariya and her parents to plan on moving to Russia by mid-December, once it was undisputed that Mikhail would become the Tsar.

Russian tradition provided that the parents and siblings of a Tsar and Tsarina would be designated as Grand Dukes and Grand Duchesses, and would live in government-owned palaces at government expense, with a generous monthly stipend. In exchange, they were expected to devote their full time to serving the nation and their local communities. Such service could be performed in variety of ways, depending upon the interests and talents of the individual royal person. Mikhail had been advised that all relocation expenses for the extended families of both the Tsar and Tsarina

would be covered by the Russian government, including purchasing any unsold private real estate that they might be vacating in the United States.

Mikhail expected to be busy forming the new government during the first few months of 2016, and during that time Mariya would oversee the renovation of royal palaces in Moscow and Saint Petersburg to serve as the Tsar's official places of residence. Mikhail was already dreaming of also renovating the royal summer palace at Livadia on the Black Sea, but he felt that should be deferred for a year or two until the reorganization of the nation, with increasing justice for the common man, was well underway.

Mikhail and the three Peterson's all agreed that a May royal wedding seemed ideal, with the exact date to be set in cooperation with the Russian government and the Archbishop of Moscow. Don Brown had already offered the use of the Standart for the royal honeymoon, and Mikhail wanted to plan a three-week cruise in the Black Sea and the Mediterranean.

Don had approached Mikhail about moving part time to Russia himself, as he wanted to live in a Catholic Confessional State, but could not completely abandon his charitable projects in Detroit. Don hoped to serve, without compensation, as a consultant to the Tsar's government. He wanted to help develop policies that would encourage the widespread formation of small, locally-run, family-owned businesses, which in turn would facilitate the process of getting wealth widely distributed in the new Catholic society. Don also told Mikhail that he would donate the Standart to the Russian state to become the Russian royal yacht – provided he could continue to use it for two weeks each summer.

The coronation would take place in late July, in conjunction with the first Papal visit to Russia. The government was hoping for July 28, which was a new national holiday beginning in 2010: The Baptism of Saint Prince Vladimir, commemorating the day in 988 A.D. when Kievan Rus first became a Christian nation. This would allow for four days of feasting and celebration in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, before the days of fasting would begin August first. Then, after August fifteenth, when the days of fasting were past, the royal couple would travel throughout Russia for receptions in major regional cities. Public addresses would be made, parades reviewed, royal balls danced, and “town hall” style meetings held.

By the beginning of October 2016, about a year from now, they could finally settle down into their new lives. Hopefully by then, three months after the wedding, a first child would already be conceived, as God began to provide for the next generation of Grand Dukes and Grand Duchesses, one of whom would one day ascend the Romanov Catholic throne.

Chapter Twenty-Six
National Referendum, Tuesday, December 8, 2015,
Feast of the Immaculate Conception.
Russian Federation.

Preparation for the Russian National Referendum had been underway since early August. The ballot contained two simple questions, each asking the voter to either agree with one proposition, or to write in an alternative suggestion. In the event that any proposition should fail to receive support from the required percentage of Russian voters, then the alternative suggestions would be collated, and a new referendum would be held including those suggestions that had received support from at least ten percent of the voters. The two propositions were as follows:

RUSSIAN NATIONAL REFERENDUM
December 8, 2015, A.D. – Feast of the Immaculate Conception
OFFICIAL SECRET BALLOT

I. (Mark only one)

- Professor Doctor Mikhail Nicholaevich Romanov, born in the Year of Our Lord 1981 in the United States of America and now a Citizen of the Russian Federation, being the only living male direct descendant of a Romanov Tsar whose line of descent remains uncompromised by any morganatic marriage, shall, by the popular will of at least two-thirds of the voters in this referendum, assume power immediately as the Tsar of the Russian nation.
- Alternative preference (Please print legibly. Use the reverse side if more space is needed):

II. (Mark only one)

If at least fifty-one percent of the voters in this referendum shall approve any one of the following options, then the Tsar of the Russian nation shall hold power:

- As an autocratic Christian monarch, bound only by the law of Christ and the guidance and advice of Christ's Vicar on Earth, the Pope of Rome.
- As a monarch whose power shall be defined and limited by a written Constitution to be developed and approved in a subsequent referendum by the Russian people.
- As a ceremonial monarch in a Christian Republic, with the political power being wholly invested in an elected legislature, an elective executive, and a Supreme Court appointed by the executive and ratified by the legislature.
- Alternative preference (Please print legibly. Use the reverse side if more space is needed):

Demographics: (For research purposes only, please indicate your religion)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Catholic, Orthodox Rite | <input type="checkbox"/> Muslim |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Catholic, Roman Rite | <input type="checkbox"/> Buddhist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Protestant Christian | <input type="checkbox"/> Other believer: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Judaic believer | <input type="checkbox"/> Non-believer (agnostic or atheist) |

The election was being held on a new national holiday, the Feast of the

Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. December eighth had long been a Holy Day of Obligation for Roman Catholics, but this would be the first time that the Russian Orthodox Catholic Church also celebrated this feast. The Orthodox Rite hierarchy had developed a new Orthodox liturgy specific to this feast, in consultation with liturgical experts provided by Pope Nicholas. Vigil Masses would be celebrated on the evening of December seventh, and feast day Masses would be celebrated throughout the morning on December eighth. For this national referendum, a new rule had been imposed: only those who had been to Mass to keep the feast, and who had received Holy Communion and had their hand stamped, would be eligible to vote on a white paper ballot. They would have their hand stamped by a parish usher immediately after receiving Communion. The design of the required stamp was kept top secret until the evening of December seventh, so there would be little time for counterfeit stamps to be produced and distributed. In addition, of course, voters would have to present their Russian Federation voter identification card at their assigned voting site.

Russian citizens who did not receive Holy Communion, either because they were not in a state of grace, or because they were not Roman Rite or Orthodox Rite Catholics, would still be allowed to vote if they were registered voters. But, since they lacked a hand stamp, they would be required to vote on identical ballots printed on green paper. Also, only green ballots were available for those voters who qualified for advance absentee voting. Green ballot votes would count equally with votes on white ballots, but in the public reporting of the results, two separate totals would be reported to the world. One, the results of the referendum if only the white ballots were counted; and two, the results of the referendum after combining both white and green ballots. If there were any difference in the two results, the result according to the combination of both white and green ballots would prevail. In this manner, the world would see the results of the Catholic vote compared to the results of the vote including all Russian citizens. There could then be no claim that Catholics were using this referendum to unjustly oppress religious minorities.

The polls would open at one o'clock in the afternoon, and remain open until midnight. This was to help everyone to make Mass attendance their first priority of the day, and voting their second priority. It was hoped that the special grace obtained by these rules would ensure that the election had been guided by the will of Heaven. The real goal, according to Patriarch Filaret, was not to discern the will of the people, but rather to discern whether an adequate percentage of the people were now willing to submit to the will of Heaven.

The Russian government had placed a ban on campaign funding and advertising regarding the referendum. The government alone could advertise, and this was limited to encouragement for all eligible voters to participate. Rules for the election, and sample ballots, were widely published. Political banners encouraging participation in the referendum,

and religious banners announcing the new national holiday, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, were posted all across Russia. The clergy of the Catholic Churches (which now included both Roman Rite and Orthodox Rite) were allowed to express their opinion about the referendum openly, not only from pulpits and in parish and diocesan publications, but also in signed opinion pieces and in broadcast interviews. Non-Catholic publications, and businesses or individuals who refused to refrain from election campaigning, or who publicly opposed the referendum, were subject to censorship, and fines could be imposed for repeat infractions. There was a national toll-free “hot line” on which citizens could anonymously report violations of these campaign restrictions. Several newspapers owned by non-Catholic publishers attempted to publish articles decrying the new government “oppression,” and found their publications confiscated, fines threatened for repeat infractions, and their publishing facilities closely monitored by agents of the FSB. Certain television and radio stations and Internet websites experienced the same restrictions.

There was an attempt to mount a “human rights” campaign in many of the Western democracies. It was alleged that the Russian government “was going back to the bad old days of the autocratic Tsars,” and was stripping religious minorities and non-religious persons of their rightful voice in the public square. There was an emergency meeting of the United Nations Human Rights Council, at which a vote was taken condemning the Russian Federation for the ‘undemocratic’ manner in which the referendum was being conducted. The Russian government responded by resigning, not only from the Human Rights Council, but from the United Nations altogether. That included withdrawing from the UNESCO World Heritage Sites program, so that total control of all Russian historical sites would revert to the Russian government. Patriarch Filaret and President Polzin held a news conference in which they explained that Russia was about to become the modern world’s first powerful Catholic Confessional State, and that the purposes of the United Nations, being purely secular, were contrary to Russia’s new Christian goals. They noted that the rules of the United Nations were in many cases increasingly anti-Christian. Patriarch Filaret cited a passage from the First Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians:

Bear not the yoke with unbelievers. For what participation hath justice with injustice? Or what fellowship hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath the faithful with the unbeliever? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God; as God saith: I will dwell in them, and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.¹²¹

Filaret stated that the United Nations was a modern Tower of Babel, a project of men who mistakenly believed they could create justice on earth

¹²¹ I Corinthians 6:14-16, DRV.

through their own wisdom and work, without Christ.¹²² He cited the well known Psalm:

Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.
Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth
it.¹²³

President Polzin then explained that Russia was about to turn inward for a time, to reorganize its economy and society according to the teaching of Christ through the Catholic Church. Russia intended no harm toward any other nation, and had no plans to interfere in the internal affairs of other nations. Russia still had sufficient military might, including its state-of-the-art nuclear shield, so that it could repel any aggression. In time, once Russia had put its own house in order, it would begin offering assistance to any other nations that might wish to correct their internal structure and affairs according to the same Christian principles. Eventually, it was to be hoped that the family of nations would all come to see that the Catholic Church, having its visible head on earth in the Pope of Rome, was God's plan for uniting all nations.

By the time of the Romanov Nobility Ball in November, Mikhail Romanov had arrived in Russia, and made a historic address to the nation, seconding many of the ideas being expressed by Patriarch Filaret and President Polzin. In Tsarskoe Selo, at the Romanov Nobility Ball, Mikhail and Mariya had been well received by the leadership of the Russian Federation. During the month of November, while the Peterson's returned to America to prepare for their eventual relocation to Russia, Mikhail had traveled the length and breadth of the vast Russian nation, meeting with local leaders and common people in every major city and in many small towns. All who made his acquaintance perceived his innate goodness, and his humility.

Finally, after the Russian Referendum took place on December eighth, the results were officially tallied within forty-eight hours. On Friday morning, December eleventh, the official referendum results were reported to the Russian nation and to world on full one-page flyers, a sample of which is reproduced on the next page.

Kiril, from the Cova rectory in Detroit, telephoned Mikhail in his room at the Hilton Leningradskaya Hotel in Moscow. It might be Friday late afternoon in Detroit, but that meant it was the middle of the Russian night.

"May I speak with the Tsar, please?"

"Rumor has it that he is here in this room. Until the phone rang just now he was sleeping, since it is the middle of the night."

"Are you alone?"

¹²² Lucas, *The New Cold War*, page 119. See Bibliography.

¹²³ Psalm 127:1, DRV.

Russian Referendum Results

	White ballots		Green ballots		Total
	Actual Percent	Weighted Percent	Actual Percent	Weighted Percent	Weighted Percent
Percent of all voters:	71	N/A	29*	N/A	100
Option:					
Romanov	97	69	19	6	75**
Other	3	2	81	23	25
Autocrat	73	52	5	1.5	53.5***
Constitutional	15	11	11	3.1	14.1
Ceremonial	10	7.1	80	23	30.1
Other	2	1.3	2	1	2.3

NOTES

- **White ballots** were used only by voters bearing a hand stamp indicating that they had received Holy Communion in a Catholic (Roman or Orthodox Rite) church for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. All other voters used **green ballots** with printed content identical to the white ballots.
- *Of the green ballots, 2% were submitted in advance by voters qualifying for an absentee ballot, and 98% were voted at polling places.
- **75% exceeds the required threshold of 66.7%, so by referendum of the Russian people, **Professor Doctor Mikhail Nicholaevich Romanov is the new Tsar**. It should be noted that even if the green ballots were not counted, the threshold would still be met at 69% and the final result would remain unchanged.
- ***53.5% exceeds the required threshold of 51%, so by referendum of the Russian people, **the Tsar will be an autocratic Christian monarch, bound only by the law of Christ and the guidance and advice of Christ's Vicar on Earth, the Pope of Rome**. It should be noted that even if the green ballots were not counted, the threshold would still be met at 52% and the final result would remain unchanged.

Demographic results:	Number	Number Voting	Percent of voters	Percent of population
Total Population in Census	142,960,000	N/A	N/A	100
Total number of voters	106,075,000	N/A	N/A	74.1
Catholic, Orthodox Rite	90,000,000	88,000,000	83.0	61.6
Catholic, Roman Rite	500,000	495,000	0.50	0.35
Protestant Christian	330,000	315,000	0.30	0.22
Judaic believer	330,000	328,000	0.31	0.23
Muslim	15,000,000	12,000,000	11.31	8.39
Buddhist	100,000	48,000	0.05	0.03
Other believer	16,800,000	3,560,000	3.36	2.49
Non-believer	15,400,000	1,329,000	1.25	0.93

“Yes.”

“Where is your security, bro?”

“In the rooms on both sides of my room. I’m okay, Kiril.”

“Can you handle some bad news, Mike?”

“Let me guess: *The New York Times* doesn’t like me. And they probably don’t like the idea of an officially Christian Russia terribly well, either.”

“Right. But it gets worse, bro. Even the American conservative talk show hosts don’t like you.”

“Well, of course not. I’m an autocrat. They believe in democracy. Democracy is part of their Americanist state religion. So naturally they’re not going to be too fond of any Christian autocrats, even if they were put on the throne fair and square by a democratic public referendum.”

“What do you think drives these people, Mike?”

“They like to think they get their big funding because their ideas are popular with the little people. I don’t think most of them even realize how very useful they are to big money: they help divert people’s attention toward meaningless rigged elections, and away from the un-elected plutocrats who quietly run everything behind the scenes.”

“Probably right, bro. But you can’t talk that way here in America, or people will think you are nuts.”

“So what is the paper saying in the Tsar’s hometown?”

“The *Detroit Free Press* is trying to stay neutral, saying you are a good man but that the new Russian system could never work here in America.”

“Of course they’re right. For now, anyway. Have you found anyone outside Russia saying anything good?”

“Well, *L’Osservatore Romano* English Edition can’t say enough good about you.”

“That’s what matters, I guess: the Pope’s paper likes me.”

“The online editions of *The Moscow Times* and the *Saint Petersburg Times* like you too.”

“Of course. They market themselves to the people who just elected me.”

“What about *Pravda*? Their online edition is equivocal, like the *Free Press*.”

“They’re just about out of business. Nobody wants to read their tired old Marxist claptrap anymore, so they’ve tried to become a sensational tabloid. *Pravda* sells in the checkout lines at Russian supermarkets. Only people without a brain want to read a Communist publication anymore.”

“When do you have to report for your first day on the new job?”

“Whenever I say. I’m an autocrat, remember.”

“Good thing you’re a Catholic, then. The Church can keep you in line.”

“Kiril, I’m going to have to get some people I know and trust to come over here and help anchor my staff. I can’t do this all by myself.”

“Who did you have in mind?”

“Mariya and I have been talking about some of the good Catholic

families at the Cova that she respects so highly. We will need some of those outstanding families to move over here, to form the core of our palace staff. The Orthodox Russians are good people too, and we've made a list of Russian nobility and good public servants to help us run the government, but we'll need some traditional Catholics to help balance things. You know, like the last two Popes: each non-Italian Pope has brought household staff along with him from the old country to manage the Apostolic Palace."

"Most of the people at the Cova don't speak Russian."

"Neither did Tsarina Alexandra when Nicholas proposed to her. She was a German princess and only spoke German and English. She spent her summers at Windsor Castle in England with her grandmother, Queen Victoria. So the Tsar sent her a personal Russian tutor, and within a few months she was ready to move to Russia. Because of Alexandra, the daily language in the private apartments of the Tsar was always English. I may restore that tradition."

"Well, the economy here in Michigan has remained terrible for years, and American culture just gets worse every year. The last time I checked, the film office of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops had rated three-fourths of newly released movies as 'morally offensive.' The mainstream publishing industry is completely rigged by liberal big money, and won't publish anything that does not somehow – directly or indirectly – undermine or attack traditional Catholic values. The families in my parish almost all home school, and struggle mightily to form their children's minds and characters according to Christ and His Church. But it is a huge battle. We used to believe that most people should stay where God put them, in their native country, and strive to be quiet lights in the darkness. But it used to be that there was no truly Christian nation to which they could move, where things would be any better. Now, rather suddenly, that has all changed. I could hardly advise them against moving to the world's only Catholic Confessional State, if they have opportunity to be employed there at living wages, and if the expense of moving will be paid for them."

"The last time I checked with the Tsar, he indicated that the Russian government would cover all expenses for relocating any families he chooses to hire for his staff. The Catherine Palace at Tsarskoe Selo contains more than one thousand rooms, and there are hundreds of unoccupied apartments that could be renovated as residences for our staff. Mariya and I plan to live next door at the much smaller Alexander Palace."

"It's an interesting idea, Mike. I'll have to do some praying about it. But what if some of them have extended families that want to come too? You know, parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and so forth."

"No problem. The Tsar will take care of them too. As we re-structure Russian society, we will try to encourage family cohesiveness and the practice of multiple generations staying close together. We want people to be able to stay put in their home towns, and not have to move all over

the place just to stay well-employed. We should set the right example in palace life.”

“Maybe it will all turn out to be a very great blessing for some good Cova families, Mike. But I feel sad to think of dear Mary Moretti not being here to witness all this. She would have been so excited by these developments, even while insisting she was too old and too unimportant to be included.”

“She probably already knows, and rejoices, Kiril.”

“Uh, Mike, speaking of people I miss ... am I right that you will probably never come back here to Michigan?”

“I am struggling to grasp that reality, Kiril. But, yes, now that I am a foreign head of state, I won’t be able to go anywhere anymore without a lot of hoopla. It will be years before the new Tsar could consider a state visit to the United States. So I’ll need you and Vladimir and Mariya to help close out my business back home. Of course, the Russian government will send staff to do all the packing and shipping.”

“Of course we’ll do it for you, bro.”

“Oh, and one more thing, Kiril.”

“What now?”

“I’ll need you to be the Roman Rite priest, spiritual director, and confessor for the Tsar and his household.”

“I see.” Ever the proper priest, Kiril pretended to be businesslike about it, even while his heart exploded with joy, and tears flowed. He knew Mikhail had stalled on mentioning this one final detail, just to get a rise out of him. Brothers were like that.

“Mike, I am a parish priest under obedience to my bishop, who is the Archbishop of Detroit. He is a good man, and will not oppose your request to move me to Russia. But the proper protocol is for the bishop overseeing Saint Petersburg, Russia, to invite me to come into his diocese.”

“That would be the Archbishop of Moscow. Russia has only three suffragan Catholic bishops, and the Archbishop oversees all assignments for foreign priests.”

“Then you will need to ask Archbishop Bogmolov to make the arrangements. It will take about two months for me to get free here. I can’t begin to orient a new pastor for the Cova until mid-January.”

“I’m so glad, Kiril. Now I can live with being stuck over here. But look, if you’re going to be moving to Russia, some of those Cova families will be lost without you. If we offer them a chance to move here too, and continue as members of your new parish here at the palace, some of them may give it serious consideration. So you’ll need to talk to them, and try to sell them on the idea.”

“If you and Mariya can draft invitations for the families you would like to bring over there, I can have a meeting for them and explain all the details and ramifications. Most of them will also need at least two months to prepare.”

“We’ll do it, Kiril.”

“So does that mean the new Russian autocrat is actually going to start working?”

“Cool it, bro. His Royal Majesty, the Tsar of All the Russias, hereby officially informs his spiritual director, Father Romanov, that he plans to begin work in just two days, on Monday, December fourteenth. At nine o’clock in the morning, right after Mass. I’ll start in an office at the Black Virgin of Russia Ministry of Catholic Social Reorganization, next door to the Catholic cathedral here in Moscow. My first official act will be to ask Archbishop Bogmolov to put in the request for your transfer to Russia.”

“So I probably won’t be seeing you for while, Mike.”

“Well, if you can sneak away anytime for a couple of days, think about flying over here for a quick visit. It’s only a ten-hour flight from Detroit. I’ll spring for your ticket, and I might even be able to get you a Russian visa on short notice.”

“Okay, I’ll think about it.”

“Gotta go now, bro. Time to finish sleeping. You waking me up in the middle of the night is getting to be a pattern.”

“The Pope said you were fabulous, Mike, the day I woke you up in the middle of the night to practice the Rheinberger. See how I make you look good by pushing you just the right distance beyond the limits of human endurance?”

“They say that behind every great king is a good woman. But no doubt it also takes a good and demanding priest.”

“God bless you, Mike,” laughed Kiril.

“God be with you too, Kiril.”

“Oh, and Mike – one more thing: God save the Tsar!”

Chapter Twenty-Seven

Late December 2015 and Early January 2016. Moscow, and Perm Region, Russian Kingdom.

The Russian referendum results had been issued on a Friday morning. Like the responsible and self-disciplined professional that he was, the Tsar of All the Russias had decided to report for work on the next Monday morning, the fourteenth of December. He had arrived at the Black Virgin of Russia Ministry of Catholic Social Reorganization at nine o'clock, coming directly from the eight o'clock Tridentine morning Mass next door at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. Archbishop Bogmolov and President Polzin had arranged for Mikhail to occupy a top-floor corner office, overlooking the plaza in front of the cathedral. At nine o'clock, as his first royal edict as Tsar, Mikhail respectfully requested Archbishop Bogmolov to arrange Kiril's transfer from Detroit to Tsarskoe Selo. Then, at just five minutes after nine, Mikhail issued his second royal edict: a Russian samovar with fresh-brewed American coffee was henceforth to be available all day outside his office. A take-home pot from a nearby Starbuck's would suffice for the first day.

Mikhail held his first meeting with President Polzin, Patriarch Filaret, and Archbishop Bogmolov. The Tsar asked Polzin to become his Prime Minister in the new royal court. He announced his intention to govern from the Alexander Palace in Tsarskoe Selo just outside Saint Petersburg, so Polzin would need to plan on moving his family from Moscow to the former and future Russian capital. Polzin happily accepted, and both bishops nodded their approval. Mikhail intended to form a group of committees to study and prepare position papers on key aspects of social reorganization, and drew upon the vast collective wisdom of the three Russian leaders in selecting the best men and women to form the study and work groups. In view of the holiday season approaching, Mikhail set a target date of late January for the initial reports to be on his desk. He announced that all employees of the Ministry would be granted a two and a half week paid vacation beginning on Wednesday, December twenty-third, and continuing through Sunday, January tenth. This would include three national holidays: Roman Rite Christmas on December twenty-fifth; Russian New Year's Day and the Roman Rite feast of The Circumcision of Our Lord Jesus Christ, on January first; and Orthodox Rite Christmas on January seventh. Study group committees would be asked to think and pray about their assigned issues over the holidays, but would not be expected to do any formal work. All committee leaders were provided with Mikhail's private cell phone number, so that they could discuss ideas with him over the vacation.

Being a newcomer to Russia, Mikhail asked Prime Minister Polzin for assistance in planning the holiday season for his new family. His fiancée

Mariya and her parents were going to spend the holiday season with him in Russia, and he wanted to take them to a remote mansion where they could enjoy winter sports, but within reasonable distance of a cultural center. The new Prime Minister suggested the northern Ural city of Perm as a remote cultural center. He noted that during World War II, many of the artistic companies from Saint Petersburg had been relocated to Perm to protect them from the Nazi occupation. After the war, many had chosen to remain there, so that Perm rivaled Saint Petersburg and Moscow in its ballet, orchestral, and dramatic theater companies. It was also a major center for high-end shopping, and had a world-class airport. Within fifty to seventy-five kilometers one could drive to a variety of country mansions owned by wealthy Russians, some of whom (and Polzin knew which ones) would be genuinely delighted to make their country retreats available for the new Tsar. Polzin recommended one or two in particular, which were not too far from decent alpine ski resorts and downhill sledding sites, and also offered outstanding snowmobile trails.

Mikhail planned to host the Petersons in the Royal (formerly Presidential) Suite at the Hilton Leningradskaya for three days surrounding Roman Rite Christmas. They would attend midnight Mass at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Moscow, which by request of the Tsar would be celebrated by Archbishop Bogmolov as a High Pontifical Mass in the Traditional Latin Rite of the Roman Church, with orchestra and chorus performing a Mozart Mass. On the second day after Christmas they would fly to Perm, and spend ten days at a country mansion. They would fly back to Moscow on January fifth and return to the Hilton Leningradskaya, in time to attend the Orthodox Christmas Mass celebrated by Patriarch Filaret at the Cathedral of Christ the Savior.

Then, during their private days at the country mansion, Mikhail and Mariya had time together to walk in the sunshine on snowy country lanes, sip hot cider beside a crackling fireplace, enjoy hot coffee in the warming hut during breaks from alpine skiing at the local ski resort, and ride side by side in a horse-drawn sleigh. Downhill sledding and snowmobiling were also enjoyed, but these activities were less conducive to sharing their hearts. Mikhail and the Petersons traveled to the regional city of Perm for one night in a hotel on New Year's eve. They attended a New Year's eve matinee performance of *The Nutcracker* ballet by Perm Ballet, ranked by many experts as the third best ballet company in the world. On New Year's morning they attended the Roman Rite Mass for the feast of The Circumcision of Our Lord Jesus Christ, at the Catholic Church of the Immaculate Conception. That afternoon, before returning to the country, they attended a concert of Christmas and winter-themed classics by the Perm Opera and Ballet Symphony Orchestra. They met the local Roman Rite and Orthodox Rite bishops, the directors of the Perm ballet and orchestra, and a number of common people in restaurants, shops, and their hotel. All were warm and welcoming, and showed remarkable insight into

the transformation that Russia must undergo in order to become in fact what she already was in name and in the hearts of her people: a Catholic Confessional State.

The two lovers talked at length about their future life together. They reviewed the fact that when Mikhail brought Father Kiril to Russia for good, the devout Catholic families that formed the core of the Cova parish would be entirely lost without their beloved pastor. Although many government positions would be filled by Russian nobles and worthy Russian citizens, they would need a group of people whom they knew and trusted to form the core of their palace staff. In time they would learn to know, love, and trust many good native Russians, but most of them would adhere to the Orthodox Rite and Mikhail and Mariya both felt it would be helpful to balance them with a core of tradition-oriented Roman Rite Catholics. Mikhail explained that he already broached this subject with Kiril, and after a week of discussions with Mariya and her parents, aided by daily Mass and Rosary, the following beginning plan was drafted:

**Appointments to the Nobility of the Royal Court
of the Kingdom of Russia
By His Majesty Mikhail II, Tsar of All the Russias**

The following individuals and families will be appointed to the Russian nobility. They will be privately tutored in the Russian language as needed, and will be relocated to Russia at government expense. They will be housed in government-owned palaces and receive generous tax-free stipends for life, in exchange for their devoted service to the Russian Kingdom according to their interests and abilities. Any additional advanced education will be funded by the Crown, subject to approval by the Tsar.

Siblings of His Majesty the Tsar:

- **Father Kiril Romanov**, age 33, single, Roman Catholic priest, as Tsar's brother will be made a **Grand Duke**, but as a priest will not be eligible to succeed to the throne. He is asked to serve as the Tsarskoe Selo palace chapel **Roman Rite priest to the Tsar** and his family; as the **personal liaison between the Tsar and the Pope** in Rome; and as a **Royal Court composer** and music director.
- **Vladimir Romanov**, age 31, married to Olga, father of six children, organist and organ builder. As Tsar's brother will be made a **Grand Duke**, and until Mikhail fathers a child will be **next in line to inherit the throne**. Will be assigned an apartment in the Catherine Palace. Vladimir will be asked to serve as **Organ-Builder to the Crown**.
- **Olga Gavrilovna Romanov**, age 31, married to Vladimir, mother of six children, homemaker. As sister-in-law to the Tsar, will be made a **Grand Duchess**. Fulltime duties as a homeschooling mother.

- **Anastasia Nicholovna Romanov, Olga Nicholovna Romanov, and Alexandra Nicholovna Romanov.** As sisters of the Tsar, they will be made **Grand Duchesses**, and their **husbands** will be made **Grand Dukes**. They may relocate to Russia at government expense, to reside in royal palaces and to serve the Crown according to their abilities.

Parents of Her Majesty the Tsarina:

- **George Peterson (Petrovich)**, age 42, married to Katarina, Professor of Psychiatry. As father of Tsarina Mariya, will be made a **Grand Duke** and will live in the Catherine Palace. He may teach and practice at the University of Saint Petersburg.
- **Katarina Fyodovsky Peterson (Petrovna)**, age 40, married to George, Professor of Music. As, mother of the Tsarina, will be made a **Grand Duchess** and will live in the Catherine Palace. She may teach at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory and continue to travel worldwide as a concert artist.

Outstanding Catholic laymen:

- **Don Brown**, married with adult children, will be made a **Duke, a Royal Prince**, and his wife **Theresa** will be made a **Duchess, a Royal Princess**. They will be assigned suitable palace quarters in Tsarskoe Selo, and Moscow. **Don will be Advisor to the Tsar on Small Family-Owned Business Development in the Russian Kingdom.** They will be permitted to maintain dual citizenship in order to continue their philanthropic work in Detroit.
- **The Szczypiorski family** of the Church of Our Lady of Fatima (Cova) Parish in Detroit will be assigned apartments in the Catherine Palace in Tsarskoe Selo:
 - **Karl Szczypiorski**, age 50, married to Diane, father of six children, civil engineer. Karl will be made a **Duke, a Royal Prince**, and will serve as the **Director of Building Improvement and Maintenance for All Royal Palaces and Government Properties in the Russian Kingdom.**
 - **Diane Szczypiorski**, age 48, married to Karl, will be made a **Duchess, a Royal Princess**, and will be **Overseer of the Homeschool Support Group** for all the families residing in the **Tsarskoe Selo and Saint Petersburg royal palaces.**
 - **Mark Szczypiorski**, age 25, single, will be made a **Royal Prince**, and will serve as **Royal Court Organist and Kapellmeister to His Majesty in the Saint Petersburg and Tsarskoe Selo royal palaces**, as **music tutor to the (future) royal children**, and as **Assistant Organ-Builder to His Majesty.**
 - **Luke Szczypiorski**, age 23, single, will be made a **Royal Prince**, and will serve as **Athletic Trainer and Coach for the Royal Palace Guard** athletic teams, as **Tennis Coach to His Majesty Tsar Mikhail II**, and as **Music Director of the Royal Palace Guard Men's Glee Club.**

- **Jacob Szczypiorski**, age 21, single, will be made a **Royal Prince**, and will be sent (at the Russian Kingdom's expense) to the world's best culinary institute in Switzerland to become trained as an executive chef. Jacob will then serve as **Executive Chef to His Majesty in the Palaces of the Russian Kingdom**.
- **Maria Szczypiorski**, age 19, single, will be made a **Royal Princess**, and will serve as the **nanny to the (future) royal children** and as **personal assistant to Her Majesty Tsarina Mariya**.
- **Joseph Szczypiorski**, age 15, will be made a **Royal Prince**, and will assist **Father Kiril Romanov at daily Mass** and as a **personal assistant and errand boy for His Majesty Tsar Mikhail II**.
- **Joshua Szczypiorski**, age 13, will be made a **Royal Prince**, and will assist **Father Kiril Romanov at daily Mass** and as a **personal assistant and errand boy for His Majesty Tsar Mikhail II**.
- **Sam Putin**, married to Catherine, ages classified. Sam will be made a **Duke, a royal prince**, and will be **Haircutter to the Tsar and the Royal Palace Staff** in Tsarskoe Selo. **Catherine** will be made a **Duchess, a royal princess**, and will be **Bookkeeper for the Royal Household** in the Alexander Palace at Tsarskoe Selo. They will be assigned appropriate quarters in the Catherine Palace at Tsarskoe Selo.
- **The Magagin family** of the Church of Our Lady of Fatima (Cova) Parish in Detroit will be assigned apartments in the Catherine Palace in Tsarskoe Selo:
 - **Charles Magagin**, age classified, married to Mary, will be made a **Duke, a royal prince**, and will be **Overseer of Maintenance for the Royal Household and the Tsarskoe Selo Catholic parish**.
 - **Mary Magagin**, age classified, married to Charles, will be made a **Duchess, a royal princess**, and will be **Overseer of Domestic Staff for the Royal Household and the Staff of the Tsarskoe Selo Catholic parish**.
 - **Amy Magagin**, age 22, single, will be made a **Royal Princess**, and will continue university studies.
 - **Henry Magagin**, age 21, single, will be made a **Royal Prince** and will become **Overseer of Mechanics for the Royal Fleet of Motor Vehicles**.
- **The Shoemaker family** of the Church of Our Lady of Fatima (Cova) Parish in Detroit will be assigned apartments in the Catherine Palace in Tsarskoe Selo:
 - **Frederick Shoemaker**, age 53, married to Katherine, will be made a **Duke, a Royal Prince**, and will serve as **Director of Electrical Systems Improvement and Maintenance for All Royal Palaces and Government Properties in the Russian Kingdom**.

- **Katherine Shoemaker**, age 51, married to Frederick, will be made a **Duchess, a Royal Princess**, and will become **Overseer of the Royal Resource Academy for Catholic Home Educators in the Russian Kingdom**.
- **Thomas Shoemaker**, age 29, married, will be made a **Royal Prince**, and his wife a **Royal Princess**. Thomas will serve as **Royal Court Organist and Kapellmeister to His Majesty in the Moscow royal palaces**.
- **Andrew Shoemaker**, age 27, married, will be made a **Royal Prince**, and his wife a **Royal Princess**. Andrew will be granted a year of advanced study in Russian language formation and Russian Law at the Saint Petersburg School of Law, and will then be asked to serve as **Overseer of the Russian Royal Academy of Solicitors and Barristers**, and as **personal legal counsel to His Majesty Tsar Mikhail II**.
- **Father Matthew Shoemaker**, age 25, single, Catholic Priest in the Roman Rite, will be made a **Royal Prince**, to serve as **the Moscow Kremlin Roman Rite priest to the Tsar** and his family; as the **Moscow-based personal liaison between the Tsar and the Catholic bishops of the Roman and Orthodox Rites**.
- **David Shoemaker**, age 23, single, will be made a **Royal Prince**, and will serve as the **Director of Entertainment for the Royal Palaces** and also as **Movie-Maker to His Majesty the Tsar**. David will also collaborate with Father Kiril Romanov, and serve as **Producer to the Tsar of Original Catholic Musicals**.
- **Joseph Shoemaker**, age 21, single, will be made a **Royal Prince**, and will serve as **Personal Secretary to His Majesty** and **Master of Ceremonies for Royal Events**.

It was agreed that additional Catholic people from the Cova Parish, and a few from Saint Augustine Cathedral Parish in Kalamazoo, would also need to be added to the list of prospective appointments. Father Kiril had long relied upon the Shoemaker family as his faithful helpers in his parish, and he would find their presence in the royal court at Tsarskoe Selo a great joy. Mariya and Mark had been close friends with David and Joseph Shoemaker, and would find comfort in their presence. Mariya was delighted the Szczypiorskis and Shoemakers had already all agreed to move into the vast Catherine Palace, next door to the Alexander Palace, before Spring.

Mariya shared her private concerns about Mark with Mikhail. Their friendship had always been chaste, and so it would ever remain. But she could not imagine living without having him close by. Unlike Mikhail, who had two younger brothers and three older sisters to populate the royal courts, she was an only child, and Mark was the beloved brother she never had. In fact, all his brothers and his sister had been, to her, like the siblings

never born because of her mother's tragic emergency hysterectomy following Mariya's birth. With Mark as the royal palace Kappelmeister, and music tutor to the future royal children, her heart would be whole again.

As assistant organ builder to the Tsar, Mark could pursue his love of old-fashioned craftsmanship, and yet remain free to pursue a vocation to the priesthood if, in time, he became certain that was God's will for him. On the other hand, as a handsome young Prince closely attached to the household of the Tsar, he would be among the most eligible young bachelors in the Russian kingdom, and only time would tell what God might have in store for him.

Mikhail and Mariya's hearts began to be joyful as they envisioned working in a Christian kingdom with so many devout and virtuous Catholic souls to assist them. Mikhail already knew many people in Russia, but Mariya would be a newcomer and would value having beloved longtime friends surrounding her and assisting her in serving her new nation.

They began to see that the function of royal courts was to set a shining example of high culture and righteousness, so that the people of the nation might be inspired to follow their example. With this in mind, the American individuals whom they proposed to elevate to the status and duties of Russian Royalty were ideal.

Knowing that the vast majority of public servants throughout the kingdom would be native Russians, they also developed an initial list of Russian leaders who would hold places of power in the Tsar's Cabinet immediately upon his accession to the throne:

**Appointments of Russian Officials to the Cabinet
of the Russian Kingdom
By His Majesty Mikhail II, Tsar of All the Russias**

- **Vasily Alexandrovich Polzin**, former President of the Russian Federation, will become the Tsar's **Prime Minister** in the Russian Kingdom.
- **Daniil Yevgenyevich Mikhailov**, former Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, will become the Tsar's **Minister for Government Personnel** in the Russian Kingdom, and will be in charge of identifying Russian citizens fit to become skilled public servants.
- **Stepan Mikhailovich Ivanov**, former Chairman of the Central Bank of the Russian Federation, will become the **Chairman of the Royal Treasury** of the Russian Kingdom.
- **Grand Duchess Marina Mikhailovna Romanov**, former trustee of the Russian throne, will become **Overseer of Traditional Russian Nobility** and will be in charge of their assignments to positions of public service within the Russian Kingdom.

- **Grand Duke Grigory Mikhailovich Romanov**, former heir apparent to the Russian throne, will become the Tsar's **Minister of Defense**, overseeing the chiefs of the several branches of the Russian military.

When their political planning was complete, Mariya and Mikhail sat together on a loveseat in a book-lined den, beside the crackling fireplace, holding hands and sipping hot chocolate while winter winds howled and snowflakes swirled violently just outside the window. They happily discussed how their many American friends, already like extended family because of the close-knit fellowship at the Cova parish, would continue to be like a network of beloved friends and family within the vast palaces at Tsarskoe Selo.

They would make the cold old museums come to life again with the warmth of human love and the music of children's voices. Their many friends would someday become the progenitors of a new Russian nobility, a ruling class that would set the proper example of holiness of life, hard work and creativity, and dedication to the love of neighbor for the love of God. They would be anything but the kind of dissipated leisure class, engaged in nothing good either for themselves or for the kingdom, whose behavior had frustrated and deeply ashamed the last Tsar.

The spiritual corruption of many of the former Russian nobility had unquestionably helped to render the House of Romanov vulnerable to an anti-Christian revolution back in 1917. For, although Tsar Nicholas and Tsarina Alexandra had lived exemplary lives as Orthodox Rite Catholic saints, many of the other Grand Dukes and Grand Duchesses had been anything but examples of devout Faith and holy living.

Suddenly their reverie was interrupted by a sharp rapping on the open door frame of the den. One of the FSB security officers, a tense look on his worried countenance, indicated an urgent need to consult with His Majesty the Tsar. He informed Mikhail and Mariya that Interpol had intercepted extensive communications among members of a well-known private world leadership forum, indicating active discussions about methods of eliminating the new Tsar and working to infect Russia once again with secular humanist propaganda.

This would include pornographers, professional prostitution rings targeting community leaders, gay activists demanding same-sex "marriages", religious pluralists demanding "religious freedom", and academicians speaking out worldwide to belittle the Russian government for opening honest debate about evolution, human activity as a cause of global climate change, population control, Keynesian economics, and democracy. If they could, they would assassinate the Tsar. But in the meantime, they would seek to assassinate his character, and the reputations of key officials in his administration.

"The battle is now being joined," said Mikhail, "between the Catholic

Russian Kingdom of the Prince of the House of Romanov, and the secular humanist kingdom of the prince of this world.”

Mariya, having been studying Russian history, commented:

“Tsar Nicholas II was bitterly criticized because of his extensive network of secret police, who sought to ferret out nests of conspirators seeking to bring down the throne.”

“A kingdom is like a living body,” said Mikhail. “The human body has to protect itself against microscopic foreign invaders, and so has armies of white blood cells that function as foot soldiers, moving quickly to the site of any battle between the body and outside infiltrators, and attacking anything that is foreign.”

“That’s a neat analogy, Doctor Romanov,” smiled Mariya. “Sometimes I think I’ll miss having you work as a physician.”

“Actually, I am thinking about continuing to do medical mission work in remote areas of Russia if the security people can make it workable.”

“Right now I wouldn’t count on that, Your Majesty,” said the FSB officer.

Mikhail sighed, realizing the immense sacrifices that wielding power in a just manner would entail.

“Anyway, like the body, a kingdom must have an ‘immune system,’ a network of trustworthy and highly trained men, spies who can infiltrate socially subversive groups and expose their intentions to the king. The lust for power and wealth always drives certain men to seek ways of usurping legitimate authority.

“When they can, they will infiltrate the ranks of power through blackmail and bribery, reaching even to the ruler if they can. If the core power structure consists of virtuous men who are impervious to such schemes, they then turn to violence. Usually they will try spiritual violence first, through character assassination. If that fails, then they resort to physical assassination.”

“That is precisely what our intelligence suggests about these men, Your Majesty,” said the FSB officer.

“Personally, I dislike becoming involved in intrigue. Christians with benevolent intentions towards their fellow men often have difficulty being realistic about the conscious evil that some men willingly harbor in their hearts. However, I do have personal experience as a former Marine special operative. I myself have been sent on dangerous espionage missions. I understand that a kingdom has to call upon its finest and most brave young men – like this young officer – in order to protect itself from spiritual, political, and physical invasion.”

The FSB security officer smiled with pride and thanked the Tsar for his acknowledgment.

Mikhail sat in silence for a few moments, offering a mental prayer to Saint Longinus and to Saint Ignatius Loyola, soldiers who became saints. He asked these saints to intercede in the Royal Courts of Heaven on behalf

of the military and security forces of the new Russian Kingdom, and for the Tsar, their Commander-in-Chief.

The safe and secure days in the Russian countryside were now fast drawing to a close. Duty was calling, and Mikhail would henceforth have to divide his time between the warmth of hearth and home, and participation in the cold field of political, paramilitary, and military battles where kingdoms are kept or conquered.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

Late January 2016.

Offices of the Black Virgin of Russia Ministry of Catholic Social Reorganization.

Moscow, Russian Kingdom.

It was a sunny late January day in Moscow. The city glistened in brilliant white due to the recent heavy snowfall. Life had returned to normal after the Russian Orthodox Christmas on the seventh of January. In the modern eight-story office building that housed the Black Virgin of Russia Ministry of Catholic Social Reorganization, the Tsar's top floor corner office, his temporary workplace, looked out on the Roman Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. Outside the office, in the open space where secretarial staff were stationed in work cubicles, a refreshment credenza supported two large Russian samovars. One, in Russian tradition, contained hot water for making tea. But the other, in a new innovation resulting from Mikhail's second official act as Tsar, contained brewed American coffee. It was becoming quite popular among those who put in long hours in their labor of love, designing a new social system that would facilitate the reestablishment of the Social Kingship of Christ in the Russian national kingdom.

Outside, Mikhail noted FSB Security officers with rifles stationed around the building and on adjacent rooftops. A few minutes earlier, when he had stepped outside his office for another cup of American coffee, he had been greeted by the four FSB agents who were posted as his personal bodyguards. In the lobby downstairs, security was as tight as at any airport or government facility, with metal detectors, x-ray scanners, trained security dogs, and optional personal searches. Mikhail had been dismayed to discover that a benevolent heart and complete transparency of policy did not dispense him from the need to be protected from men with evil intentions. Any transfer of power, however orderly and just, nevertheless meant that the power was being transferred *away* from some men. Mikhail and President Polzin (who had already agreed to become the new Prime Minister in the emerging royal court of the Tsar) had discussed the fact that shadow organizations representing international "big money" had exerted tremendous influence upon elected representatives in the "democratic" Duma of the Russian Federation, and that such entities could foresee that Tsar Mikhail was not going to be for sale to the highest bidder or to any lobbyists at all. The FSB had ramped up their forces significantly, and had not been surprised when serious threats surfaced during the Tsar's winter vacation in Perm.

In just two weeks the first national election was scheduled, to select members for the new national Duma. It would be a parliament but not a legislature: a place for constructive discussion and debate, but not for making laws. The Duma would be charged with recommending policies and changes to the Tsar, who as the Autocrat of All the Russias would

alone make and change the law. The national Duma was designed to be truly representative of local, common people. Eligibility would be based on strict requirements: one had to be self-employed full time in one's home district in a business employing at least twenty people and no more than one hundred people. The minimum length of time one had to be self-employed in a single position would gradually be increased to five years, over the same span of time, in order to ensure that Duma members were actively engaged in providing employment in their home district. This was to promote the likelihood of Duma recommendations to the Tsar that would favor human-scaled, locally-based businesses. Eligibility also required that one be Catholic, either Orthodox Rite or Roman Rite, and certified by the local bishop as active in a local parish, and as not being barred from the Sacraments and not being a public sinner.

Duma members would need to seek reelection every other year, and the Duma could assemble in the capital for no more than one month every six months. Campaign advertising or personal campaign websites would not be allowed. The opinions of each candidate would be widely published in newspapers and side-by-side on an official Duma website, and citizens would be asked to vote based upon their review of the complex issues discussed, rather than on a candidate's attractive looks or his ability to afford slick advertising.

The Duma would be in session each year beginning October 1st and April 1st, and would be required to disband by the end of the month. Each member would be required to publish on the Duma website a record of the positions they had promoted in each session, so the local people could decide, before the next election, whether they felt the member was adequately representing them.

Local Dumas would also be formed, with power being as decentralized as possible according to the Catholic social principle of subsidiarity. The majority of rules and regulations would be made and adjusted at the local level, which would be either a city Duma or a county Duma. Qualifications for local Dumas would be the same as for the national Duma, except that self-employment would not be required. Local mayors would be selected by popular election, but would be subject to correction or removal for misbehavior by the local Count or by the state Governor, known as a Duke. A Count would rule over a region of about thirty square miles, and would be appointed by the Duke of the Principality (state) for a term of ten years. He could be reappointed or replaced, based on his performance. He would live in a stately residence owned by the county, and would be charged with enforcing the local laws, and with locally enforcing state and national laws.

A smaller number of rules and regulations would be promulgated at the state level. These would pertain to matters best handled on a semi-local regional basis, such as public utilities and transportation systems and the management of natural resources and historic sites. There had been eighty-three "subjects" in the Russian Federation, comparable to states in the United States. Each of these "subjects", known as a Principality, would have its own elected Duma, which would be an advisory body

reporting to a Governor, an appointed Prince to be known as a Duke. A Duke would be appointed personally by the Tsar, and would rule for life, or until he became incapacitated by age or chose to resign. He could be removed by the Tsar for misbehavior. His replacement would be chosen by the Tsar, based upon recommendations from the Counts in the respective Principality. Qualifications for the Principality Dumas would be the same as for the national Duma.

The Russian Kingdom would consist of a national federation of the eighty-three Principalities. The smallest number of rules and regulations would be issued at the federal level. These would concern matters of national security, regulation of currency, relations between Principalities, national infrastructure, the protection and promulgation of Christian culture, and relations with foreign nations. The Tsar would promulgate all national laws, drawing upon the guidance and advice of the national Duma. The Tsar would also have the prerogative to review, amend, or override Principality, county, or local laws as he deemed best for his people; however, in practice this was likely to occur only when there was a prominent dispute or complaint brought to the Tsar as an appeal.

There would continue to be a system of courts at all four levels of government, with judges being appointed by, and subject to removal by, the Mayors, Counts, Dukes, or the Tsar.

The basic outline of divisions of power within the Russian Kingdom would be as follows:

Hierarchy of Governments in the Russian Kingdom

Level	Entity	Number	Ruler	Advisory Body
1	Russian Kingdom	1	Tsar	National Duma
1a	Federal cities	2*	Grand Duke	Federal City Duma
1b	Russian Military	6**	Grand Duke	Defense Ministry
2	Principality	83	Duke	Principality Duma
3	County	1,805	Count	County Duma
4	City	1,004	Mayor	City Duma
5	Town	2,065	Mayor	Town Duma
6	Village	22,681	Council	Parish priests

[*Saint Petersburg and Moscow. **Ground Forces, Navy, Air Force, Strategic Missile Troops, Military Space Forces, and Russian Airborne Troops.]

The Vatican would be asked to assign Orthodox Rite and Roman Rite bishops to suitable regions that corresponded to political subdivisions within the Russian Kingdom. Obviously, Orthodox Rite bishops would be much more numerous and would oversee much smaller territories than the few Roman Rite bishops.

It was expected that, as time progressed, adjustments would be made in the new system, based on the wisdom gained from experience.

Mikhail had already appointed Catholic Social Reorganization committees charged with the task of undoing excessive federal and state intrusion into various areas of community life, and with defining the proper role of Church and government at each level. He had relied upon

Prime Minister Polzin, Patriarch Filaret, and Archbishop Bogmolov to recommend leaders for each committee.

Mikhail had come to realize, through the help of Patrick O'Malley and Kathleen Houston Matches and their previous presentations to the former Russian president, that the popular Austrian school of economics, purporting to promote free markets, was not sufficient to build a Catholic society. Austrian economics itself was based on a fundamental error. Because human nature was inherently flawed by original sin, allowing everyone's self interest to magically guide the free market as an "invisible hand" would not be likely to result in social justice. In fact, free markets were largely a myth, since over time capitalism tended to result in wealth becoming increasingly concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer men.

He knew that the ideas of Matches and O'Malley about sound money and the evils of usury were exactly correct. So Mikhail called in yet another American expert, Professor Doctor Christian Maserati, Ph.D., J.D. (Econ and Law), a traditional Catholic expert on Distributism. Whereas Austrian Economics was a school of thought devised by agnostic anti-Christians,¹²⁴ Distributism was devised by devout Catholic men such as Hilaire Belloc and Father Heinrich Pesch, S.J. Mikhail had not failed to notice two prominent American Catholics who heavily promoted the Austrian school of free-market economics through their respective institutes. One was a southern Catholic layman hosting a popular libertarian website named after himself. The other was a northern Catholic priest with unusual charisma, who had a murky past as a prominent California gay Protestant evangelist and faith healer, and who had once performed America's first public gay wedding. He had later returned to the Catholic Church and managed to be ordained in a theologically liberal order. He operated an apostolate in Michigan with a branch in Rome where he would attempt to indoctrinate seminarians to embrace Austrian economics. Both these prominent proponents of Austrian economics were heavily funded by entities tied to non-Catholic big money, and sought to make Austrian economics appear to be compatible with Catholic Social teaching. This served the interests of big money, which opposed any restrictions on economic activity that would be based on the interests of the common man rather than upon the "bottom line".

Distributism, explained Professor Doctor Maserati, called for solidarity, the Catholic principle of the widespread and fairly even distribution of wealth and power. It tended toward the principle that the ratio of wages between the highest paid and lowest paid in a social system should not be more than about ten to one. It called for a business model that limited the size of businesses, so that they would remain local and on a human scale where management and workers could be and remain personally acquainted. This was not unlike some of the best liberal arts colleges in America, which had found that if they expanded beyond a size of about

¹²⁴ Ludwig von Mises and Murray Rothbard. Von Mises' virulent hatred of the teaching of the Catholic Church is detailed by Christopher Ferrara in *The Remnant* archives at http://www.remnantnewspaper.com/Archives/2010-0215-ferrara-ludwig_von_mises_versus_christ.htm.

one hundred students in each of the four class levels, they would lose the human scale of a local community. A bigger school or company might be more efficient in terms of monetary profits, but those added profits would come at a very steep human cost. Distributism also argued for the wide dispersal of populations, enabling the majority of people to move out of huge, impersonal cities and into smaller, human-sized communities where people could know and support each other. Distributism helped to focus the economy on the ultimate purpose of human activity, which is not to maximize profits, but to form and nourish souls in such a manner as to maximize their chances of achieving eternal salvation.

Some of the most important Catholic Social Reorganization sub-committees, and their preliminary policy summaries had been submitted to the Tsar. Mikhail and his assistant, Christian Maserati, spent the next few days reviewing and discussing the following reports:

Restoration of the Nobility in the Russian Kingdom

The people of the former Russian Federation expressed their majority will, through a public referendum, to restore the autocratic Christian monarchy. The new Tsar has begun to guide the nation in the process of converting itself into the Russian Kingdom which is to be a Catholic Confessional State. The Tsar has made known his wish to reestablish the tradition of Russian nobility, a class of men and women selected by God through conception and birth, who carry the mandate to serve the people of the Russian Kingdom as leaders.

Parents and siblings of the Tsar and Tsarina will henceforth be known as Grand Dukes or Grand Duchesses. They may be assigned by the Tsar to special tasks of leadership within the kingdom. It is expected that a Grand Duke will normally oversee the military, and that a Grand Duke or Duchess will oversee each of the Federal cities which are Moscow and Saint Petersburg. The children of Grand Dukes and Duchesses shall be considered royal persons, but they in turn must marry Catholic royal persons from Russia or from other unbroken lines of European royalty, in order for their children to retain the royal status. Otherwise, their offspring will become major nobility but not royal. Grand Dukes and Duchesses shall be provided with royal palaces to serve as residences and official royal courts, in such location and for such length of time as the Tsar may determine.

Persons appointed as Dukes (governors) to rule over Principalities (states) will become major nobility, and their offspring shall be considered major nobility in all their generations, providing that both their parents are from the class of major nobility. Each Duke shall be provided, during his term of office, with a royal palace in the capital city of his respective Principality, to serve as a place of residence and seat of government. Additional Dukes may be appointed to serve as high officials in the Royal Court, and will report directly to the Tsar.

Persons appointed as Counts (local rulers) over Counties shall also

be considered noble persons, but in the class of minor nobility, and their offspring shall be considered minor nobility in all their generations, providing that both their parents are from the class of minor nobility. Each Count shall be provided, during his term(s) of office, with a County Palace in his County Seat, to serve as a place of official residence and as the seat of County government.

Certified members of the Romanov Nobility Organization are eligible for appointments by the Tsar, but the Tsar shall be free to appoint to the royal or noble station any persons, Russian or foreign, whom he believes can best serve the needs of the Kingdom. Members of the Romanov Nobility Organization may retain the status of royalty, major nobility, or minor nobility, according to the dynastic rules of inheritance that were in force immediately prior to the 1917 revolution.

Nobility of any level who cease to profess and practice the Catholic Faith may be converted to the status of commoners by the Tsar.

Education in the Russian Kingdom

The education of children is the primary responsibility of parents, who will answer to God for the formation of their offspring. The Church is responsible to guide and instruct parents, and to assist them in every way possible in their duty to provide their children with a solid Catholic education suitable to their vocations in life. Homeschooling is the norm, but cooperatives formed by local groups of parents can be acceptable. Cooperative schools should be limited in scale to a village or a neighborhood, and should be designed to keep parents intimately involved in their children's day to day education.

Curriculum recommendations should be promulgated by the Church at the national, state, and county levels, as appropriate, but parents remain free to either follow or modify such recommendations. The government has no competence to regulate education, although the city or county government may intervene where there is evidence of parents not fulfilling their duty. In such cases, the local church will be asked to assign volunteer parents of good local repute to oversee the education of such unfortunate children. The government's duty is to ensure that wages are kept high and taxes are kept low, so that parents can easily assume the cost of educating their children. Social economic policy should be designed to encourage and reward large families, and to place relatively more of the burden on those who are not able or do not choose to be generous in procreation.

At the secondary level, students displaying excellence in academics, arts, or trades may be allowed to attend city or county level "magnet" cooperative schools where their special talents can be more fully developed. Such schools can be part-time (e.g. meeting two days per week) in order to allow students to remain socially integrated in their home communities. Only in rare cases should gifted students at the high school level travel to specialized boarding schools in major metropolitan cities; such schools should be under the close supervision of the archdiocese. When possible,

school cooperatives at the secondary level having more than thirty students should offer separate classes for boys and girls, since both sexes perform better academically when segregated. A portion of tax revenue may be given to the Church by the local and regional governments for the purpose of supporting such regional schools for gifted students, since the development of special talent benefits society as a whole.

Religious minorities are tolerated but not encouraged in the Russian Kingdom. They may engage in educating their own children, but must do so separately from Catholics unless they choose to allow their children a Catholic education.

Universities in the Russian Kingdom

A University is a collection of Colleges which bring together groups of scholars specialized in each major branch of study, for the purpose of promoting the advancement of human knowledge and achievement in the various arts and sciences. It is proper for Catholic universities to receive funding from the national or regional government through the tax system, but in return universities must work to improve the happiness and prosperity of Christian society, in the practical, moral, and artistic spheres. It is the responsibility of the Tsar and his appointed Dukes, under the guidance of the Church, to oversee the quality of those holding positions of influence in universities. An annual public Oath of Fidelity to the Magisterium of the Catholic Church is to be required of all faculty for universities and colleges in the Russian Kingdom. By definition, those who refuse to take such an Oath are opposed to Truth (and are in league with error) and therefore cannot be trusted to help form the minds and hearts of Russian youth.

Religious minorities, being tolerated but not assisted by the Catholic government of the Russian Kingdom, may develop and operate their own schools or universities, at their own expense, but must clearly identify themselves by the religion which they represent.

Since ultimate Truth has been revealed to man by God and has been entrusted to His Church as the Deposit of Faith, Catholic theology is the Queen of Arts and Sciences, and Thomistic philosophy is the most highly developed method of analyzing the truth with precision of thought. Therefore, the natural arts and sciences must build upon the sure foundation of Catholic Truth in order to truly advance and not make shipwreck. In the arts, qualities of order, hierarchy, beauty, harmony, and organic development will be typical, reflecting Heavenly reality. In the natural sciences, Truth which is fixed and immutable cannot clash with apparent truth that is elicited by experimentation or research. It has happened very often in academic history that apparent conflict between revealed Truth and a natural scientific theory has proven to be illusory once additional natural information became available.

For example, Galileo egotistically insisted upon teaching as a proven fact that the sun was the center of the universe, and therefore the Church

and Sacred Scripture must have been mistaken to have declared the earth to be the center of the universe. Galileo was advised to teach his idea as an unproven theory, pending further investigation, but he obstinately (and foolishly) refused. Later, when better telescopes became available, it was shown that what Galileo had assumed to be the universe was merely a tiny solar system in one immense galaxy which in turn was tiny in comparison with an apparently infinite universe. Science now shows that it is impossible to declare what is the center of so vast a universe; only divine Authority can possibly designate a center, and God has in fact designated planet Earth as the center. Since the motion of all bodies in the universe is relative, it can accurately be said that everything in the universe moves around any one body which is designated as “fixed.” There is no longer any necessary conflict between Sacred Scripture and natural science, except in the minds of those who are “stuck” on Galileo’s erroneous dogma.

Universities must be open to honest intellectual debate, providing that such debate is based upon rational ideas or observations, and not upon *ad hominem* attacks against another whose opinion may differ. Catholic dogma, once defined *ex cathedra*, has a divine guarantee of accuracy when properly understood. Scientific theory, however, is always at best tentative and subject to revision as more information is discovered. For example, in universities in Western ‘democracies’, open debate about the theory of evolution as the origin of species is no longer allowed. But the scientific evidence now available (in contrast to the primitive biology of the mid-Nineteenth Century when Darwin wrote) now makes plain that macro-evolution (the development of more complex life out of more primitive forms) has never been observed even once, is statistically impossible, and is contrary to the laws of thermodynamics. Numerous scientists have developed theories showing that the available biological, geological, and astrophysical data reconcile much better with a young-earth hypothesis than with an ancient-earth hypothesis.¹²⁵ Such honest scientists also note that the data show the gradual disappearance of species as the earth continues to grow old, but there has never been any evidence for the emergence of even one new species. Yet in the West, such scientists are not allowed to be heard, because in Western universities the theory of evolution has become a sacrosanct dogma of the obligatory state religion of secular humanism. It must not be so in the Russian Kingdom.¹²⁶

When Western universities began promoting a new sacrosanct dogma called “global warming,” the Russian Academy of Sciences had the audacity to engage in open intellectual debate: if human activities were a significant causative factor in global warming, asked the Russians, then why were the polar ice caps also melting on Mars? The obvious possibility that variations in solar activity were the real cause of global warming

¹²⁵ Brown, Walt, Ph.D., *In the Beginning: Compelling Evidence for Creation and the Flood*. See Bibliography.

¹²⁶ Lucas, *The New Cold War*, page 119. See Bibliography.

(a trend that has now reversed as global cooling) was not allowed to be debated in the West. May the Russian Kingdom foster and perpetuate the openness and intellectual honesty already displayed by the Russian Academy of Sciences.

Finally, that which supports and fosters Christian Truth must be promoted in higher education, and that which undermines Christian Truth, being error, must be combated. History, philosophy, literature, music, painting, sculpture, architecture, civic planning, and many other fields will be truly fruitful precisely when they are guided by the sweet yoke of Christ, Who is Truth.

Healthcare in the Russian Kingdom

The treatment and prevention of disease is a Corporal Work of Mercy and is therefore inseparable from the Catholic religion. All healthcare enterprises should properly be Catholic in identity, and as such should not be operated for profit. Unlike most goods and services, which may be taken or left at the discretion of the potential buyer, all healthcare (except perhaps some optional forms of preventive care) is made necessary by falling into the misfortune of illness or disease. To be paid fair compensation for the products one supplies, or just wages for the work one performs, in caring for others, is just and proper; to make a large profit off others' misfortune is immoral.

In consultation with the Commerce Committee, we have learned that corporations (fictitious legal 'persons' without an immortal soul that must answer to God) will be strictly limited in the Russian Kingdom. For-profit insurance will also not be allowed. Therefore, healthcare must be operated as a private, personal business. The Church, which is the Body of Christ on earth, does have an enduring corporate existence, and is best able to operate hospitals, nursing homes, and specialty clinics. Physicians should normally be self-employed, and should be paid fair fees for their services. They should be allowed to adjust their fees according to the resources of the patient, so that those who are able to pay more without real hardship can help to subsidize the charity given to those who are less fortunate. For-profit insurance not being allowed, local groups should form cooperatives to spread the burden of cost for care needed in a given year. A group of local citizens who are personally acquainted with the physicians and patients can make informed decisions about what expensive care to disallow, since rationing in this world cannot be entirely avoided. Catholic clergy should be consulted to help with resolving apparent ethical dilemmas in the operation of such cooperatives.

Regulation of healthcare entities should be at the County level, and multi-county chains should not be permitted as their management becomes too far removed from the local people. Licensing of medical professionals can best be done at the Principality (state) level, and Principalities may opt to give reciprocity for each others' licenses. A state license should provide an automatic right to practice in any licensed or private medical facility without further "credentialing". Satisfactory completion of advanced

specialty training should be sufficient for the basic right to practice any specialty branch of medicine. Certification by specialty boards should be entirely optional, for personal marketing purposes, and should never be a prerequisite for obtaining the right to practice in any medical facility.

Nurses, laboratory and medical technicians, and other ancillary healthcare personnel should normally be employed either by private physicians, or by hospitals, clinics, or nursing homes.

Firms which develop medical products, including pharmaceuticals, may pursue safety certifications through private independent testing laboratories, or through private contracts with research universities. Each local healthcare facility and healthcare cooperative may determine what safety standards they will require, weighing costs versus risks versus benefits in light of the local situation. It is not the prerogative of government to intervene in the learned profession of medicine.

Each principality may conduct reviews of performance of licensed medical professionals accused of incompetence or excessive medical errors. Rehabilitation of the professional while protecting the public interest should be the goal. A presumption of innocence is to be made whenever it can be shown that those making accusations of incompetence stand potentially to gain through reduced competition.

All licensed healthcare personnel who are Catholic should make an annual Oath of Fidelity to the Magisterium of the Catholic Church, and thus become eligible to practice in Catholic healthcare facilities. Adherents of other religions may freely develop and market their own healthcare facilities, but may not practice in Catholic facilities, and must disclose their non-Catholic status in all advertising.

Healthcare practices must be regulated by the moral law. Surgical termination of pregnancy must be illegal. Abortion is always gravely sinful. The natural law, which God has dictated into the hearts of each of us, clearly teaches us that we must never kill an innocent human being. We must furthermore remember that abortion is gravely sinful also because the unborn child who is killed in abortion cannot be baptized, and as such he is denied the Beatific Vision for all eternity. Such an act of injustice is a serious crime against the salvation of souls.

Abortion can never be justified because of the sins of others. Rape and incest do not justify the murder of the innocent unborn child. Birth defects discovered before birth also can never justify abortion. Parental choice or convenience can never be a justification for abortion. The use of contraception is contrary to divine law, because God has the right to determine when conception shall occur. Furthermore, many methods of contraception (including most contraceptive pills, IUD's, and "morning after" pills) operate by causing microscopic abortions of newly-conceived children and are thus doubly sinful. Permanent sterilization procedures (vasectomy, tubal ligation) performed for the purpose of contraception can never be permitted. Therefore, the sale of contraceptive pills, procedures, or methods shall be illegal in the Russian Kingdom. Natural Family Planning, as approved by the Catholic Church, shall be permitted.

Money and Banking in the Russian Kingdom

In the Russian Kingdom, gold and silver shall be the only legal forms of money. The power to mint and issue legal tender coins is reserved to the Crown. The new Russian Ruble shall consist of one-hundredth troy ounce of 99.9% pure gold. Coins of various denominations, composed of ninety-nine percent gold or ninety-percent silver, shall be issued and put into wide circulation. In addition, the Royal Treasury of the Russian Kingdom may issue gold and/or silver paper certificates in various denominations, representing that the stated quantity of gold or silver is on deposit in the Vaults of the Russian Royal Treasury, and may be obtained by the bearer on demand in exchange for the note. Such notes must employ modern state of the art anti-counterfeiting technologies. The Royal Treasury will be required to maintain physical gold and silver reserves in its vaults equal to one-fourth of the notes issued.¹²⁷ Annual independent audits of the Vaults of the Royal Treasury will be conducted in the most publicly transparent manner possible.

There will be no need for a central bank, since the monetary system will be based on a true gold (and silver) standard. Fractional reserve banking will not be allowed. As a result, no inflation is likely to occur, and very gradual deflation can be expected as the general wealth of the nation (available goods and services) increases.

Usury will not be allowed in the Russian Kingdom. Usury is the lending of money with the expectation of receiving back the entire sum plus interest at a pre-determined annual rate, regardless of what happens to the borrower. Proper investing of one's extra saved money is to be both allowed and encouraged. Investing means that the lender is at risk with the borrower. This means that a lender will perform due diligence, and not lend money where he does not believe there is a likelihood of eventual fair profit for both borrower and lender to share. Furthermore, the lender will be motivated to assist the borrower every way he can, to help ensure the success of the enterprise in which he has invested his money. If the borrower's enterprise does not succeed, the lender loses his investment, and cannot punish the borrower unless the borrower can be shown to have behaved irresponsibly or recklessly (i.e. contrary to the agreement with the lender).

Since corporations will be strictly limited in the Russian Kingdom, both banks and businesses will tend to remain small in scale and locally based. Most businesses and banks will be restricted from expanding outside the confines of the County in which they are founded. Banks will be required to maintain reserves in the same ratio as the Royal Treasury: they must have on deposit as long-term savings (certificates of deposit) one fourth of the amount of money they give out in loans. Demand accounts (checking accounts) must be backed one hundred percent by (coin or treasury certificate) deposits. They can negotiate an agreed percentage of profit from the business receiving the loan, reflecting the bank's percentage

¹²⁷ Huerta de Soto, Jesús, Hayek Memorial Lecture, London, October 2010. See Bibliography.

of ownership of the business, in exchange for being at risk. However, if the business does not prosper the bank may lose its loan. Depositors are not paid interest, but rather gain the safety of having their gold and silver coins stored securely in the bank's vaults. Furthermore, they are eligible to receive a dividend from the bank's profits, if any, that accrued from good loans made to thriving businesses. Thus, depositors are also at risk for seventy-five percent of what they deposit (the bank must maintain twenty-five percent reserves), and thus are not guilty of extracting usury. Those unable to bear such risk can store their cash in safe deposit boxes, for which they pay nominal rent and have no opportunity for dividends. However, since the use of gold currency with only strictly limited fractional banking allowed should prevent inflation, and historically tended to produce very gradual deflation to the benefit of everyone equally, there should be no need to earn any return over time on savings just to preserve purchasing power.

Corporations and Commerce

The Russian Kingdom must maintain balance of payments with foreign nations. Russia will accept nothing but physical gold and silver from other nations in payment of debts, and will offer gold and silver in payment to other nations. To the extent that Russia can maintain balance between the value of what it sells to other nations and the value of what it buys from other nations, no gold or silver need be exchanged. Initially, the Russian Kingdom will seek to be self-sufficient. Russian workers will be paid a living wage, so that a married man employed full time can adequately (not luxuriously) support a wife and as many children as God may see fit to send them. That will mean that Russia cannot afford to purchase many goods manufactured abroad by vastly underpaid workers enslaved in third-world corporate sweat shops. Russia will sell her excess agricultural products and natural resources abroad, in exchange for gold and silver. As national reserves are built up, investment in new local businesses will be encouraged, so that Russia begins to manufacture what Russia needs. The cost of such products may be high compared to those that could be imported, but Russian workers will be employed and fairly paid, and taxes will be kept low. In time, Russian products will become known for their high quality and local variation.

Corporations will be strictly limited in size, and large corporations will be phased out (and subdivided into locally owned and operated entities) over the first five years. A colossal fictional "person" that never dies, and that lacks an immortal soul answerable to God, is a moral abomination. Business enterprises must be owned and operated personally at the local level, and in most cases should not be allowed to expand beyond the confines of the County in which they are founded. A business could be developed that sells a "business plan" or a "business system" that teaches others how to found similar local businesses. But ongoing franchise fees for the use of another business' trademark name will not be allowed. Each

local business should be in some respects unique, and should operate under its own name. Some heavy manufacturing businesses should be allowed to expand as much as to the state (Principality) level, such as steel mills or automobile manufacturers. These may be allowed to incorporate, but must be personally supervised by a group of investors actively involved in operating the business, who may be held personally responsible for dishonest, unfair, or predatory business practices. Inheritance taxes will not be allowed, so it should be possible to pass on successful unincorporated companies from generation to generation, or to sell one's interest to another investor. Some anonymous investing through a stock market could be allowed in the case of large companies, but such investors would assume the risks of part-ownership in the firm and could be penalized on a pro-ratio basis if the firm turned out to engage in corrupt business practices. There can be no "corporate shield" to completely protect large investors from liability; therefore most people ought not to invest freely except at the local level where management people and their personal reputation and business practices can be known and observed.

Mining and Agriculture in the Russian Kingdom

Catholic social policy should encourage a return to the land, where both manufacturing and agriculture should be pursued on the scale of family businesses. Corporatized "agri-business" conducted on a massive scale deprives a huge percentage of the population from the opportunity to live in close proximity to the land in closely-knit human-sized communities. Maximum production coupled with massive unemployment is not an acceptable approach to agriculture or manufacturing. Family-owned farms and small manufacturing plants distributed throughout the nation must be encouraged. Solidarity requires sound management of the land and of the retrieval of natural resources from beneath the land, to maximize long-term human good and not just immediate profit. Manufacturing conducted in a small-team approach where a limited number of workers see a product through from beginning to completion should be pursued, even if the cost of production is somewhat greater. As much as possible, work should be located at or close to home, and should take place alongside a small number of well-known workmates who can easily become personal friends and fellow citizens in a human-sized local community.

Insurance in the Russian Kingdom

For-profit insurance is unethical and will not be permitted in the Russian Kingdom. Rather, locally operated cooperatives can help to pool risks, and determine on an annual basis the actual cost of covering damages. In general, risk pools should not operate over a wider region than a county, so that leadership and participants can have personal familiarity with local customs and risks. Government at the Principality level can set aside a pool of tax revenue to offset disaster losses, and government at the national level can likewise set aside a pool of tax revenue to offset

disaster losses too great to be covered by a Principality. Workers who are employed to administer such risk pools should be paid fair wages, but the risk pools should be not for profit and should have completely transparent books supporting the annual adjustment of rates.

Consumer Financing

In general, citizens of the Russian Kingdom will enjoy greater prosperity if they are encouraged to avoid debt and to practice frugality and saving. It may take a minimum of five to ten years to accomplish a transition from a debt-based consumerist society to a savings-based productive society. Policies to encourage extended families to live together, and to make employment widely available in smaller communities, will help young couples to be able to defer purchasing a home until they have an opportunity to save. Thrift institutions, similar to United States models including the former Savings and Loan Associations or the contemporary Credit Unions, should be explored. These would be operated as housing investment companies, where lenders (the depositors) would accept being at risk for loss of their investment, and where a nominal risk-of-loss fee could accrue to depositors for allowing their savings to remain at risk over time. Home purchases should require a large down payment (perhaps twenty-five percent) and a relatively short term for repayment (perhaps ten to fifteen years maximum). Home-building cooperatives, based on American models such as Amish communities or Habitat for Humanity, may prove beneficial to keep costs of basic housing limited. Goals for the kingdom will include civic planning to make automobile ownership entirely optional, due to excellent public transportation systems and pedestrian-friendly community designs. Automobile clubs should be encouraged, where residents of a neighborhood can share ownership and use of private automobiles, since most people in a well-planned community will only have occasional need for an automobile.

Taxes in the Russian Kingdom

Taxes, a necessary evil, must be uniform, transparent, and strictly limited. Social engineering through complex tax codes is contrary to social justice. The custom of donating up to ten percent of one's income to the Catholic Church, or other charitable agencies operating according to Catholic principles, is commendable if one is able to do so without failing to provide adequately for those rightfully under one's care. Therefore, any kingdom which would dare to ask as much as ten percent in taxes from its citizens seeks to place itself above God and His Church.

The family is the basic economic unit of society, and should be left free to retain most of its income and to make decisions on how to spend that income according to personal and local circumstances. The functions of government should be limited to those few areas in which the family can not best govern and provide for themselves (such as public safety, public works projects, or national defense).

In the Russian Kingdom, the goal will be to have citizens pay a flat rate of four percent of their net income to their County (local), three percent to their Principality (state), and two percent to the Royal Treasury (national), for a total of nine percent. Annual income tax returns will be limited to a single one-sided page which can be submitted in copy to all three levels of government. Withholding of estimated taxes from wages will be required by employers only for those employees who have failed to save adequately for at least ninety percent of their taxes due in any of the previous three years.

Additional direct taxes on the people should be avoided. The government may derive additional revenues from the sale of Russian natural resources, or from tariffs on imported goods produced in conditions where workers do not receive a just living wage. Government at all levels must balance its budget annually and may not enter into any public debt.

The one exception to the rule against social engineering through taxes shall be a pro-life and pro-family tax credit for those raising dependent children or caring for retired adult relatives. For each child under the age of eighteen who lives at home, parents will receive a one percent reduction in taxes. Thus, a family with nine children under age eighteen would not pay any taxes. The same one percent tax reduction shall be granted to families caring for retired or disabled adult relatives.

Social Welfare and Rights in the Russian Kingdom

Caring for the poor, the widow, and the orphan is a Corporal Work of Mercy best supervised by individual families, or if necessary with assistance through the Church. The proper role of government is to protect families and to foster an environment in which families and individuals can flourish through responsible and moral behavior. By keeping income taxes low, eliminating inheritance and capital gains taxes, and providing a precious commodity currency that will tend to have stable or even increasing value over time, saving for retirement is made practical without “investment savvy” or “insider trading” expertise. The simple virtue of thrift, practiced over a lifetime, will normally result in adequate financial security for retirement.

Those who are rendered destitute through no fault of their own should be able to rely on charity administered through the Church, the Body of Christ. The Church can best administer institutions such as orphanages; shelters for the destitute, abused, and homeless; retirement communities; and assisted living and nursing home facilities. Centering the communal life in such institutions on the Catholic Faith will create a family-like atmosphere. Such agencies should be locally operated, guided by the local Catholic bishops, and generally should be limited to a service area no larger than a County. Vagrancy laws are appropriate to a well-ordered society, which need not tolerate homeless persons camping out on public corners. Those destitute of home or shelter should be required to locate temporarily in a county-based Church-affiliated shelter where dignified

productive work is made available in exchange for room and board, and where rules of well-ordered daily living are enforced. Destitute individuals who are found to be mentally ill should be relocated to an appropriate county-run psychiatric facility until treatment renders them fit and able to be reintegrated into society.

Living and working in the two federal cities (Moscow and Saint Petersburg) or in other culturally highly developed metropolitan centers is a privilege to be earned, and not an inherent right of citizenship in the Russian kingdom. The crown may see fit to impose qualification tests for those desiring to reside and/or work in the national capital or other metropolitan city centers. Required qualifications could include the active profession and practice of the Catholic religion; minimum levels of savings and income; proficiency in the Russian language; and minimum levels of academic, artistic, or business achievement.

The Russian Kingdom is a Catholic Confessional State. Citizens who profess the Catholic religion may live freely anywhere in the kingdom (except in restricted metropolitan areas as noted above). Citizens who do not profess the Catholic religion may enjoy the same freedom, provided they do not actively seek to undermine the Crown or the Catholic religion, provided they do not actively seek to convert Catholics to other religions or to atheism, and provided they do not seek to obtain positions of power or authority over Catholics. Repeated agitation against the established state or the Catholic religion, or repeated attempts by non-Catholics to gain positions of power or authority over Catholics, may result in the deprivation of the usual privilege to live and work wherever one chooses. To protect the general welfare, the Crown may designate certain circumscribed regions (known as “pales”) within the kingdom as places of internal banishment for those who have repeatedly shown (through behavior, public agitation, or the dissemination and teaching of anti-Christian ideas) an intention to undermine the state, the Crown, or the established Church. Those who persist in actively opposing the laws of the Russian Kingdom, despite previous resettlement to such pales, may ultimately be banished from the Russian Kingdom.

Social policies that encourage couples to be generous in procreation tend to result in larger numbers of young people answering their vocation to the religious life. The missionary spirit of the Church Militant on earth includes a tradition of many religious Brothers and Sisters serving as teachers and caregivers in institutions dedicated to caring for those in need. It is a long-established Catholic tradition that all who are needy are welcome, regardless of their religious identity. It is always hoped that the sincere charity of Christians will help to convert those who have not yet received the grace to recognize Christ for Who He is. On the other hand, Catholic Christians should be hesitant about relying upon the charity of non-Catholic people, whether Protestant or non-Christian. Such people, despite good intentions, base their policies and behaviors at least in part on error, and may place vulnerable Catholics in a condition of spiritual risk. Therefore, Catholics ought not avail themselves of the services of social

welfare institutions operated by non-Catholics, nor should Catholic social welfare agencies employ non-Catholic persons.

Law in the Russian Kingdom

The Russian Kingdom is a Catholic Confessional State. The Crown officially declares that there is one religion which is true, which is the Roman Catholic Faith including among its various rites the Orthodox Rite and the Roman Rite. All other religions therefore contain at least some error, and may be tolerated but not supported by the Russian Kingdom. The Law of Christ as taught and explained by the Magisterium of the Catholic Church is the law of the Russian Kingdom. The Natural Law, written by God on the hearts of men, and discernable by reason alone, is the more basic law. The rights of God take precedence over the rights of man. The Tsar is an autocrat with respect to men, but is an obedient servant with respect to Almighty God. The Tsar's mandate is to enforce, encourage, and exemplify obedience to the Law of Christ within the borders of the Russian Kingdom, and, insofar as possible, with all men everywhere. The Tsar has no power to make any law contrary to the Law of Christ or contrary to the rules of Christ's Church, nor does the Tsar possess any power to dispense from obedience to the aforesaid Law or rules. The several Dumas, chosen by local people, are charged with recommending such policies as shall seem to them most likely to result in any increase in justice and equity according to the Law of Christ, the rules of the Catholic Church, and the Natural Law. Any citizen of the Russian Kingdom who believes he has suffered an injustice under the law has the right to appeal, through the system of royal courts, including the right to an ultimate personal appeal to the Tsar.

Men have certain rights under the Natural Law. Men have a right to life from conception to natural death, and God has the right to determine when men shall be conceived and when they shall die. As a result, contraception, elective abortion, and euthanasia cannot be legal.

Men have a right to that true liberty which is to do the will of God, but men are not at liberty to break God's Law with impunity. Therefore, men have a right to freely speak truth, but they do not have an equal right to proclaim error. Men have a right and a duty to believe and obey the one religion which is true, the Roman Catholic religion, but cannot be forced by the state or by the Church to do so. Therefore, the state will promote the one true religion in its various rites including the Orthodox Rite and the Roman Rite. But the state will only tolerate, and not promote, other religions because they are all at least in part false.

Under the natural law, a man and a woman have a right to marry, but in so doing must promise to be faithful to their spouse until death, since what God has joined together men may not put asunder. Divorce is therefore a vice that may have to be tolerated by the state among non-Catholics, but cannot be legally granted by the state to those sacramentally married in the Catholic Church. Even the Natural Law proclaims that unnatural vice

(that is, homosexual activity) is forbidden because it is an abomination to God. Likewise, pornography, which is an offense against Christian modesty and chastity and is destructive of family life, must be forbidden. Catholic divorce, homosexual acts (including any public claims to same-sex “marriage” or “partnership”), and pornography must therefore be illegal in the Russian Kingdom. Those who marry in the Catholic Church (Orthodox or Roman Rite) must be presumed by the sovereign and the state to have forfeited any right to later divorce, although if the Church later determines the marriage to be annulled then the Principality (state) may acknowledge this reality. Non-Catholics who marry in schismatic Christian “churches” or in civil ceremonies have not publicly consented to the teaching of Christ and His Church, and therefore the Principality (state) may grant civil divorce to such parties under such rules as each Principality (state) may see fit to promulgate.

Modesty of dress and behavior is necessary for the protection and encouragement of Christian chastity. Therefore, the selling or wearing of immodest clothing must be prohibited; but again, this will be best done through rules made and adjusted at the local level. Local communities may also explore policies to protect the Catholic faithful against the spiritual and social degradation which results from vices including drug and alcohol abuse, prostitution, premarital cohabitation, and indecent entertainments.

The Natural Law teaches that God has made of one blood all nations of men upon the earth. Therefore, unjust discrimination on the basis of ethnic origin is not legal.

God calls all men on earth to become one family in the Body of Christ in the Catholic Church. Therefore, discrimination on the basis of religion is not only legal but is a requirement of Charity, for it can never be loving to leave a brother groping in the darkness of error rather than to lovingly invite him to come into the light of Truth. A Catholic State may – and in most cases must – impose a religious test for high office, because those who are unable to publicly acknowledge the Truth cannot reliably be trusted with the stewardship of the public good. It must be emphasized that the Law of Christ requires Catholics to treat all men with charity, justice, and equity, seeking by means of love and good works to draw all men to the Truth and to the one religion which is true. However, in most cases a Catholic should not be put under the authority of a non-Catholic, and therefore equivalent but separate schools, businesses, and social services will normally develop in those communities where a significant number of non-Catholics reside.

The Natural Law teaches that men and women are equal in having immortal souls that must answer to God at the Last Judgment. However, they are in general called to complementary but different vocations, since God designed them to be helpmates one for the other. A certain social standard for division of labor between the sexes is not unjust but rather reflects the beauty and majesty of creation, which is characterized by hierarchies and variations. It shall be legal for local regions to determine their own rules regarding the proper sphere of social activity for men and

women, providing that respect and charity is the motivation behind any restrictions.

The Law of Christ teaches that the worker must be paid a just wage, and that failure to pay a just wage is one of the four sins (together with murder, sodomy, and oppressing widows and orphans) that cries to Heaven for vengeance. Therefore, a man must be paid a living wage which enables him to support a wife and a large family in an adequate but not luxurious manner. Social justice may therefore require that men with larger families be paid a higher wage for the same work than a single man or a man with a small family. Employers, being for the most part locally-owned companies, have an obligation to provide security of employment to their workers in exchange for loyalty of the workers to the company and its rightful goals. It is expected that the “boom and bust cycle” characteristic of nations which lack a sound currency will not be experienced in the Russian Kingdom, since a true gold standard will be observed. Trade guilds to enforce decent working conditions and fair wages for workers in a given trade should be encouraged. Women with children should have the option to work as fulltime mothers and homemakers, and to be respected by society as making the most important contribution of all to the common good. Rules to promote these social ends will best be developed and applied at the local level, where they can most easily be altered or amended as experience requires.

As a general rule, the highest paid men in a company or in a society should not be paid more than ten times the lowest paid men. The Tsar should not be paid more than ten times the salary of the lowest paid servant in his palace, and the president of a company should be paid no more than ten times the wages of the lowest paid company employee. Granted, high officials of state may also enjoy certain privileges consistent with their station, such as room, board, and staff provided in state palaces, liberal transportation throughout the kingdom and abroad as needed for state business, and an allowance for official uniforms, supplies, and equipment required for the proper fulfillment of their office. Similarly, those with at-risk investments in productive enterprises may be entitled to a just portion of profits, if any, as a return on their investments.

The rules of the Catholic Church for the faithful should be reflected in the laws of the Russian Kingdom. Holy Days of Obligation should be obligatory legal holidays. Businesses should be closed on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, with the exception of businesses necessary to the preservation of life, such as medical care facilities, pharmacies, and food services.

Legal practice by solicitors, barristers, and judges must be based on justice and truth, and must not devolve into a procedural or technical game in which an unfair advantage is sought through clever manipulation of rules or laws which were not crafted foreseeing the circumstances of a current dispute. Rather, a man who perceives that he has suffered an injustice should first personally confront the man whom he believes has done him wrong, and request appropriate reparation. Only when private

justice has been denied should an injured party seek legal counsel, and then an effort should be made between the counselors for plaintiff and defendant to mediate the dispute and thus to minimize the overall cost of reconciliation. When a case cannot be settled amicably and must come before a judge, it should first be at the most local court, and should be referred for review to superior courts only in rare circumstances. The point of reference must always be the Law of Christ, and not mere legal precedent, since no two cases can have identical facts. All citizens have a right to an ultimate personal appeal to the Tsar.

The right to keep and bear arms is fundamental, but includes responsibilities. Rules should be developed at the local level to determine what responsibilities must be met by those keeping firearms or other weapons (for example, completion of gun safety classes, or a duty to engage in periodic target practice).

Substances prone to cause addiction or intoxication must be regulated. Drug addiction is a disease and should be treated as such. However, men must be held accountable for the consequences of their voluntary actions, including the voluntary acts that over a period of time result in drug or alcohol addiction. Men who endanger others by driving or becoming violent when intoxicated must be punished.

Local communities should include treatment of drug addiction in their healthcare cooperatives, but men who show a pattern of resistance to treatment should be referred to agencies at the state (Principality) level that are court-ordered and not voluntary. In extreme cases, court-ordered time in a drug-free work camp in a remote area for an extended period of time, the so-called "boot camp" approach, may be necessary for character re-formation.

Rules regarding alcohol use should be developed at the Principality level, and should draw upon available data from various modern nations.

Smoking is generally understood to be a serious health hazard, and therefore is sinful from a Catholic moral perspective. This represents a change from earlier decades when the health hazards of smoking were less well understood. Therefore, smoking in public or private buildings should be generally forbidden, but specific rules are best developed at the local level.

Mental disorders should be managed by the medical community at the local level. Government may need to become involved when patients endangering themselves or others persistently resist needed medical treatment. Such matters are best handled at the local or County level.

Suicide attempts or threats, and self-mutilation (such as self-cutting or self-burning) must be illegal, since most of them constitute attempts at manipulation and are not serious. They are, however, assaults against a valued member of society (oneself) and should be punished the same as threats against someone else. Many persons who engage in such self-destructive behaviors have been victims of severe physical, sexual, or emotional abuse.

They can best be treated through a combination of medical and

spiritual interventions. Placement for a time in a strict Catholic “boot camp” facility where rule-breaking is not tolerated can be healing for many such individuals, who are angry because of having been betrayed in a fundamental way. Often they are desperate to know that someone loves them enough to set firm limits, and they cannot be expected to enjoy adult “rights” until they have achieved the maturity to handle adult responsibility.

Transportation in the Russian Kingdom

Public transportation should be convenient, comfortable, and affordable. Cities and towns should be designed to be pedestrian-friendly. Energy-efficient railroads are to be favored over private trucks and automobiles nationwide.

Utilities and Communication in the Russian Kingdom

While competition among utility and communication providers may be helpful, there is a greater social good in developing stable local companies that can provide stable long-term employment and be responsive to the needs of local communities. Cable service providers (internet, television, and land-line phones) should generally serve an area no larger than a County, and cellular phone providers should serve regions no larger than states (Principalities), with reciprocity agreements to provide de facto nationwide service.

However, directories should be restricted to only one directory per region, so that businesses are not forced to buy multiple advertisements in competing directories serving the same local region. Directory service should therefore be a function of County and Principality governments, subcontracted at set rates by lottery to private companies.

Media (television, radio, internet, newspapers, publishing) in the Russian Kingdom

The airwaves and cable are a resource belonging to the people of the kingdom, and may properly be regulated in the public interest. Broadcasters and publications adhering to Catholic standards of decency and truth can be awarded the Seal of the Russian Kingdom. Those that lack the seal will be understood to be suspect from a Catholic perspective. Programs or publications that are overtly subversive of Catholic principles may be suppressed.

The Arts, Architecture, and Civic Planning

The Catholic and Orthodox Churches built European and Russian Civilization upon the foundations of ancient Greece and Rome, and developed organically by respecting tradition while allowing for natural growth and development. There is a need to preserve what is left of traditional art and architecture, and to engage in civic planning that reflects the values of the Catholic religion, family life, and healthy living.

Music and art powerfully influence the soul, and should be oriented toward celebrating truth, beauty, harmony, hierarchy, and right order. Much of “modern” art, music, and architecture represent a devolution from the highest forms achieved in the course of civilization.

Modern art celebrates randomness, and seeks to convey the belief that there is no Truth and no unchanging Foundation which can be known. Modern music likewise began with a neo-pagan reversion to the primal beat of “rock music,” and the modern randomness of “jazz”, and has ultimately devolved into a cacophony of formless sounds. Modern architecture celebrated the simple plainness and openness of the “Bauhaus” movement, impoverishing the soul that rejoices in the unfathomable beauty and joy of the Gothic, the Baroque and the Victorian, as well as the storied dignity of the Greco-Roman.

A Catholic kingdom will seek to foster those forms that reflect the beauty of the Heavenly Kingdom, and the highest forms that developed organically in the long course of Christian civilization.

Royal Palaces in the Russian Kingdom

The Russian Kingdom contains a wealth of magnificent Baroque palaces constructed at a time when royalty was understood as a reflection of the divine. The beauty of royal palaces and of ancient and baroque church buildings hints at the greater glory that awaits the ransomed soul in the Courts of Heaven. Palaces which have served only as museums should be returned to their original function as seats of government, and the Russian people should be welcomed to visit these glorious national treasures and to take pride in being part of a society striving to celebrate its Catholic identity.

Under the guidance of the Tsar and Tsarina, the Russian Kingdom will develop plans to refurbish the former royal residences in Saint Petersburg and Moscow. This should begin with the royal apartment in the Alexander Palace in Tsarskoe Selo, where Tsar Nicholas II and Tsarina Alexandra lived up until the tragic 1917 revolution. The palace had fallen into disrepair during the Soviet era, but was partially restored as a museum during the years of the Russian Federation.

It would now be a small matter to install modern conveniences and technology, while preserving the historic grandeur of the palace. Moving Tsar Mikhail and Tsarina Mariya into the Alexander Palace will symbolize that Russia is picking up where she left off, as a Christian kingdom. Princess Mariya and her parents Grand Duke George and Duchess Katarina should move to Saint Petersburg, and oversee the beginning palace renovations with a view to having them ready in time for the royal wedding in May. A royal crest for Mikhail and Mariya, consisting of two intertwined M’s, should be designed to replace the intertwined N&A [H&A in the Cyrillic alphabet] that was used during the reign of Nicholas II and Alexandra.

Chapter Twenty-Nine

April 2016.

Opening Session of the New National Duma, Grand Philharmonic Hall, Saint Petersburg, Russian Kingdom.

In February 2016 national elections had taken place, and each locality had chosen a representative to serve in the new Duma of the Russian Kingdom. During March, those selected had made preparations to take leave of their careers for a month twice a year, in April and October, to meet at the Hall of the Duma in Saint Petersburg. There, the Tsar would formally address the historic opening session on April first, to launch the first month of deliberations on national policy. At the end of the month, the Duma would disband and the representatives would return home to their regular jobs. The Tsar's administration would then attempt, during the next five months, to implement the ideas worked out by the Duma, providing that he felt those policies were wise and likely to benefit his people and his kingdom. In October, when the Duma would reconvene for another month, the Tsar would seek feedback from all regions of his kingdom on how current royal policies were affecting the daily life of the common people. This would be a means of identifying and rectifying any unintended bad consequences of well-intentioned policies.

April first was a Friday, and Tsar Mikhail chose to deliver his opening speech to the Duma at three o'clock in the afternoon. Not having yet been crowned, he would appear in Russian military attire, but would otherwise follow traditional royal protocol. As a decorated American war hero and Marine special operative, he had already been honored and appropriately decorated by the highest ranks of the Russian military. For the historic event Mikhail chose to hold the opening session in Saint Petersburg's Grand Philharmonic Hall, built in 1802, which boasted near-perfect acoustics, a grand pipe organ, and seating for more than fifteen hundred persons. Its elegant imperial interior featured carved marble columns and enormous crystal chandeliers. Prince Mark Szczypiorski had been recruited to play the organ for the event, accompanied by a brass choir drawn from the Saint Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra.

At three o'clock, a chorus of trumpets in the rear gallery announced the arrival of the Tsar. A high official announced his entrance:

"His Royal Majesty, Mikhail Nicholaevich Romanov, Tsar of All the Russias!"

Regal and majestic music emanating from the organ and brass choir on stage, and answered by the trumpet chorus in the rear gallery, now filled the acoustically-acclaimed hall. Everyone stood while Tsar Mikhail II, accompanied by a Russian military honor guard, made a slow procession down the center aisle, greeting newly-elected Duma members in nearly every row. Banners bearing the Romanov double-headed eagle and the

inscription “Tsar Mikhail II welcomes the National Duma of the Russian Kingdom” were suspended all around the vast room, and at the rear of the stage on both sides of the towering pipe organ façade. Once on stage, where the royal podium was flanked by a dozen floral bouquets, Mikhail stood at the microphone and immediately began his address:

Distinguished members of the new National Duma of the Russian Kingdom, spouses, invited guests, clergy, and members of the press: As your royal sovereign it is my privilege and joy to welcome you here to Saint Petersburg, the once and future royal capital of Holy Mother Russia. You have been chosen by those who know you well, in your own local communities, through the ideal process of local democracy. You have come here to report the needs and desires of your friends and neighbors to their king, so that he may initiate such policies as shall seem most likely to produce the increasing long-term health, wealth, and happiness of his loyal subjects. You have not come here to establish careers as rulers. In thirty days you will all be returning to your previous places of work, where you will be able to observe first-hand the effects of those policies that you and I will have designed together during this first thirty-day session. In six months you will return to meet with me again, and will report to me any good effects, as well as any unintended bad consequences, from the policies we previously established.

My role as sovereign will be to continually seek the good of all people within the Russian Kingdom, with as much justice and equity as can be achieved in this imperfect world. I will expect to intervene in local matters only in rare instances, when it becomes necessary, in justice, to protect any of my people, even the least in my kingdom. By meeting twice each year, together we will continue the process of learning how best to implement the social teachings of the one true Church founded and preserved from error by our Heavenly Sovereign, Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

To assist us in this process, Orthodox Rite Patriarch Filaret, Roman Rite Archbishop Bogmolov, various esteemed Russian theologians, and my brother Grand Duke Father Kiril Nicholaevich Romanov, will be at our disposal. We will expect them to correct us whenever we begin to stray from the teachings of Christ and His Church. Father Kiril will serve as the direct liaison between His Holiness Pope Nicholas VI and the Russian Royal Court, so that, when needed, we can formally seek guidance directly from Christ’s Vicar on earth.

It has been ninety-nine long years since a Christian Duma last assembled in this glorious city named after the Blessed Apostle Peter, to whom Christ gave the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven

and the power of binding and loosing. There is reason to believe that, had Russia not been consecrated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary by the Pope and all the Catholic bishops before the one hundred year deadline of 2017, disaster would have befallen Rome and the Pope, and a generalized massacre of Christians throughout the world would soon have followed. Instead, a great public miracle has taken place, upon which the entire world gazes in amazement: the vast majority of Russians have undergone a conversion of heart, and have voluntarily and eagerly embraced the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church and all that the Church holds and teaches. This has produced an unprecedented unity of purpose and resolve. In every corner of this vast kingdom, citizens of Russia are first reforming their own personal lives, and are then beginning to think about how to join together in Christian solidarity to reform their communities, their regions, and our entire and singularly blessed Russian Kingdom.

The Catholic principle of subsidiarity must be the rule in the Russian Kingdom: decision making must be done at the most local level possible, and centralization of power and control must be kept strictly limited to what is essential. Local communities and regions must be kept free to determine and discover what works best for them. There can be no requirements of uniformity except in minimal essentials: the one true Holy Catholic Faith, a uniform honest currency, regional and national systems of transportation and defense, and loyalty to the Tsar who will soon be anointed by the Pope, the visible head of the Church Militant on earth, to rule Russia in the Name of Christ, as the servant of Christ and His people.

Democracy works well at the local level, but is impractical at higher levels. This observation is entirely consistent with the Catholic principles of subsidiarity and solidarity. Thus, local leaders up to the level of medium-sized city mayors will be elected. Higher officials will be appointed by the Tsar, and will serve for life or until the Tsar sees fit to remove them. I believe we should place strict limits on campaign advertising and fundraising, and instead facilitate open intellectual debate of competing ideas in public forums where every qualified candidate can be heard equally by the people.

The Russian Kingdom is a Catholic Confessional State. This means that the most basic qualification for public office is to be a Catholic in good standing in either the Orthodox Rite or the Roman Rite, actively practicing the Faith and not currently living in public sin, and so certified by one's local bishop. The external world will accuse us of religious bigotry for this. That is because the world denies that there can be one religion which is true, and that therefore all other religions must be false. But in Russia, by

the grace of Heaven, we know better.

A vocation to any public office must be a vocation to carry the Cross: to die to oneself and one's own selfish interests in order to seek instead the greater good of the community. This is what parents, teachers, priests, and saintly kings have always done. And this is what you, as chosen members of the Duma of the Russian Kingdom, must be prepared to do. You cannot serve two masters. You must choose each day to serve Christ, and to turn aside from the temptations to the power, riches and glory of this world, which the devil, the prince of this world, will surely come to offer to you. You must choose this day, and every day, whom you will serve: for you cannot serve both God and mammon.

Those who do not embrace Christ and the one true Church that He founded upon Peter the rock, cannot be trusted with the public welfare. A man must first have his own house in order, before he is fit to exercise authority over others. In the Russian Kingdom we must treat every person who is not a Catholic with the utmost respect, with justice, charity, and loving-kindness. But charity also demands that we be honest with them: until they obtain the grace to submit to the sweet yoke of Christ and His Church, we cannot entirely trust them.

We do not discriminate against any persons on the basis of race, for God has made of all nations one blood. Race is a social construct, and has no real meaning in biology. We must not be racists. Men and women are equal in having been created in the image of God with immortal souls, souls destined for eternal reward or punishment. But men and women are not the same, and may often have different vocations that are complementary rather than competitive. We must construct social policies that help each person to discover and fulfill his or her God-given vocation.

But we *must* discriminate on the basis of religion: As Christ Our Lord said, "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who gathers not with Me scatters abroad." Christ calls all men and women, all nations and all families, to become one body in Him. The Catholic Church is God's original plan for universal "diversity," since all people are called out of all false religions of every kind into the one religion which is true, and which is able to save their souls from hell. All are welcome in the Church, but to become a member of Christ's Church means to submit to all that Deposit of Faith of which Christ spoke when He gave to His apostles the Great Commission: "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to everyone, teaching them all things which I have commanded you."

Because those who do not know, love and serve Christ are necessarily slaves to error and to unbridled passions, it is not fitting for Christian people to serve under the rule of non-Christians. In

the Russian Kingdom, policies must be established to discourage Christians from becoming employed by, indebted to, or under the power of non-Christians. On the other hand, Christians should be encouraged to treat non-Christians with respect, kindness, patience, and an extra measure of generosity, in hope that by their Christian charity they may one day win them to Christ and to eternal beatitude.

The human heart secretly longs for Paradise lost. We dream of building our own Edens here on earth, where we can finally be happy. But, inevitably, every time we think we have reached that elusive goal, something goes wrong. Our first parents were expelled from Eden because of their sin, and we are not going to get back in no matter how hard we try. If we are wise we will accept our punishment for sin, which is to work while we live and, eventually, to die. Work is a punishment for sin, and if we do not altogether prefer work over leisure, then we have something to offer up in reparation for our sins. Work is ennobling because it represents submission to the will of God and to the sentence which His Divine Majesty saw fit to pass upon the human race, excepting only the All-Immaculate Mother of God and Her Divine Son.

In this world there are men who seek to escape real work by becoming money-changers, skimming a percentage off of every transaction between other people who do real work. Still other men seek to avoid work by becoming career politicians, living off the taxes and favors extracted by force or bribery from the working classes. But it has never been so with me, and it must never be so with you, honorable ladies and gentlemen. I have worked as a student, as a physician, and as a soldier for my entire adult life, and now I pledge to continue working each day as the servant of every man, woman, and child in this great Russian Kingdom. You too must continue to work, to keep your hands busy in your own communities, creating real wealth through your honest labor.

Many modern nations have erred by supposing that they can increase national wealth simply by continually creating more currency, without a corresponding increase in real goods and services. They have spawned huge classes of “investors” who do not work at any honest trade, but rather seek to gain an unfair advantage over their neighbors by constantly buying low and selling high, without adding any real new value through their own labor. But in the Russian Kingdom it must not be so: the Scriptures and all of recorded human history make plain that God put precious metals into the world to function as a stable medium of exchange that is convenient, reliable, just, and equitable. It has been many decades since the world saw the last vestiges of an honest monetary system. In the Russian Kingdom, we intend to

reestablish honest currency, using physical gold and silver coins as the standard of value. We will include a strictly-limited paper note system, to facilitate day-to-day transactions. Any such notes must always remain guaranteed to be redeemable at any bank, by the bearer on demand, for precious metal coins of equivalent face value. Great blessings will flow upon Russia when she begins to use God's money as her own money.

The value of gold and silver have historically been remarkably stable over time when compared to the cost of real goods and services. It is the value of "fiat" currencies, which have no intrinsic value at all, that has fluctuated wildly. People in Western democracies have been brainwashed into thinking that the prices of gold and silver fluctuate wildly, because they mistake "fiat" currency units, such as the United States dollar or the European Union Euro, as real standards of value. The value of gold and silver has remained remarkably stable over time, changing so slowly that local free markets can easily and equitably determine fair gold and silver prices for goods and services based on factors of supply and demand. In a productive economy, which keeps everyone employed who wants to work, the supply of goods and services will tend to increase faster than the supply of gold and silver money, and this will cause prices to gently decrease over time. Such very gradual deflation tends to slowly and steadily enrich everyone who lives frugally and saves a bit, though it does gradually punish those who maintain the habit of remaining in debt.

The proposed new Russian Ruble currency will be interchangeable for gold and silver at fixed ratios, as explained in this chart, a copy of which is included in your program:

**PROPOSAL OF HIS MAJESTY TSAR MIKHAIL II
FOR A NEW NATIONAL CURRENCY
FOR THE RUSSIAN KINGDOM**

1 Russian Kingdom Ruble = 1/100th Troy ounce of 99.99% gold

COINS (Clear plastic encased)

Face value	Weight (Troy oz.)	Metal Content	Approximate US\$ Value	Coin size is comparable to
100 rubles	One oz	99.99% gold	\$2,500	US silver dollar
50 rubles	½ oz	99.99% gold	\$1,250	US half dollar
10 rubles	1/10 th oz	99.99% gold	\$250	US quarter
1 ruble	1/100 th oz	99.99% gold	\$25	US nickel
½ ruble	1/200 th oz	99.99% gold	\$12.50	US dime
10 cents	1/1000 th oz	99.99% gold	\$2.50	US penny
1 cent	1/100 th oz	90.0% silver	\$0.25	US dime
1/5 cent	1/5 oz	90.0% copper	\$0.05	US penny

PAPER NOTES*

Face Value	Type of Note	Redeemable by the bearer on demand at any bank for	Approximate US\$ value
100 rubles	Gold certificate	One 1 oz 99.99% gold coin	\$2,500
50 rubles	Gold certificate	One ½ oz 99.99% gold coin	\$1,250
10 rubles	Gold certificate	One 1/10 th oz 99.99% gold coin	\$250
5 rubles	Gold certificate	Five 1/100 th oz 99.99% gold coins	\$125
1 ruble	Gold certificate	One 1/100 th oz 99.99% gold coin	\$25

[*Paper notes, entitled Gold Certificates, will be issued by the Royal Treasury of the Russian Kingdom, and will certify that the stated amount of 99.99% pure gold, promised in the note, is physically present in storage in the vault of the Royal Treasury. By law the Royal Treasury must strictly observe a 25% reserve standard, so that the total face amount of paper gold or silver certificates in circulation can never exceed four times the actual amount of precious metals physically stored in the Royal Treasury vault. A completely transparent public audit of the Treasury will be conducted annually by two of various rotating private accounting firms. This will make government-sponsored currency inflation impossible. As the quantity of available goods and services grows while the money supply remains relatively static, prices will tend to gradually decrease, causing everyone who saves to gradually become wealthier.]¹²⁸

Many members of the Duma rose to their feet and applauded while the above chart was displayed on several large projection screens on the stage, and around the hall. Tsar Mikhail waited for the applause to subside before continuing:

There are immensely powerful dark forces angrily opposed to the new monetary freedoms that I am proposing for the Russian Kingdom. A true gold standard is hated by all those who would seek to manipulate the value of money for their own selfish purposes, and who seek through endless warfare and its resultant destruction and consumption of real wealth to enslave even governments as their debtors. The value of gold and silver is stable, and cannot easily be manipulated, especially over long periods of time. Those who would continue to force “fiat” currencies and fractional reserve banking upon the world are, fundamentally, enemies of truth.¹²⁹ They are therefore enemies of Christ, Who is Truth.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Valuations are based on the author’s estimate of the probable prices for gold, silver, and copper in 2016, considering 2010 prices and historic trends in the precious and industrial metals markets. Hugo Salinas Price at LeMetropole Café (www.lemetropolecafe.com) has suggested that, in a world with competing fiat currencies, precious metal coins might have to be issued in standard weights, whose value could fluctuate relative to commodities and other currencies. The 99.99% pure gold money would be the standard of value against which the value of everything else was measured. Actual payments would replace endless shifting of unpaid debts. Bill Buckler of *The Privateer* (www.the-privateer.com, mid-November 2010 issue, page 5) suggests such pure precious metal coins could be encased in clear plastic to prevent wear and to allow even very tiny amounts of precious metal (e.g. 1,000th oz) to be circulated inside a clear plastic coin of practical size. Such standard money would make a central bank unnecessary; only a national depository (treasury) and an official national mint would be needed. That would strip the national government of unlimited power (even in an autocracy), and would empower the frugal individual. Buckler notes that the first nation to issue such standard gold money would “blow the lid off” the false, infinitely-corruptible fiat-currency financial systems of all other countries.

¹²⁹ Huerta do Soto, Jesús, Hayek Memorial Lecture, London, 2010. See Bibliography.

¹³⁰ Likoudis, Paul, “Canadian Journalist Cites Saints to Indict ‘Fractional Reserve Banking’”, *The*

Such men, the enemies of Truth, will doubtless seek to infiltrate this Duma, and so you and I must be on our guard, watching our hearts, examining our consciences daily, and praying without ceasing. I strongly suggest that every member of this Duma consider the practice of daily Confession and daily Holy Communion.

Catholic priests of both the Orthodox and Roman Rites will be assigned to serve this Duma continually whenever it is in session, with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass being offered every morning and the Sacrament of Confession being available every day before Mass.

Far beyond western Europe, across the Atlantic ocean, lies my native land, where I was born of expatriate Russian royal blood. Long ago, the United States of America was torn asunder by a cruel Civil War, in which brother fought against brother. Legend has it that the reason for the war was the practice of African slavery in the southern portion of the young nation.

Other analysts say that it was actually an economic war between wealthy northern industrialists and middle class gentleman farmers in the south. Suffice it to say that the American President of that day, Abraham Lincoln, sought to heal the nation by honoring those who had given their lives that the fledgling nation, not yet a century from its founding, might not fail.

In November of 1863, Lincoln gave a brief address of just two hundred seventy-two words, dedicating a battlefield as a military cemetery for fallen American heroes. The field was located near the town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Tonight, I will use the immortal words of Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address" as a template upon which to construct a new manifesto of political and financial freedom, beginning in Russia, and intended, over time, to spread its blessings across the entire world.

For, strange as it may seem for an autocratic Tsar to state, I have come to understand that the only place where local democracy can freely flourish is under the benevolent protection of autocratic Christian monarchy. Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, please be attentive as I deliver to you what shall henceforth be known in the annals of Russian history as "The Saint Petersburg Address":

The Saint Petersburg Address¹³¹

**Given by His Majesty Mikhail II, Tsar of All the Russias
Before the First Session of the
National Duma of the Russian Kingdom.
Friday Afternoon, April the First,
in the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Sixteen.**

Five *score and three years ago* private plutocrats and paid-for politicians *brought forth on the American continent a new national bank, conceived in usury, and dedicated to the proposition that some men are created more equal than others.*¹³²

Now we are engaged in a great Global Financial Crisis, testing whether that Federal Reserve Bank, or any national bank so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure.

We are met, in spirit, at the great printing presses in the subterranean bowels of that Federal Reserve Bank, where unlimited quantities of dishonest currency have been continuously created out of nothing, and then lent to the United States Treasury at a perpetual rate of interest. Since the 1944 Bretton Woods Agreement, the American military empire has been able to require all other modern nations to hold vast amounts of these usurious Federal Reserve Notes as the “reserve currency” behind their own national currencies.

*We have come to condemn these predatory, Ponzi-scheme printing presses, and to proclaim a new Russian Ruble that is gold-and-silver-convertible: an honest, inflation-proof medium of exchange that will soon send these pernicious paper-money presses, once and for all, to their *final resting places*.*

*We proclaim this new gold and silver currency for the sake of all those common people in Russia, and in the United States, and in all modern nations, who have lost their life savings, the wages of their honest labor, to the relentless monetary inflation resulting from perpetual printing on these profligate presses. The common people have seen their futures sacrificed, by sleight of hand, so that this corrupt national bank – and the profits of the private plutocrats who prosper by it – *might live*.*

*We have come today in the name of honest money, on behalf of the workers deprived of their just wages, and in defense of the poor, the widow, and the orphan, whose cries have now reached even unto the ears of the Lord of Hosts.*¹³³

¹³¹ With apologies to United States President Abraham Lincoln. Words borrowed from Lincoln’s November 1863 *Gettysburg Address* are italicized.

¹³² With apologies to George Orwell, *Animal Farm*, Chapter Ten.

¹³³ James 5:4; Exodus 22:22-24.

It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we cannot negotiate – we cannot exonerate – we cannot even resuscitate – the post-Christian, “democratic” world’s failing, fictional “fiat” currencies. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled helplessly against endless and usurious inflation, have condemned those dishonest currencies, far above our poor power to add or to detract.

The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what was done to enrich the rich and impoverish the poor by the 1913 founding of the Federal Reserve Bank, the 1944 Bretton Woods Agreement, and the United States’ 1971 final repudiation of the international gold standard.

It is for us, the honest workers who produce the real wealth of the world through the sweat of our labor, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work of reestablishing honest money; a noble cause which they who create so much imaginary money out of nothing have thus far so shamefully suppressed.

It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us –

That from these shameful, soon-to-be-silenced printing presses we take increased devotion to the cause of honest, gold and silver currency (to prevent which, the presses have been run, in futile final desperation, full-speed and non-stop) –

That we here highly resolve that these corrupting, counterfeiting presses shall not have been shut down in vain –

That the family of nations shall have a new birth of freedom –

Embracing the only true liberty which is the Social Kingship of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and rejecting the false glamour of the cruel, anti-Christian kingdom of mammon –

And that government of big money, by big money, and for big money, shall forever perish from the earth.

When at the end Mikhail stood silent, the entire Duma and their guests leapt to their feet and cheered wildly, clapping their hands, stomping their feet, and shouting “Long live Tsar Mikhail!” and “God bless the Russian Kingdom!” Prince Mark quietly took his place at the organ as the brass choir readied their instruments. Following new words to the familiar old “Russian Hymn,” recently penned by Grand Duke Father Kiril Romanov and printed in their programs, the entire Duma sang together before their sovereign:

Christ save our Christian Tsar!
Long may he reign in power,
In holiness, justice, and charity.
Dread of Christ's enemies,
Our Catholic Faith's defender,
Christ save the Tsar!
O God save the Tsar!

As Mikhail wiped tears from his eyes, he found himself unable to sing the final phrases of this beautiful, blatantly-Christian new national hymn. Wondering whether he could possibly regain his composure in time to resume speaking, he was relieved to see the Duma's newly-elected parliamentarian approach the podium to address the gathering. The parliamentarian praised the beautiful concord of minds and hearts, between the monarch and his subjects, which was evident in this gathering and which would prove to be an inestimable blessing to the people of the new Russian Kingdom.

Outside the hall, a handful of foreign protestors held aloft large signs displaying typical Western secular humanist slogans. At first the Western news services focused entirely on them, suggesting that the people on the street did not support the "regressive religious bigotry" and "hopelessly-outdated horse-and-buggy economics" which the "overly-zealous Tsar" had just been expounding inside the "palatial pre-democratic hall." But the protestors were vastly outnumbered by Russian crowds gathered to demonstrate their support for the new Tsar and his policies. It became impossible for the news services to ignore the fact that for every sign criticizing the Tsar, there were a hundred or more supporting him.

Television news crews began interviewing random Russians not only in Saint Petersburg and Moscow, but also in medium and small cities throughout the Kingdom. To their great surprise, they found that the common people well understood that it would take several years just to begin to get the broken Russian economy and the debased culture back on track. A recurring theme was evident: Russians spoke of their renewed hope of leaving a far better kingdom for their children and grandchildren than the self-destructed spiritually-dead dinosaur that their parents and grandparents had inherited from the atheistic Communists of the former Soviet Union.

The Catholic Church in Russia – both Orthodox and Roman Rites – was reporting a marked increase in vocations to the religious life. Already discussions were underway how to expand the capacity of seminaries and convents.

At New Year's, the Russian people had barely been able to discern the faintest first glow of morning twilight. Now, in April, they could clearly see, by the dawn's early light, the golden glow of the miraculous Russian Sunrise. And by the grace of faith, in their converted hearts the Russians could envision, afar off and in future years to come, the brilliant new morning that was breaking, and the blinding glory descending upon Holy Mother Russia through the intercession of the Woman Clothed with the Sun.

Chapter Thirty

A Saturday Morning in May 2016. Royal Wedding, Roman Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Moscow, Russian Kingdom.

An air of excitement permeated every corner of the Russian Kingdom, and would soon stir the hearts of incurable romantics the world over. The first Russian royal wedding since 1894 was about to take place. The last time the world had been enthralled by a truly spectacular royal wedding was in 1981, when England's Crown Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer were married before three thousand five hundred guests in London's Saint Paul's Cathedral. That high-church Anglican ceremony was witnessed live on television by an estimated seven hundred fifty million persons, and souvenir picture books and DVD recordings of the event remained in demand for decades.

When the last Tsar, Nicholas I, married Princess Alexandra just six years before the close of the Nineteenth Century, the ceremony was conducted in haste and relative privacy. Nicholas' father, Tsar Alexander III, had died suddenly, less than four weeks before, and it was not fitting to have a large public celebration during the period of public mourning for a Tsar.

After Charles and Diana's 1981 wedding, it had seemed to many that never again would the world witness such an elegant, complex, and regal ceremony, a hint of higher civilization past that had now receded forever into the fading pages of old fashioned children's fairy tale books. The much less dramatic 2011 royal wedding of Prince James had served to confirm this impression. But today, the cloudless blue sky over Moscow proclaimed that they were wrong. Today, the Russian Kingdom would thrill the world with a pageant of pomp and circumstance unparalleled in living memory. Tsar Mikhail II Nicholaevich Romanov was going to wed Princess Mariya Georgovna Peterson at a high Nuptial Mass in the Traditional Latin Rite. The ceremony would take place in the Roman Catholic Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Moscow, with three Roman Catholic prelates officiating: Roman Rite Archbishop Bogmolov, Orthodox Rite Patriarch Filaret III, and Grand Duke Father Kiril Romanov.

In true Catholic tradition, the wedding ceremony would take place first, and then, while the bride and groom knelt together at the gate of the sanctuary, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was to be offered in the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite, with the usual sung portions. Mozart's *Coronation Mass*, written to commemorate the Coronation of the Blessed Virgin Mary as Queen of Heaven and Earth, would be performed by the cathedral chorus accompanied by organ and thirty selected members of the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra. The music would be conducted by His Royal Highness Prince Thomas Shoemaker, the new Moscow Palaces Kapellmeister to His Majesty, with His Royal Highness Prince

Mark Szczypiorski, the new Saint Petersburg Palaces Kapellmeister to His Majesty, as organist. Selections from two Rheinberger Concertos for Organ and Orchestra would be performed for the prelude, processional, and recessional/postlude.

A year before, Prince Mark would have said there was no way he could play the organ at Princess Mariya's wedding, either because he would be the groom, or else because if he were not the groom he would be unable to read the music through his tears. But now that he and the entire Szczypiorski family had relocated to Russia, and he and his brothers and sister were in almost daily contact with their beloved "sister" Mariya, Mark's heart was once again whole, and he could face the unknown future with expectant wonder. Observing Mariya's happiness had gradually turned his sorrow into joy. He had even come to love Mikhail, in the same way a brother loves his brother-in-law. Mark and Mariya's lifelong friendship would always remain a solid rock, a sheltering harbor to which each one could turn in times of trial or tempest to find a completely trustworthy old friend who would offer wise counsel out of unselfish love.

The cathedral was filled to standing room only, with the invited guests including all the important Russian and European royalty, elected heads of state, and leading Russian and European political and ecclesiastical leaders. Every Russian Catholic bishop, of both the Roman Rite and the Orthodox Rite, was present, as were many priests from Moscow and Saint Petersburg. Two hundred tickets had been issued by lottery to ordinary Russian citizens. The entire ceremony was to be broadcast live on Russian television, with feeds to all major networks worldwide. His Royal Highness Prince David Shoemaker, the Tsar's media producer, would oversee the arrangements for broadcasting and recording of all events connected with the royal wedding. His Royal Highness Prince Joseph Shoemaker, David's brother, would serve as the Tsar's Assistant Master of Ceremonies, guided in his new role by Archbishop Bogmolov's Master of Ceremonies. The two brothers would later oversee the production and marketing of official DVD's and souvenir booklets of the royal wedding, reception, and balls. All rights would be reserved by the Russian Kingdom, and all profits from this project – which were expected to be immense over many years to come – would be used to fund Catholic charitable institutions in Russia, including clinics, hospitals, and orphanages.

His Royal Highness Prince Jacob Szczypiorski, on leave from his recently-begun year of study at Switzerland's leading culinary institute, was serving as First Assistant to the Executive Chef of the Kremlin for the evening's receptions and balls. Jacob, the third-oldest child of the Szczypiorski family, had long been like an adopted little brother to Mariya, and rejoiced to have an important part to play in her wedding day. Prince Jacob was not quite as tall as his older brothers Mark and Luke, but he had the same athletic build, and a handsome face with wide-set eyes and a strong chin. His hair was brown, exceedingly curly, and, if he did not keep it trimmed, his mop could make Mark's wild curls seem almost civilized.

But there was no wild streak in Jacob; he was his parents' consolation, the one who always stepped in to help without being asked, and who never sought to bend his parents' rules. Although talented in music, with a beautiful tenor voice and excellent skills at the piano, he had realized by his early teens that he was especially gifted as a cook and that his logical vocation was to be an executive chef.

The wedding celebration had begun with a grand military parade through the streets of Moscow that brought the wedding parties to the cathedral in antique gilded horse-drawn carriages borrowed – not without some understandable opposition from the curators – from the Kremlin museums. Mikhail and Mariya would each arrive at the cathedral in separate carriages, accompanied by their respective members of the wedding party. After the religious rites in the cathedral were concluded, the celebration would continue with another grand military parade to the Kremlin. The very gilded carriage, bearing the Romanov double-headed eagle, in which the last Tsar and Tsarina had ridden on their own wedding day in 1894, was to carry the Tsar and Tsarina from the cathedral to the Grand Kremlin Palace, where a reception would be held for the leading dignitaries who had attended. In the evening, a series of Royal Wedding Balls would be held in five major hotels throughout the city, and the royal couple would appear sequentially at each of those gatherings, beginning and ending at the Grand Kremlin Palace where the evening's Royal Ball orchestra would be conducted by His Royal Highness Prince Thomas Shoemaker.

The guests had all been seated in the cathedral by fifteen minutes before noon. Every guest had been provided a detailed program with parallel Russian, Latin, and their respective native language, so that they could follow the intricate ceremony with relative ease and understanding. The Rheinberger organ and orchestra prelude was timed to finish just in time for the cathedral's noon bells. The *Angelus*¹³⁴ was recited, and then the wedding ceremony was set to commence. As the grand music sounded, the wedding procession began.

First in the procession were the three priests, twelve altar boys including a Christopher, a thurifer, and candle bearers,¹³⁵ and a military honor guard. These were followed by the wedding party, traversing a royal red carpet strewn with white rose petals. Tsar Mikhail II Nicholaevich Romanov, the groom, in full Russian military dress, had entered from the side and stood up front to the right of the sanctuary gate, awaiting his beloved.

First in the wedding party was Her Royal Highness Grand Duchess Diane Szczypiorski, accompanied by the Tsar's good friend, advisor, and best man, His Royal Highness Duke Don Brown. Next came Her Royal

¹³⁴ A traditional Catholic prayer recited daily at noon, honoring the Mother of God for Her humble submission to the divine will.

¹³⁵ The Christopher ("Christ-bearer") carries the ceremonial crucifix, mounted on a pole, which will be placed in a stand in the sanctuary for the duration of the ceremony. A thurifer ("incense-bearer") carries the burning incense in an incense burner suspended on a chain. Candle bearers (NOT called "Lucifers"!) carry lighted candles, signifying the light of Christ.

Highness, the young Princess Maria Szczypiorski, accompanied by the groom's younger brother, His Royal Highness Grand Duke Vladimir Romanov. These were followed by the groom's three older sisters, Their Royal Highnesses Grand Duchesses Anastasia, Olga, and Alexandra, accompanied by three of Mariya's young friends from the Cova parish, Their Royal Highnesses Princes Jacob and Joseph Szczypiorski and Prince Andrew Shoemaker. Then came the bride, Her Royal Highness Princess Mariya Georgovna Peterson, in a magnificent flowing white Italian wedding gown having a stunning train worthy of the majestic queen she was about to become. Princess Mariya walked arm in arm with her father, His Royal Highness Grand Duke Professor Doctor George Peterson, and with her mother Her Royal Highness Grand Duchess Professor Doctor Katarina Fyodovsky Peterson.

As they reached the sanctuary gate, the bride's five attendants took their places at the left, and the groom's five attendants took their places at the right, standing in front of the altar rail and facing the congregation. When Mariya arrived with her parents, they stood slightly to the left and Mikhail stood slightly to the right, facing the sanctuary. Archbishop Bogmolov stood in the gate of the sanctuary, facing the congregation, and was flanked by his two attendants, Patriarch Filaret III of Moscow and All Russia, and His Royal Highness Grand Duke Father Kiril Romanov. The wedding ceremony, conducted by Archbishop Bogmolov, would take place first, and would be followed by the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. To begin the wedding ceremony, the Archbishop turned first to Mikhail, and began:

“Mikhail, wilt thou take Mariya, here present, for thy lawful wife, according to the Rite of our holy Mother the Church?”

“I will,” replied Mikhail.

Mariya's father George then gave her hand to Mikhail, and her parents then took their reserved seats in the left front pew, joining Diane's husband His Royal Highness Grand Duke Karl Szczypiorski, Don's wife Her Royal Highness Duchess Theresa Brown, Vladimir's wife Her Royal Highness Grand Duchess Olga Romanov, and Their Royal Highnesses Grand Duke Frederick and Grand Duchess Katherine Shoemaker. In the two rows behind them were the three husbands of the Tsar's sisters, supervising their many well-behaved homeschooled and young-adult children.

Mariya's hand was ungloved, signifying that she was a virgin; if she had been a widow remarrying, her hand would have been gloved. Mikhail held Mariya's right hand in his right hand, as he faced her to plight her his troth:¹³⁶

¹³⁶ “Plight” here used means to pledge. “Troth” here means a promise of truthfulness, and is derived from the same word as “truth”. “Plight thee my troth” – The groom pledges his truthfulness, faithfulness, and loyalty to his promise.

“I, Mikhail, take thee, Mariya, for my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness, and in health, till death do us part; and thereto I plight my troth.”

The royal couple loosed hands, and then joined them again, as Mariya faced Mikhail and said:

“I, Mariya, take thee, Mikhail, for my wedded husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness, and in health, till death do us part; and thereto I plight my troth.”

Bearing witness that by this mutual consent the reception of the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony was accomplished, the Archbishop then said, in Latin, while making the sign of the cross over them:

“I join you in holy matrimony, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.”

The Archbishop now received an aspersion¹³⁷ from Father Kiril, and sprinkled the couple with holy water. Meanwhile, Patriarch Filaret placed the ring and ceremonial coins of gold and silver on the Archbishop’s book. The Archbishop (P) then blessed the ring and coins as follows, alternating with responses from Patriarch Filaret and Father Kiril, his attendants (R):

P: “Our help is in the name of the Lord.”

R: “Who made Heaven and earth.”

P: “O Lord, hear my prayer.”

R: “And let my cry come unto Thee.”

P: “The Lord be with you.”

R: “And with thy spirit.”

P: “Let us pray:”

The Archbishop made the sign of the cross over the ring and coins as he prayed:

P: “Bless, O Lord, this ring which we bless in Thy name, that she who shall wear it, keeping true Faith unto her spouse, may abide in Thy peace and will, and ever live in mutual charity. Through Christ Our Lord.”

R: “Amen.”

Then the Archbishop sprinkled the ring with holy water; and Mikhail, receiving it from the Archbishop, gave the gold and silver coins to Mariya,

¹³⁷ An ornate bucket for liturgical use, containing holy water and a device for sprinkling.

saying as he did so:

“With this ring I thee wed; this gold and silver I thee give;
with my body I thee worship; and with all my worldly goods
I thee endow.”

Mikhail then placed the ring on Mariya’s left thumb, saying:

“In the name of the Father;”

Then on her first finger, saying:

“And of the Son;”

Then on her second finger, saying:

“And of the Holy Ghost;”

And then on her third finger, saying:

“Amen.”

He then pushed the ring all the way onto her third finger, where it would remain all the days of their lives together. Then the Archbishop prayed:

P: “Confirm, O God, that which Thou hast wrought in us.”

R: “From Thy holy temple which is in Jerusalem.”

P: “Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.”

R: “Lord, have mercy.”

P: “Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in
Heaven.”

R: “Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our
trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

P: “And lead us not into temptation.”

R: “But deliver us from evil.”

P: “Save Thy servants.”

R: “Who hope in Thee, O my God.”

P: “Send them help, O Lord, from the sanctuary.”

R: “And defend them out of Sion.”

P: “Be unto them, O Lord, a tower of strength.”

R: “From the face of the enemy.”

P: “O Lord, hear my prayer.”

R: “And let my cry come unto Thee.”

P: “The Lord be with you.”

R: “And with thy spirit.”

P: "Let us pray: Look, O Lord, we beseech Thee, upon these Thy servants, and graciously assist Thine own institutions, whereby Thou hast ordained the propagation of mankind, that they who are joined by Thine authority may be preserved by Thy help. Through Christ our Lord."
 R: "Amen."

There was an interlude while the three priests regrouped in the sanctuary, now assisted by the twelve altar boys led by their captain Prince Luke Szczypiorski, and including Princes Joseph Shoemaker and Joshua Szczypiorski, and nine native Russian Catholic youths from the far-flung cities of Archangel, Kaliningrad, Kiev, Moscow, Nizhny Novgorod, Omsk, Perm, Saint Petersburg, and Vladivostok. Mikhail and Mariya would kneel at the gate of the sanctuary for the entire Mass, taking a break to sit in the front right pew only when their home pastor Father Kiril would ascend the pulpit to deliver the wedding homily, and when the priests and altar boys would take their seats in the sanctuary during the prolonged musical *Credo*.¹³⁸

The overall order of Mass is always the same in the Tridentine Mass, and was well-known to Mikhail and Mariya. There are a few changeable parts, always inserted in the same places in the Mass, and those parts, selected for a wedding day, moved them both deeply:

INTROIT: "May the God of Israel join you together: and may He be with you, Who was merciful to two only children ..."¹³⁹

EPISTLE: Ephesians 5:22-33. Saint Paul explains that the mutual self-sacrificing love of husband and wife is a Sacrament, and an image of the mutual love of Christ and His Church.

GRADUAL: "Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine on the sides of thy house. Thy children as olive plants round about thy table. Alleluia, alleluia. May the Lord send you help from the sanctuary, and defend you out of Sion. Amen."¹⁴⁰

GOSPEL: Matthew 19:3-6. Christ teaches that husband and wife become one flesh, and that what God has joined together, man must not put asunder.

HOMILY: The homily, also called a sermon, represents a break in the liturgy of the Mass. In a large church such as a cathedral, the celebrant or another priest ascends a high pulpit where he can be better seen and heard, and delivers a message appropriate to the day's Scripture readings and to the

¹³⁸ The Nicene Creed.

¹³⁹ Tobias 7:15.

¹⁴⁰ Psalm 127:3; Psalm 19:3.

particular occasion. On this day of a Russian royal wedding being watched by hundreds of millions the world over, His Royal Highness Grand Duke Father Kiril Romanov, the Tsar's brother – who had counseled the couple during their marriage preparation, and had issued their marriage banns in Mariya's home parish at the Cova in Detroit – delivered the following sermon to the royal couple, to the congregation, and to the world:

The festivity of a royal Church wedding, even in this age when most of the world is very non-religious, remains a very desirable and impressive thing. Hundreds, even thousands, have put forth their finest efforts to make this day an impressive and memorable event suitable for posterity to remember. The countless detailed preparations made for this day are now unfolding.

In the midst of all those matters of dress and ceremony and protocol, there is a very brief moment of absolute significance, a moment without which all this pomp and display would be entirely vain, empty and thus, ultimately, meaningless. I speak of that great but ever so swift "happening" that took place just before the Mass began: the exchange of the wedding vows. It's all so simple that one might easily overlook it. It's the moment of "I pledge thee my troth" when – invisibly to all of us who are intently looking on – a real transformation took place.

We call it marriage, a uniting of two persons in an unseen but essential change, whereby they are made one thing: a married couple. "Looks" can't inform us about it. By human nature, His Majesty Tsar Mikhail and Her Majesty Tsarina Mariya appear to be every bit the same after their vows as before. But what a deception. An act of God almighty has today been worked in their souls that will change them, and raise them to a new height of status, Christian dignity, and holiness.

If I may, I would liken this to the sacramental action of the Mass itself. Bread and wine remain what they are only until the priest's transforming words make something new out of them, so that they become the true Flesh and Blood of the Lord. Marriage, as you know, is one of the Sacraments. It produces a change, an interior change that's real. Surely, married couples remain who they are, and don't become someone else than who they were. But, between the two of them there comes to exist something that did not exist before. They become a couple.

I said that they remain, as individuals, the same after the vows as before. This is true in one sense, but not in another. What stays the same is obvious in their looks and personalities. What can and should change is the manner in which the Sacramental union affects each of the individuals. God's grace should make them

grow in such a way that the good of what they already are should increase, and the bad points (dare I even mention imperfections in royal persons?) about what they are should diminish. This is not a magical change, of course, even though the Sacrament itself brings real grace to the couple. These secondary and enhancing effects of matrimony's grace happen only as both members of the couple become willing partners with God's grace.

When as their pastor I counseled with them in preparation for their marriage, and as they began their life's plan for making the grace of their marriage work, three words stood out to Mikhail and Mariya. The three words were: **virtue, order, and love**. Just a brief word about each one:

1. **Virtue**. "Like the sun rising in the Lord's Heavens, the beauty of a virtuous wife is the radiance of her home," says Sirach, chapter 26 verse 16. A happy marriage has a certain "radiance" about it, a kind of pleasant light. Where does that light come from? We can say, of course, that it comes from God, or from His grace – true – but that's too broad a cause. The radiance of a happy marriage comes from virtue. The word of God calls virtue a form of beauty. One can't mistake it when looking upon someone whose life has been formed by virtue. They're beautiful! And we are drawn to them because of this spiritual kind of beauty that shines through their eyes and graces their speech. With God's grace behind them, Mikhail and Mariya can become even more beautiful through the increase of goodness of their lives as they cooperate with the sacramental grace of marriage.

2. The second word comes from today's Epistle reading. It is **Order**. That word may sound a little cold, "order" – but it's something that a good marriage can't be without. Order is where there's a structure, a hierarchy, an ordering of things in life according to their rightful place. Here's the biblical and theological right ordering – what we would call priorities. Our Catholic Faith teaches us that Christ should reign supreme over all. That means that both the husband and the wife should put God first in their marriage. They must obey God, Christ and His One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church in the infallible teachings of the Magisterium. After that, the husband is head of his wife and over his household in his responsible role as leader. His wife is subordinate to Christ and to her husband. Their children are in turn subordinate to Christ and their parents. All other matters, interests and concerns take their place after these. This order, when it is motivated by Faith and exercised in charity, makes for marital happiness. Dis-order, or bad structuring, brings on marital sadness and misery. Subverting this right structure has been the

ruin of many marriages, and the cause of much suffering, spiritual and emotional.

3. The last word is **Love** – a word one can never omit when speaking about marriage. Too often, however, the singular emphasis of that word is on the couple’s mutual love. The biblical understanding is much more comprehensive than that. Love is first the love of God, of the Church, of the Catholic Faith, and then love for others. The teaching of our Lord in Saint John’s Gospel, Chapter 15, verse 10, specifies what this loving of God means. “If you keep My commandments, you will remain in My love.” Love, according to the doctrine of Christ, then, is interchangeable with obedience to the commandments. No sentimentalism here in the doctrine of Christ’s love!

So we have three concrete ways for Mikhail and Mariya to grow in the matrimonial grace that they are receiving here today. By choosing the ways of virtue, order, and charity, they will show themselves very wise in the ways of God. They will also find themselves undergoing a wonderful change. By these three things they will become a happy and holy married couple – and, we pray – an exemplar Russian royal family. May Our Lord and Our Blessed Mother grant them the Virtue, Order, and Love which they have so prudently identified as the program for their married life! And through the grace of Holy Matrimony may they set a right and shining example for every married couple, not only in the Russian Kingdom, but also throughout the world in the home of every couple who call themselves Catholic.¹⁴¹

The homily was followed by Mozart’s stirring but lengthy *Credo*,¹⁴² sung by the choir with organ and orchestra, during which those men in the sanctuary and the newly married couple had a chance to rest in their seats. Then, as Mikhail and Mariya returned to kneel before the sanctuary gate, the usual prayers of the Mass were resumed, including the prayers known as the Canon of the Mass, during which bread and wine actually become the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is re-presented to God the Father in Sacrifice. This was then followed by the *Pater Noster*.¹⁴³ Then the Archbishop prayed the following two special prayers, which are added to the traditional nuptial Mass, for the bride and bridegroom:

Let us pray. Be propitious, O Lord, to our humble prayers, and graciously further this Thine institution, which Thou hast ordained for the increase of mankind; so that what is joined

¹⁴¹ Adapted by the author from a wedding sermon by Father Eduard Perrone, pastor of Assumption Grotto in Detroit, downloaded on 10-18-10 from <http://te-deum.blogspot.com/2007/06/marriage-at-assumption-grotto.html>. Used with permission.

¹⁴² The Nicene Creed.

¹⁴³ The Lord’s Prayer, beginning “Our Father. . .”

together by Thine authority may be kept by Thy help. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost now and forever. Amen.

Let us pray. O God, who by Thy mighty power didst make all things out of nothing; who having set in order the elements of the universe and made man to God's image, didst appoint woman to be his inseparable helpmate, in such wise that the woman's body took its beginning out of the flesh of man, thereby teaching that what Thou hadst been pleased to institute from one principle might never lawfully be put asunder.

O God, who hast hallowed wedlock by a mystery so excellent that in the marriage bond Thou didst foreshow the union of Christ with the Church; O God, by whom woman is joined to man, and that union which Thou didst ordain from the beginning is endowed with a blessing which alone was not taken away, either by the punishment for original sin or by the sentence of the flood; look in Thy mercy upon this Thy handmaid, who is to be joined in wedlock and entreats protection and strength from Thee.

May the yoke of love and of peace be upon her. True and chaste may she wed in Christ; and may she ever follow the pattern of holy women: and may she be dear to her husband like Rachel; wise like Rebecca; long-lived and faithful like Sara. May the author of deceit work none of his evil deeds within her. May she ever be knit to the faith and to the commandments. May she be true to one husband, and fly from forbidden approaches.

May she fortify her weakness by strong discipline. May she be grave in demeanor and honored for her modesty. May she be well taught in heavenly lore. May she be fruitful in offspring. May her life be good and sinless. May she win the rest of the blessed and the kingdom of Heaven. May they both see their children's children unto the third and fourth generation, and may they reach the old age which they desire. Through the same Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost now and forever. Amen.

These prayers were then followed by the *Libera Nos*, which was shortly thereafter followed by Holy Communion. Our Lord commanded that His Body and Blood be eaten in Holy Communion by the Catholic faithful who are properly disposed and who are in a state of grace (i.e. not conscious of un-confessed grave sin).

While the organ and orchestra accompanied a world-famous soprano singing classical Latin masterpieces in praise of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Catholic faithful processed, row by row in solemn order and prayerful demeanor, up to the Communion rail that enclosed the sanctuary. There they knelt, in successive groups, to receive the Body of Christ, placed directly on their tongue by the consecrated hands of a priest. An altar boy

held a flat golden paten beneath each communicant's chin, lest the precious Body of Christ should accidentally fall to the ground. Since ancient times the Church has taught that the whole Christ is contained, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity, under both Consecrated Species (the Body and the Blood) and so it is entirely sufficient to receive Communion under one Species only.

The congregation for a royal wedding, being composed of international dignitaries from many nations, was necessarily a religiously diverse group. Those who were not in formal union with the See of Rome, including Protestant Christians and adherents to non-Christian religions or to agnosticism or atheism, were discreetly but clearly advised in the program not to present themselves for Communion in the Catholic Church, since Holy Communion is the sign *par excellence* of Catholic Christian unity.

However, two female government officials from secular Western democracies, both liberal "Catholics" well-known in international pro-family circles as public sinners who travelled widely promoting crimes against Heaven including abortion rights and same-sex marriage, found the traditional rules personally offensive.

Even though their own local bishops had long since denied them Communion until they repented of their active public opposition to ancient Catholic dogma, they pompously presented themselves at the Communion rail, where they stood, hands outstretched, having no intention of respecting the ancient traditional rite in which Holy Communion is received only on the tongue while kneeling. They supposed that, while the whole world looked on, no one would dare to deny them their "right" to receive Communion, and to do it their own way.

But Grand Duke Father Kiril Romanov knew these women all too well. Both were regular speakers at the annual "Summons to Action Conference" in Detroit, a radical-left group of aging Catholics who had been engaged in a continuous tantrum for decades because the post-Vatican II revolution failed to change the Church even half as much as they had wished. Father Kiril and Mother Angelica had co-founded the annual tradition-oriented "Summons to Holiness Conference," which also met annually in Detroit, to try to publicly counter their crazed, Christ-mocking message with the quiet sanity of Christ, His Church, and His Holy Mother.

Grand Duke Father Kiril, as a priest, first politely asked the two obstinate women to leave the Communion rail and return to their seats. For at least five minutes, the women stubbornly refused to move, keeping their hands extended in a posture of open defiance against any priest or prelate who might dare to deny them Communion in the hand. Ushers gently tried to reason with them, but to no avail.

Ultimately, as a Grand Duke, Father Kiril had to order members of the military honor guard to physically remove the women from the cathedral. Once outside, by his order, they were stripped of their official wedding guest credentials, and so would be admitted neither to the reception for dignitaries in the Kremlin, nor to any of the evening balls. Official word

would be sent to their governments, on behalf of Tsar Mikhail II, that henceforth these women would not be received in the Russian Kingdom in any diplomatic capacity whatsoever, because they had obstinately and intentionally shown public disrespect for the Holy Catholic Faith, and for the authority of a Grand Duke, the brother of the Tsar, on Russian soil.

When the Mass was over, just before the final blessing, the Archbishop gave the special wedding blessing of the traditional rite to the new royal couple:

“May the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob be with you: and Himself fulfill His blessing on you: that you may see your children’s children even to the third and fourth generation; and thereafter possess life everlasting, by the aid of our Lord.”

After the final blessing of the congregation, the organ and orchestra began the majestic final movement of a Rheinberger concerto, and the priests, altar boys, and military honor guard recessed in the same order in which they had processed.

The congregation stood and heartily sang “God Save the Tsar,” with the grand music building to a fitting crescendo while the royal couple proceeded down the aisle and out the door of the cathedral, through a torrential rain of rice, and into the waiting horse-drawn gilded antique Romanov carriage.

The cathedral bells intoned the joyful news, and were answered by hundreds of church bells ringing wildly throughout Moscow, and by thousands of church bells clanging in a cacophony of jubilation throughout the length and breadth of the Christian kingdom. Cannons were fired and military rifle salutes sounded. Mounted cavalry in full military dress preceded and followed the royal carriages transporting the wedding party to the Kremlin.

As the procession moved slowly away from the cathedral square, the Russian Army military marching band played the Russian Hymn, “God Save the Tsar.” To the astute observer it actually seemed as if Tchaikovsky’s *1812 Overture*¹⁴⁴ was being replayed in real life that Saturday afternoon, amid colorful Romanov banners fluttering from every lamp post, and multi-colored confetti raining down upon the broad, tree-lined *prospekts*¹⁴⁵ of Moscow.

Mikhail and Mariya waved happily at the thousands upon thousands of cheering Russians and international tourists lining the parade route. Mikhail, however, was a trained military man, and was never oblivious to the presence of security forces: armed troops lining the streets, and sharpshooters standing guard on rooftops. Hovering overhead, the roar of

¹⁴⁴ The “Russian Hymn” theme, cannons and rifles firing, and church bells wildly ringing, all together characterize the stirring climax of Tchaikovsky’s anti-Napoleonic orchestral masterpiece, the *1812 Overture*.

¹⁴⁵ “Avenues,” in Russian.

military helicopters served to slightly dampen his delight in all the grand pageantry and revived Russian tradition, by reminding him that this was not in fact the Nineteenth Century, but the Twenty-first.

By half past three o'clock Mikhail and Mariya were actively greeting world dignitaries in the receiving line. At five o'clock there was a wedding dinner for dignitaries in the Grand Kremlin Hall, and at seven o'clock the royal couple entered the dance floor for the opening waltz of the Royal Wedding Ball. Beginning at half past seven o'clock, they spent thirty minutes at each of the five other balls in Moscow hotels, with fifteen minutes transit time between each, and so returned to the Grand Kremlin Hall for the final waltz of the evening by about half past eleven o'clock.

All through the evening, the rooftops of the Kremlin were outlined in clear, bright electric light bulbs, recalling a custom initiated by Tsar Nicholas II during the early days of electrification in the 1890's. When the balls ended at midnight, there was a grand display of fireworks over the river near the Kremlin, which Mikhail and Mariya watched from the rooftop of the Grand Kremlin Palace. This was followed by a final round of Russian vodka toasts with lingering dignitaries, and then the royal couple departed through the palace loading dock to a carefully guarded secret location, the Royal (formerly Presidential) Suite atop the Moscow Hilton Leningradskaya hotel.

On Sunday morning they made their confession (as is customary in the Orthodox Rite before every reception of Holy Communion) and attended the Orthodox Rite of Catholic Mass at the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, to emphasize to the nation and to the world that they were the Catholic leaders of all the Russian people, both Orthodox Rite and Roman Rite.

By Sunday noon they had boarded a military transport to fly to Yalta, on the Crimean peninsula. They would spend the first two days of their honeymoon nearby in the royal palace at Livadia. The classic Italianate summer royal palace of glimmering white marble, built during the reign of Tsar Nicholas II, sat on a high bluff overlooking the Black Sea. Mikhail remembered the devout and prayerful personal lives of Nicholas and Alexandra, who had vacationed here for many years prior to the tragic revolution that took their lives.

But he was troubled to recall that in this very palace, in 1945, three Masonic Brothers¹⁴⁶ had met to carve up the kingdoms of former Christendom according to their secular humanist agendas, and to permit Christian Eastern Europe to fall under the dark night of atheistic communism. Mikhail invoked his patron, Saint Michael the Archangel, to defend him against the powers of darkness that would surely be arrayed against Catholic Russia and its new Tsar and Tsarina in days to come.

From Livadia, they would board the Standart, which had been sailed from Detroit across Lake Erie, bypassing Niagara Falls through the Welland Canal, across Lake Ontario and out the Saint Lawrence Seaway, across the Atlantic Ocean, through the Straits of Gibraltar and across the

¹⁴⁶ Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin.

Mediterranean Sea, through the Dardenelles straits past Constantinople and into the little Sea of Marmara, then through the Bosphorus straits and finally into the Black Sea. The world's largest private yacht had now been donated by Duke Don Brown, who was growing older, to become the state property of the Russian Kingdom, the modern world's first Catholic Confessional State. It would be for private use by the royal family, and for public use for state functions.

Duke Don Brown had asked only to retain the right to use the Standart for two weeks each summer, in the Mediterranean. The Standart's first royal cruise would take the honeymooning Tsar and Tsarina on a three-week Mediterranean cruise to ports in Greece, Italy, and Spain, and finally through the Straits of Gibraltar to Madeira, a Portuguese island in the Atlantic off the north coast of Africa. Many of their family and friends would join them for portions of the cruise. For security, the Standart would be accompanied at all times by a Russian Naval patrol. From Madeira, the Russian Air Force would fly the Tsar and Tsarina back to Saint Petersburg, where they would take up residence in the Alexander Palace.

Mikhail had especially wanted to visit the remote island of Madeira, because this was the place of the exile, death, and burial of the last great Hapsburg monarch of the Austro-Hungarian empire, Blessed Charles.¹⁴⁷ Charles inherited the throne of Austria-Hungary in 1916, at the height of World War I, from his uncle Franz Josef who had ruled for 68 years. Popularly called "the Peace Emperor," Charles struggled to quickly bring about a cessation of the senseless war, even offering portions of his kingdom to opponents as an enticement to stop the bloodshed.

But the secular humanist and Masonic President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, refused to negotiate with Charles because he was not elected by the people through a democratic process. (The fact that Charles had been elected by Heaven did not seem to impress Wilson.) While decrying the lack of self-determination for peoples, Wilson carved up Catholic Europe according to his own foreign prejudices and ideas, thus (perhaps unintentionally) sowing the seeds of World War II. Blessed Charles died in exile on Madeira, after two failed attempts (despite much popular support) to regain his throne.

Charles was beatified by Pope Leo Alexander II in 2004, the first step toward sainthood. Some Catholic observers noted that, very shortly after Charles' saintly widow, Princess Zita, died in 1989 at the age of 96, Eastern Europe began to open up to freedom from Communist anti-Christian oppression, with the Soviet Union peacefully dismantling itself on the Roman Rite Christmas Day in 1991. Some years before, Mikhail had been to Vienna to pray at Zita's tomb in the Hapsburg Royal Crypt beneath the Capuchin Church. But he wanted especially to pray at the tomb of Blessed Charles, and to seek his intercession in the Courts of Heaven.

For Mikhail was attempting to pick up where Charles left off, as the

¹⁴⁷ A detailed account of the life and faith of Blessed Emperor Charles is contained in the book *A Heart for Europe* by James and Joanna Bogle. See Bibliography.

world's most powerful Catholic monarch, seeking to cause peace, justice, and local democracy to flourish throughout a vast Christian empire.

Intending to keep their vows before God, the royal couple hoped that the young Tsarina, now nineteen, might conceive their first child as soon as possible, so that the new kingdom might have an heir and might begin to look, as a nation, toward future generations. Before the Russian sunrise, before the time of extraordinary graces showered upon Russia through the intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, that poor nation had been literally self-destructing.

Widespread contraception combined with frequent abortion had meant that the barren, benighted nation was not even maintaining its population, let alone growing. But now, after its miraculous conversion, Russia basked in the warm sunshine of righteousness as a nation unreservedly open to life. Not only in the royal palace, but also in cities and towns and remote villages, all across the vast expanse of the Eurasian Christian kingdom, the blessed Russian people had opened their hearts and their homes to welcome new sons and daughters.

Russia would soon begin expanding its population; and in time its wealth would also expand, because it is many people working – and not presses printing paper money – that create the real wealth that enables a nation to grow and to prosper, and to advance true Christian civilization both at home and abroad. Through the generosity of righteous living under the true liberty of a Christian state, the real wealth of a nation increases, and people soon begin to have increasing time to spare for family, friends, faith, and feast days.

The demeaning slavery of sterile servitude in the cruel kingdom of mammon gives way to the glorious fruitful liberty of the children of God. Government of, by, and for big money gives way to justice, solidarity, and subsidiarity. True liberty and local democratic rule flourish best under the benevolent protection of a devout Christian autocrat, who serves not the fickle “will of the people” but the divine eternal law of Christ, the King of Kings, Who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ Hebrews 13:8

Chapter Thirty-One

Friday, July 29, 2016.

The Coronation of His Majesty Tsar Mikhail II and Her Majesty Tsarina Mariya by His Holiness Pope Nicholas VI. In the Russian Orthodox Rite Catholic Cathedral of Christ the Savior, Moscow, Russian Kingdom.

As soon as the Russian royal honeymoon had ended, Mikhail had returned to Saint Petersburg and to the immense task of implementing the programs recommended by the Ministry of Catholic Social Reorganization and by the first session of the new Duma. A review of Russian royal history revealed that months or even years had often intervened between the initial accession of the Tsar to power and the performance of the coronation ritual. Nevertheless, there had been a growing consensus among Tsar Mikhail's personal advisors that his coronation ought not to be postponed beyond the summer of 2016. Because the first half of August was a two-week period of fasting in the traditional Orthodox Rite, in preparation for the Feast of the Dormition on August fifteenth, any time of great national celebration would have to be scheduled either before or after the time of fasting.

Grand Duke Father Kiril had noted that a new Russian national holiday had been instituted back in 2010 by then-President Polzin: July 28 was the day of the Baptism of Saint Prince Vladimir, after whose conversion Kievan Rus became a Christian nation in 988 A.D.¹⁴⁹ Patriarch Filaret and Archbishop Bogmolov both agreed that July 28 would be the ideal coronation date, when most Russians would be off work and when the symbolism of Russia's first Christian king would naturally lend support to the crowning of her new Christian Tsar. Also, the Baptism of Saint Prince Vladimir had marked the beginning of Russia's original status as a Roman Catholic nation. A mere sixty-six years later, the tragic schism of 1054 had torn Christendom asunder; and it had taken nine hundred sixty-one years, until the miraculous conversion of 2015, for Russia to once again become a Roman Catholic Confessional State.

A series of consultations between Grand Duke Father Kiril Romanov, the Tsar's papal liaison, and Father John Herald, the Pope's personal assistant in Rome, had resulted in an agreement that Pope Nicholas VI would make an historic first-ever papal visit to the Russian Kingdom in late July. After a week of outdoor Masses in major cities throughout the kingdom, Pope Nicholas would perform the coronation of the Russian Tsar and Tsarina in an Orthodox Rite ceremony. Past Tsars traditionally crowned themselves in a ceremony conducted by the Russian Orthodox Patriarch in the Cathedral of the Dormition in the Kremlin. In order to mark continuity with Russia's Romanov past, the traditional Russian Orthodox coronation ritual would be followed to the greatest extent possible

¹⁴⁹ Bemis, James. See Bibliography.

consistent with Catholic doctrine. But the location would be changed to the much larger Cathedral of Christ the Savior, capable of accommodating ten thousand people. The cathedral itself is an exacting reconstruction of the former cathedral, the largest Orthodox church ever built, which had been consecrated in 1883 but was dynamited by Josef Stalin in 1931 to make way for a planned (but never constructed) “Palace of the Soviets” glorifying secular humanism. Russians laid the new cornerstone in 1990, and the magnificent new cathedral was consecrated in 2000. Thus, the coronation would take place in a powerful symbol of a new Christian Russia rising from the ashes of its benighted Communist past.

Pope Nicholas arrived in the Russian Kingdom on July 21, 2016, a week ahead of the coronation date. This historic first visit of a Pope to Russian soil was profoundly moving for the vast majority of Russians. The Pope’s Alitalia jet landed at Moscow’s Sheremetyevo Airport at noon, under a cloudless blue sky. When the door opened, His Holiness emerged, smiling broadly, and waving at the joyful and enthusiastic crowd. As Nicholas descended the stairs to the tarmac, his bright red shoes gleamed in the sun as the gentle breeze moved the hem of his shining white cassock. The agility of the aging Pontiff was remarkable. As soon as he reached the tarmac, he knelt down and kissed the ground, signifying his profound love for Holy Mother Russia.

Immediately he was greeted by Patriarch Filaret III, who knelt to kiss the Fisherman’s Ring. Nicholas assisted Filaret to his feet, whereupon the Pope and the Patriarch joined in a prolonged public embrace, both shedding tears of joy that this moment had come in their time, and that they had lived to behold the blessed Russian Sunrise so long awaited. Immediately Nicholas was greeted by the Russian sovereigns, Tsar Mikhail and Tsarina Mariya, who likewise knelt to kiss his ring and then rose to embrace the Vicar of Christ, shepherd of kings. Grand Duke Vasily Polzin, the Tsar’s Prime Minister, was next, and wept as he embraced the Pope who had dared to assent to “The Russian Request” he had drafted with Patriarch Filaret. The Tsarina’s parents, Grand Duke George Peterson and Grand Duchess Katarina Fyodovsky Peterson, the very couple who had smuggled “The Russian Request” into Rome, were next.

Then came leading members of the Romanov family, who now held appointments as special assistants to the Tsar, including Grand Duchess Marina Mikhailovna, Grand Duke Grigory Mikhailovich, and the elderly Orthodox Rite priest Father Oleg Romanov. Finally, the Pope was greeted by a number of newly-appointed Russian nobility, whose last names nearly all started with “S,” and who seemed quite youthful and uncannily familiar. The Pope laughed, realizing they were recent transplants from the Cova Parish in Detroit, now blessed to live and work in the modern world’s first Catholic Confessional State.

After a short limousine ride to an airport hanger where a large crowd of enthusiastic Russians cheered his arrival, Pope Nicholas took his place at a podium bearing the Vatican Coat of Arms, and began his historic

address to the Russian Kingdom and to the world:

It is with great joy that the Holy Father sets foot today upon the hallowed soil of Russia, that Christian nation which has lately received inestimable blessings through the intercession of the All-Immaculate Mother of God. In Anno Domini 987, Saint Prince Vladimir accepted Christian baptism in Kievan Rus, and ordered that Russia would become a Catholic kingdom. Just 66 years later, in 1054, tragic events caused the Church to be torn asunder. Russia, being cut off from the guidance and protection of the Bishop of Rome, was left isolated, weakened, and ultimately found itself defenseless against the cruel anti-Christian revolution of 1917.

Now, not quite a century after that tragic *coup d'état*, we have witnessed a glorious and miraculous Russian sunrise. Through the glorious intercession of Our Lady of Fatima, Russia has obtained a unique and special grace. She has converted, to become not only Roman Catholic but the Third Millennium's first Catholic Confessional State. She has restored her noble Christian monarchy, and is already beginning to enjoy the unique blessings that come to those nations whose God is the Lord and whose laws are Christ's. Efforts are well underway to reshape Russian society according to the social teachings of the Church, which in large part have not been practiced at the national level since the High Middle Ages.

Under the atheism of communism, imposed by the usurped authority of the State, power becomes the real god. Under the practical atheism of unregulated free-market capitalism, the real god is mammon, or money. In both systems, wealth and power become increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few, while the many are progressively rendered powerless and poor. But in a Catholic state, where solidarity, subsidiarity, and the wide distribution of wealth are practiced as social policies, traditional Catholic family life becomes possible for the common man without the necessity of heroic virtue, and a generous openness to life begets a growing population and a proportionate increase in the real wealth that only working people can produce.

A just society will provide a living wage to a man, increasing as his family size increases, so that his wife can stay home to manage the household and properly raise all the children that God sees fit to send them. Children privileged to grow up in large families where the Faith is central become mature, other-centered, self-confident but humble, and become leaders who can make their nation rich not only in material goods but in the true riches of righteousness, holiness, and the fear of God. May the Russian Kingdom be blessed with many such families.

The Catholic principle of subsidiarity militates against the socialist evils of centralization and bureaucratization. There are strong moral arguments supporting the idea that impersonal, oversized corporations are inherently unethical structures, and should be abolished. We are pleased that in the Russian Kingdom corporations will be strictly limited, as part of an effort to downsize companies to a local, human scale. Employers and employees should be friends and neighbors, and the good of the community through the payment of living wages should take precedence over the “bottom line” of excessive profits benefiting anonymous distant investors.

No markets are ever truly free, and in this world, where fallen human nature tends to take advantage whenever it is not kept in check by the moral law, the question becomes simply this: who will do the regulating? If private plutocrats who neither fear God nor serve Christ have control, then the rich will tend to become richer while the poor become marginalized. But under a Christian government, regulation will favor family life and widespread prosperity by placing reasonable limits both on the range of wages and on investment returns. A sound, inflation-proof currency can actually make limited returns on investment quite acceptable.

Catholic social policy therefore also requires an honest form of money, a stable standard of value to facilitate the just and equitable exchange of goods and services in a transparent manner. An honest currency protects against inflation, which is an insidious evil and an unjust tax made possible by the modern “fiat” currencies that are founded upon a lie. Inflation deprives the laborer of his just wages, and oppresses the poor, the widow, and the orphan. “Fiat” currencies thus become in themselves sins which cry to Heaven for vengeance. The Russian Kingdom is blessed to be the first modern nation to return to honest money, to the gold and silver which experience and Sacred Scripture both show to be the natural and normal standards by which the value in transactions can be measured with justice, equity, and transparency. I am pleased to announce that the State of Vatican City will henceforth adopt the Russian Kingdom Ruble as its official currency, until such time as a more universal honest currency comes into widespread use.

The heart of the Holy Father rejoices now to be here. In the next week we plan to travel the length and breadth of this beautiful Catholic kingdom, to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in large public gatherings. Tomorrow we will celebrate the Orthodox Rite of Mass in the Cathedral of Christ Our Savior in Moscow, to demonstrate to the world the profound and real unity which we now enjoy. During the next several days, we will travel to Saint Petersburg, Perm, and Vladivostok, to offer the Tridentine Mass in large outdoor arenas. In Yekaterinburg we will offer the Russian

Byzantine Rite of Mass in the Church on the Blood, built on the site where the last Tsar and his family were martyred by the anti-Christian revolutionaries.

The climax of our visit will be the coronation of your king, His Majesty Mikhail Nicholaevich Romanov, in the Cathedral of Christ Our Savior. As you know, in the past Russian Tsars crowned themselves, indicating that they viewed their power as coming directly from God with no intervening authority. But now that Russia has been converted, the proper Catholic order has been restored, as it existed in Russia in the time of Saint Prince Vladimir. The Tsar will be crowned by the Pope, indicating that in answering to Christ, the Tsar, like all earthly rulers, is subject to the Bishop of Rome to whom Christ entrusted the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and the power of binding and loosing. The Church, like the new Russian Kingdom, operates on the principle of subsidiarity. Just as the Tsar does not intervene in regional or local matters except in rare cases where justice and equity are at stake, so the Holy Father does not intervene in the reign of a Catholic monarch unless necessary for justice, equity, or the salvation of souls.

As your spiritual shepherd, we extend to everyone in the Russian Kingdom our profound thanks for welcoming us to your Christian kingdom. May Almighty God bless you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

When the Pope was done speaking, Tsar Mikhail offered a few welcoming comments, and then the papal motorcade departed for the Cathedral of Christ the Savior where accommodations for visiting bishops had been made ready for His Holiness. The following day the cathedral was filled as a historic event took place: a Pope celebrated Holy Mass according to the Russian Byzantine Rite of the Catholic Church, in Moscow. The world watched in amazed wonder as the event was telecast around the globe.

In the western royal capital city, the new Saint Petersburg Stadium seating 69,500 people was filled to capacity for the papal Mass. Fair weather made it possible to open the retractable roof. The Russian Byzantine Rite faithful appreciated the dignity of the Roman Rite when celebrated in the Traditional Rite, noting its similarity to the Orthodox Mass of Saint John Chrysostom. The next day the Holy Father celebrated an outdoor Tridentine Mass in Perm, one of the largest cities in central Russia. Tens of thousands attended, again showing that the faithful of the Russian Byzantine Rite had fully embraced the Holy Father as their own chief shepherd. Two days later there was a papal Mass in Vladivostok, at the eastern edge of the kingdom, again attended by large crowds.

The culmination of the papal tour of Russia would take place in Moscow. The coronation of a Russian Tsar, which had last taken place in 1896 when

Nicholas II was crowned, had traditionally been a religious ceremony conducted by the Russian Orthodox Church. During the long centuries of the Great Schism, from 1054 to 2015, Tsarist Russia had claimed to be the true Christian state. Moscow was designated the “Third Rome,” the replacement of Byzantium, the “Second Rome” which had fallen under Muslim control when the Ottoman Empire conquered Constantinople in 1453. The “First Rome” where the “Pope of Rome” ruled over the Roman Catholic Church, was viewed by the Orthodox Church as being in “schism” from the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Orthodox Church. The Russian Empire practiced caesaropapism, meaning that Church and State were one. The Tsar was viewed as the head of both the Russian State and the Russian Orthodox Church, and had power to appoint and remove bishops. Therefore, a religious coronation in the Russian Empire conferred both political and religious legitimacy.

The coronation, like European Catholic coronation ceremonies during the Middle Ages, was believed to confer a genuine spiritual benefit that mystically wedded the sovereign to his subjects, and which imparted divine authority to the ruler. In medieval Catholic Europe, the anointed Christian king had been viewed as a *mixta persona*, being part priest and part layman, but never being entirely either. While Europe had gradually shed this view, especially after the Protestant Revolt, the belief had persisted in Russia right up until the 1917 revolution. In the Orthodox view, the Tsar was anointed by God, and the anointing was a Mystery performed by the Church during the coronation. The anointed of God entered the Royal Doors into the altar, went to the altar table and received the Holy Mysteries like a priest, with the Body and Blood taken separately.

By this the Church proclaimed the great spiritual struggle of ruling as a Christian monarch, and likened this to the holy sacrament of the priesthood. The Tsar thus became a sacramental image, and a carrier of the special power of the Grace of the Holy Spirit. No Orthodox layperson was ever permitted to pass through the Royal Doors or to partake of communion in both species separately. This unique privilege, granted to the Tsar at his coronation, emphasized the special duties and authority of the Christian autocrat. The sacred and the secular, the Russian Orthodox Church and state, God and government, were all joined by the Russian Orthodox coronation service in the person of the Tsar.

The coronation of Tsar Mikhail II would necessarily reflect a change in belief. Since Russia had miraculously converted to become a Catholic Confessional State, there was no longer any claim that Moscow was the “Third Rome.” Most of the Eastern Orthodox nations had practiced caesaropapism, viewing their monarch as the head of their autocephalous national Church. Now, the Russian Orthodox Church was under the spiritual jurisdiction of the “Pope of Rome.” No longer would the Tsar have any direct authority over the Church in Russia. The Russian Orthodox Church was no longer a national Church but part of the one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church founded by Christ upon the rock of Peter.

The Tsar would still answer to God, but also to Christ's Vicar on earth, for the use he made of his temporal power. Russian bishops, both Orthodox Rite and Roman Rite, would no longer answer to the Tsar in ecclesiastical matters. Like the Tsar, they would answer to God, and to Christ's Vicar the Pope. Proper separation of Church and State would thus be observed: the administration of the Russian state would be separate from administration of the Church in Russia, but the State would be obligated to obey the law of Christ, and to submit to the spiritual authority of the Vicar of Christ who holds the power of binding and loosing over the entire Christian world. The anointing and coronation of the Russian Tsar would represent the realities that he had been chosen by God (through the ancient tradition of hereditary monarchy), and that he would receive unique and special graces appropriate to his station in life (as a Christian autocrat).

In the past, the Russian Tsar had crowned himself, signifying that his power came directly from God. The Tsar then crowned his consort, the Tsarina, signifying that she shared in his dignity and responsibility for the welfare of the nation. In the new Catholic Russian Kingdom, by contrast, Christ's Vicar, the Pope of Rome, would place the crown on the heads of the Tsar and Tsarina, indicating their proper subordination to the Church founded by Christ.

The pre-revolutionary Russian monarchy possessed an impressive collection of Imperial regalia. These included the sovereign's crown, the consort's crown, the scepter and orb, and the banner of state. Although Russia no longer claimed to be an empire but a kingdom, the symbolism of these precious objects would be retained. The Great Imperial Crown had survived both the Russian revolution and the Soviet era. It spent time in Ireland as collateral for a \$25,000 loan from the Irish Republic to the new Soviet Republic, and remained hidden away in various Irish homes and government safes until 1950, when it was returned to Russia upon repayment of the loan. In recent decades the crown and other historic regalia had been on display in the Moscow Kremlin Armory State Diamond Collection. They would be brought to the Cathedral of Christ the Savior on coronation day, and then returned to the museum for exhibition except on those few days per year when the monarch would have need of them, for such State occasions as the twice-annual opening ceremony of the Duma, the annual official portrait of the royal family, or audiences granted to certain visiting heads of state.

The Tsar's nine-pound Great Imperial Crown, made in 1762, was last worn by Tsar Nicholas II. It is fashioned in the style of a mitre, divided into two half-spheres with a central arch between them. The crown is studded with 5,000 diamonds, and is topped by a 398.72-carat red spinel from China. The Tsarina's Smaller Imperial Crown was virtually identical in design, was similarly encrusted with diamonds, and was last worn by Tsarina Alexandra. The 1784 Scepter consisted of a burnished shaft of three sections, containing eight rings of brilliant diamonds, some as large as 30 carats. It was topped by the 189-carat Orlov Diamond, which was in turn crowned by a double-headed eagle bearing the Russian coat of arms

at its center. The Orb consisted of a polished hollow ball made from red gold, and was encircled by two rows of diamonds and topped by a large 47-carat sapphire which in turn was crowned by a diamond-studded cross. Each Tsar had a banner of state manufactured for his coronation. The banner was blessed on the eve of the coronation, in the armory room of the Kremlin Palace, and would then be displayed at the coronation and at all significant State events during the Tsar's reign.

Several days before the coronation, Tsar Mikhail and Tsarina Mariya made a private pilgrimage to the Peter and Paul Cathedral inside the Peter and Paul Fortress on the Zayachy Island in the Neva River at Saint Petersburg. Here were the burial vaults of the Romanov dynasty. Mikhail and Mariya prayed at the tombs of Tsar Nicholas II and Tsarina Alexandra, their final resting place only since July 1998. They had been moved here after their shattered bones were retrieved from a forest outside Yekaterinburg, where their Bolshevik murderers had buried them in haste in July 1918. Mikhail and Mariya offered prayers for the repose of the souls of their Romanov predecessors. They also asked Saint Michael to intercede for them, in the Courts of Heaven, so that their reign might help to foster the growth of the Catholic Faith and help many people to attain the only thing that matters in the end, the salvation of their souls.

The day before his coronation, Tsar Mikhail made a grand processional entrance on horseback into the city of Moscow. He was accompanied by multiple squadrons of cavalry, and by his consort Tsarina Mariya, riding in an antique royal carriage. Thousands of church bells rang out as Tsar Mikhail made his way to the newly rebuilt Chapel of Our Lady of Iveron, where he revered the miraculous Icon of the Blessed Virgin of Iveron. For centuries, Russian Tsars had revered this icon before every entry into the Kremlin fortress. During the Soviet era, as part of a campaign to destroy holy sites, the original chapel had been torn down to make way for parades of huge military machines. But by 1992, an exact replica of the chapel had been rebuilt, and an exact copy of the original icon, painted at Mount Athos in Greece, was blessed by the Russian Patriarch.

On coronation day morning, under bright blue skies, there was a grand royal procession to the Cathedral of Christ the Savior. The Tsar walked under a canopy held by thirty-two generals, representing all branches of the Russian military forces. The Tsarina and the royal regalia followed under separate canopies. The regalia, in strict order, included The Chain of the Order of Saint Andrew the First Called,¹⁵⁰ the Sword of State, the Banner of State, the State Seal, the Purple Robe of the Tsar, the Orb, the Scepter, the Small Imperial Crown, and the Great Imperial Crown. Many Russian nobility, both descendants of the old nobility and those recently

¹⁵⁰ The Order of Saint Andrew the First Called was named in honor of the Apostle Andrew who, from the time of the Kiev princes, had been the patron saint of the Russian lands. The highest Russian honor, the Order of Saint Andrew, was awarded rarely. It was conferred principally on members of the royal family, heads of foreign states and "exceptional servants" of the state: dignitaries, diplomats or successful military commanders. The heir to the Russian throne was awarded the order at his christening.

appointed by Tsar Mikhail, followed the regalia.

Upon arrival at the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, the Tsar and Tsarina were met by His Holiness Pope Nicholas VI, and His Excellency Filaret III, Patriarch of Moscow and All the Russias. The royal couple knelt on the cathedral steps to publicly kiss a large crucifix, while they were sprinkled with holy water. Upon entering the vast cathedral, Mikhail and Mariya each received the Sacrament of Confession from their Roman Rite Father Confessor, Grand Duke Father Kiril Romanov. Then, while a *cappella* choir music filled the vast space, the newly-shriven royal couple made their way down the aisle, venerating numerous holy icons, and ultimately taking their place on two thrones set up at the front.

The ceremony began with the singing of Psalm 101, while the Tsar repeated the Nicene Creed (now, according to the Catholic version, including the *filioque* clause). The Tsar then read a prayer, and received a blessing from Patriarch Filaret. Further hymns were sung, and three Scripture lessons were read:¹⁵¹

Isaias 49:13-19: Give praise, O ye heavens, and rejoice, O earth; ye mountains, give praise with jubilation: because the Lord hath comforted His people and will have mercy on His poor ones. And Sion said: The Lord hath forsaken me, and the Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? And if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee in my hands: thy walls are always before my eyes. Thy builders are come: they that destroy thee and make thee waste shall go out of thee. Lift up thy eyes round about, and see. All these are gathered together; they are come to thee. I live, saith the Lord. Thou shalt be clothed with all these as with an ornament: and as a bride thou shalt put them about thee. For thy deserts and thy desolate places and the land of thy destruction shall now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants: and they that swallowed thee up shall be chased far away.

Romans 13:1-7: Let every soul be subject to higher powers. For there is no power but from God: and those that are ordained of God. Therefore, he that resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God. And they that resist purchase to themselves damnation. For princes are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. Will thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good: and thou shalt have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to thee, for good. But if thou do that which is evil, fear: for he beareth not the sword in vain. For he is God's minister: an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil. Wherefore be subject of necessity: not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For

¹⁵¹ Quoted from the DRV.

therefore also you pay tribute. For they are the ministers of God, serving unto this purpose. Render therefore to all men their dues. Tribute, to whom tribute is due: custom, to whom custom: fear, to whom fear: honour, to whom honour.

Matthew 22:15-22: Then the Pharisees going, consulted among themselves how to ensnare Him in His speech. And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying: Master, we know that Thou art a true speaker and teachest the way of God in truth. Neither carest Thou for any man: for Thou dost not regard the person of men. Tell us therefore what dost Thou think? Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? But Jesus knowing their wickedness, said: Why do you tempt Me, ye hypocrites? Shew Me the coin of the tribute. And they offered Him a penny. And Jesus saith to them: Whose image and inscription is this? They say to Him: Caesar's. Then He saith to them: Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God, the things that are God's. And hearing this, they wondered and, leaving Him, went their ways.

Next the Tsar removed his Chain of the Order of Saint Andrew, and was robed in purple by the Patriarch and the Tsar's attendant, Prince Joseph Shoemaker. He knelt on a crimson cushion before the Pope, who laid hands upon him and offered the following two prayers over him. The first prayer, a Catholic revision of a traditional prayer from the Byzantine coronation ritual,¹⁵² was as follows:

O Lord our God, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who through Samuel the prophet didst choose Thy servant David and didst anoint him to be king over Thy people Israel; hear now the supplication of us though unworthy, and look forth from Thy holy dwelling place and vouchsafe to anoint with the oil of gladness Thy faithful servant Mikhail, whom Thou hast been pleased to establish as ruler over the Russian Kingdom, a Christian kingdom, a kingdom of holy people whom Thou hast redeemed by the precious blood of Thine Only-begotten Son. Clothe him with power from on high; set on his head a crown of precious stones; bestow on him length of days, set in his right hand a Sceptre of salvation; establish him upon the throne of righteousness; defend him with the panoply of thy Holy Spirit; strengthen his arm; subject to him all the enemies of Christ; sow in his heart the fear of Thee and feeling for his subjects; preserve him blameless in the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Faith; make him manifest as a sure guardian of the doctrines of Thy Holy Catholic Church, and as an

¹⁵² The two coronation prayers are credited to Wooley, Maxwell, B.D., *Coronation Rites*, Cambridge University Press, 1915. Altered by the author to reflect Catholic doctrine.

obedient son and ready defender of Christ's Vicar on earth, the Bishop of Rome; that he may judge Thy people in righteousness and Thy poor in judgment, and save the sons of those in want and may be an heir of Thy Heavenly kingdom. We ask these blessings in the name of Christ Jesus Our Lord, who livest and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, One God, forever and ever. Amen.

Patriarch Filaret then offered the greeting "Peace be with you" to the congregation, and gave the command, "Bow your heads unto the Lord." Pope Nicholas then offered the second prayer:

To Thee O Christ, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, has he to whom Thou hast entrusted this earthly kingdom bowed his head, to pray in union with Christ's Vicar on earth. We pray Thee, Lord of all: keep him under Thine own shadow; strengthen his kingdom; grant that he may do continually those things which are pleasing to Thee; make to arise in his days righteousness and abundance of peace; that in his tranquility his people may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity. For Thou art the King of peace, and the Saviour of our souls and bodies, and to Thee we ascribe glory: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Following these prayers, Pope Nicholas received the Great Imperial Crown from Prince Joseph, blessed it invoking the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and placed it on the head of the Tsar, saying¹⁵³:

Most God-fearing, absolute, and mighty Lord, Tsar of all the Russias, this visible and tangible adornment, placed upon thy head by the Vicar of Christ, is an eloquent symbol that thou, as the head of the whole Russian people, art invisibly crowned by the King of Kings, Christ, with a most ample blessing, seeing that He bestows upon thee authority over His Russian people, to rule according to His divine law and the teaching of His Holy Catholic Church.

Then the Tsar arose, while Pope Nicholas received from Prince Joseph the Scepter and the Orb. Nicholas blessed them in the name of the Holy Trinity, and presented them to the Tsar while saying:

God-chosen, Christ-crowned, and Faith-adorned, most pious Christian Autocrat and Great Sovereign, Tsar of All the Russias: Receive the bejeweled Sceptre, symbol of the majesty of your benevolent authority; and the Cross-crowned Orb, representing

¹⁵³ This and the following prayer are derived from historical sources cited in Wikipedia, through a succession of untraceable quotes, and were altered by the author to reflect Catholic doctrine.

your dominion over vast Christian realms, and your mandate to assist in the future propagation of Catholic Confessional States throughout the whole earth. Together with the Crown, these emblems form a regal trinity, visible signs of the autocratic power given thee from the Most High over thy people, that thou mayest rule them and order for them the spiritual and temporal welfare they desire, and that shall encourage and assist them in their hope of eternal salvation.

Tsar Mikhail now seated himself on his throne, holding the Orb in his left hand and the Scepter in his right, while Tsarina Mariya approached Pope Nicholas and knelt on the crimson cushion before him. The Pope received the Small Imperial Crown from Prince Joseph, blessed it in the name of the Holy Trinity, and placed it upon her head. When she arose, Tsar Mikhail, having handed the Scepter and Orb to Prince Joseph, placed the Chain of the Order of Saint Andrew around her neck, and laid a purple mantle upon her shoulders, signifying her sharing in his dignity and responsibility for the nation's welfare.

The Tsar and Tsarina now returned to their thrones, both wearing their crowns, and the Tsar once again taking in hand the Scepter and the Orb, while the *a cappella* cathedral choir sang the Orthodox Rite prayer for "Many Years" of health and a long, prosperous reign. This traditional prayer had been adapted in Byzantium from a public acclamation once used for Emperors in the Roman Empire:

Grant long life, O Lord God, to our most pious king Mikhail.
O Lord, preserve him, unto many years.

Grant long life, O Lord God, to our most pious queen Mariya.
O Lord, preserve her, unto many years.

Grant long life, O Lord God, to our most pious king and queen.
O Lord, preserve them, unto many years.

The singing of the prayer was followed by the ringing of church bells and a 101-gun salute outside the cathedral, announcing to the kingdom that the Christian sovereigns had been crowned by Christ's Vicar. The Tsar then handed the Orb and Scepter to Prince Joseph, and knelt while he publicly offered the following prayer, which served as his Coronation Oath:

Lord God of our fathers, and King of Kings, Who created all things by Thy word, and by Thy wisdom has made man, that he should walk uprightly and rule righteously over Thy world; Thou hast chosen me as Tsar and judge over Thy Russian people. I acknowledge Thy unsearchable purpose towards me, and bow in thankfulness before Thy Majesty. Do Thou, my Lord and Governor, fit me for the work to which Thou hast sent me; teach me and guide me in this great service. May there be with me

the wisdom which belongs to Thy throne; send it from Thy Holy Heaven, that I may know what is well-pleasing in Thy sight, and what is right according to Thy commandments and according to the Magisterium of Thy Holy Catholic Church whose visible head is the Bishop of Rome.

May my heart be in Thy hand, to accomplish all that is to the temporal and eternal profit of the people committed to my charge and to Thy glory. May I keep my kingdom ever Christian, never compromising with the worldly kingdom of mammon and its principalities, powers, and spirits of wickedness in high places. May my subjects ever enjoy that true Christian liberty which flourishes only under the Social Kingship of Our Lord Jesus Christ. And may I protect and preserve this autocratic Christian throne, to be inherited inviolate by my successor whom Heaven shall appoint, so that in the day of Thy judgment I may give Thee account of my stewardship without blame; through the grace and mercy of Thy Son, Who was once crucified for us, to Whom be all honor and glory with Thee and the Holy Spirit, the Giver of Life, forever and ever. Amen.¹⁵⁴

Tsar Mikhail then rose to his feet and stood beside Pope Nicholas, while Patriarch Filaret and all others present knelt to pray for the Tsar on behalf of all the Russian people, while the choir sang the *Te Deum*, a well-known early Christian hymn of praise.

Now the Tsar set aside his crown, and the Orthodox Rite of the Divine Liturgy was celebrated by Patriarch Filaret. After the Communion hymn, but before Communion, Tsar Mikhail gave his Sword of State to Prince Joseph, and he and Tsarina Mariya ascended the stairs in front of the Royal Doors of the iconostasis, which were opened just at that moment for the anointing portion of the coronation ceremony. There, each was anointed with holy chrism by Pope Nicholas, who spoke the words, "Receive the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit." The Tsar was anointed on his forehead, eyes, nostrils, mouth, ears, breast, and both sides of each hand. Then he moved aside to his right to stand in front of the icon of Christ. Mariya then stepped forward and was anointed on her forehead only. She then moved to her left to stand in front of the icon of the Mother of God. A second 101-gun salute sounded outside the cathedral, while church bells rang throughout the city, announcing to the kingdom that the Christian sovereigns had been anointed by the Vicar of Christ.

Now a unique, once-in-a-reign event in Orthodox Rite Divine Liturgy took place: the Tsar was escorted by Patriarch Filaret through the Royal Doors (normally permitted only to deacons, priests, or bishops) into the altar, where the Tsar partook of the Body and Blood separately, in clerical manner. This was the only time the Tsar – or any Orthodox Rite layperson –

¹⁵⁴ Attributed to R. Monk Zachariah (Liebmann), "Martyrology of the Communist Yoke: The Life of Tsar-Martyr Nicholas II", *The Orthodox Word*, 153 (1990), page 200. Downloaded on 10-20-10 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coronation_of_the_Russian_monarch, and altered by the author.

was ever permitted to receive Communion in this manner. Unlike the Tsar, the Tsarina remained outside the Royal Doors and received Communion in the standard Orthodox Rite manner, kneeling and receiving the Most Precious Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, under the appearance of bread and wine, together on a spoon.

After Holy Communion the Tsar and Tsarina returned to their thrones, where their Father Confessor, Grand Duke Father Kiril Romanov, recited over them the following prayer:

We thank Thee, O Lord our God, that Thou hast not rejected us sinners, but hast suffered us to be partakers of Thy holy things. We thank Thee that, unworthy as we are, Thou hast enabled us to receive of Thy most pure and Heavenly gifts. And yet moreover we beseech Thee, O Lord and Lover of mankind, who for our sakes didst die and rise again, and hast provided us these dread and life-giving Mysteries unto the benefit and hallowing of our souls and bodies.

Grant that these Thy gifts may be even unto us for the healing of soul and body, and the driving out of every adversary; for the enlightening of the eyes of our understanding, and peace for the powers of our soul; for Faith unashamed, and love without dissimulation; for the fullness of wisdom, and the keeping of Thy commandments; for the increase of Thy divine grace, and an inheritance in Thy kingdom. That preserved by Thy grace we may be ever mindful of Thy love, and not henceforth live unto ourselves but unto Thee, our bountiful Lord.

And when we have departed this life in the hope of life everlasting, vouchsafe that we may enter into eternal rest, where the voice of those whose feast is unceasing, and the gladness of those who behold the goodness of Thy countenance is unending. For Thou art the true Desire and the ineffable Joy of those who love Thee, O Christ our God, and all creation sings Thy praise for ever. Amen.¹⁵⁵

Then in a brief ceremony Tsar Mikhail received formal homage from his wife the Tsarina, and then from other family members, old and new nobles, and friends, and finally from all Russians in the congregation. The dismissal was read, and the archdeacon intoned a special blessing for the Tsar and the royal family, with the choir again singing the threefold "Many Years" prayer.

Tsar Mikhail and Tsarina Mariya now exited the cathedral adorned in their full coronation regalia, and entered the horse-drawn royal carriage, while church bells rang wildly all throughout Moscow, and cannons fired in salute. The royal procession took them to the Kremlin, where three cathedrals (Dormition, Archangel, and Annunciation) were visited for

¹⁵⁵ A traditional Orthodox prayer after Communion, altered by the author.

additional brief rites, affording an opportunity for thousands more to be live witnesses of this historic coronation day. Then the newly-crowned monarchs proceeded to the Red¹⁵⁶ Porch of the Kremlin, where they rested and prepared for a great ceremonial meal at the Kremlin's Hall of Facets. Following the tradition of previous Tsars, they stopped on the Red Staircase and bowed three times to the Russian people assembled in the courtyard, symbolizing the mutual bond of affection between the Russian ruler and his subjects. Inside the Kremlin Palace, there was a special receiving line for Muslim subjects whose faith did not permit them to enter a Christian church.

The coronation banquet was held that evening in the Granovitaya Palata, the former council chamber of Muscovite rulers. A special table was set for the monarchs, who dined alone while being served by high-ranking members of the royal court, including not a few Princes having the last name of Shoemaker or Szczypiorski. Foreign ambassadors were admitted one at a time, and the new sovereigns drank a private toast with each in turn, taking care to sip very lightly of the powerful top-shelf Russian vodka.

Following the banquet, festivities were held that paralleled the night of the royal wedding. There was a grand electrical illumination of the Kremlin rooftops, fireworks over the Moscow River, and a series of royal balls in the Grand Kremlin Palace and several leading hotels. Over the next several weeks, the monarchs made public appearances in major Russian cities, where coronation souvenirs were distributed and the Tsar inspected his kingdom and addressed his beloved Russian people in person.

The Papal Consecration had converted the Russian nation, and now the Papal Coronation of her Romanov Christian king was complete. The Russian Sunrise was breaking forth into the warm sunshine of a brilliant new morning. The world would continue to watch in amazement as the "regressive" Russian Kingdom flourished with all those inestimable blessings, both material and spiritual, which accrue to those men and nations who keep the commandments of Christ, the Savior of the World.

¹⁵⁶ Note that in Russian "red" also means "beautiful," and here bears no reference to communists.

Section III: Christendom

“And the Gentiles shall walk in Thy light, and kings in the brightness of Thy rising.”

— Isaias 60:3, DRV

“And the city hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon, to shine in it. For the glory of God hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof.”

— Apocalypse 21:23, DRV

“Then Betsabee came to King Solomon, to speak to him for Adonias: and the king arose to meet her, and bowed to her, and sat down upon his throne: and a throne was set for the king’s mother, and she sat on his right hand.”

— 3 Kings 2:19, DRV

“The queen stood on thy right hand, in gilded clothing...”

— Psalm 44:10, DRV

Chapter Thirty-Two

The Alexander Palace.

Tsarskoe Selo, Russian Kingdom.

On October 1, 2016, when the second session of the new Duma opened in Saint Petersburg, Tsar Mikhail announced that Tsarina Mariya was now almost two months pregnant. It had been four and a half months since the royal wedding in May, and the royal couple's prayers to conceive a first royal child had been swiftly answered. While a standing ovation took place in the Hall of the Duma, church bells began to ring throughout the Russian capital, and in cities and villages all across the kingdom. The Duma members reported to their sovereign that much progress had been made in their local districts, as former secularist structures were being redesigned or replaced with systems based upon Catholic social teaching. There was excitement in the air about the launching of the new Russian Kingdom Ruble, at the New Year in just three months.

Numerous suggestions for policy revisions were offered, as various members explained how some policies, put in place six months before, were already proving to have unintended negative consequences. These were quickly rectified, since there was no toleration for paid lobbyists. This Duma consisted of men who actually ran small businesses back in their home districts, and understood how excessive kingdom (national) and principality (state) regulations would negatively affect them. Mikhail wistfully remembered the inevitable futility of elections in Western democracies, where paid-for politicians routinely spent huge sums to campaign against each other, not because they actually intended to change anything, but because they craved the power and the brief opportunity to enrich themselves by selling favors – and the interests of the voting public – to eager lobbyists.

Many Duma members reported increasing and extensive efforts by Western big-money interests to infiltrate the kingdom in various ways. Local officials were happy to cooperate with the Tsar's FSB security forces, because the Russian Kingdom was now cohesively Catholic. People seeking to obey the laws of Christ were not readily attracted by the siren songs of secular humanist agitators. Such infiltrators would try to entice people to demand rights to engage openly in sinful behaviors, but most often the infiltrators would find their subversive tactics reported to the police. In the Western media, complaints about the Tsar's "repressive police state" were widely voiced. But, because they loved Catholic truth, Russians living inside the kingdom appreciated being sheltered from evil forces intending to drag their souls down to hell. Tsar Mikhail reiterated his analogy that a kingdom is like a living organism. In order to live and thrive, it must continually defend itself against foreign invasion. Just as white blood cells prowl throughout the human body identifying and attacking any foreign microorganisms that may have slipped past the body's outer defenses, so the Tsar's police kept watch over the kingdom,

warning every time a culturally subversive intruder was identified.

In late October, Mikhail received an old friend of Father John Herald as a guest in the palace. Michal Potomik, from Prague in the Czech Republic, had come to Russia to investigate how a modern state could become Catholic. As a youth, Michal had been active in public demonstrations against Communist oppression. As a young father, he had won the right for parents in the new Czech Republic to home school their children. As a devout traditional Catholic, he published an independent newspaper in Prague that had helped to prepare the way for a Catholic revival. The former Bishop of Prague had excommunicated himself, at the time of the Pope's Consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The new bishop, a young man chosen by Pope Nicholas, had encouraged a return to tradition in Czech, and now there was a large and growing movement of Czech citizens clamoring for the privilege of becoming the Third Millennium's second Catholic Confessional State. Tsar Mikhail agreed to provide such assistance as might help facilitate a Catholic government for Czech. Michal reported that Poland and other nations from the former Soviet block were likely to rise up, like a string of fallen dominos standing back up one by one, to join in the formation of a new Catholic Christendom.

At the end of October, in the closing session of the Duma, Grand Duke Vasily Alexandrovich Polzin, the Tsar's Prime Minister, introduced a special guest, Father Nicholas Gottschalk, from Detroit. The Prime Minister explained that for a decade he, as Russian President, together with Russian Orthodox Patriarch Filaret III, had secretly studied Father Gottschalk's publications, and the conferences hosted by his apostolate. By this means they had come to understand and to believe the entire message of Our Lady of Fatima. The Prime Minister acknowledged that the tens of millions of Rosaries, offered year after year by followers of Father Gottschalk's apostolate and by other traditional Catholic organizations, had surely obtained from Heaven the grace for the President and Patriarch to see the truth about Fatima. They had thus been inspired to send a personal, private pleading to the Pope in Rome, which had come to be called "The Russian Request". The Pope had responded by taking time for a private retreat, during which His Holiness had reached a decision to precisely obey the request of Our Lady of Fatima despite exceedingly strong opposition. Now, Russia had been miraculously converted and was enjoying the blessings of true liberty, peace, and prosperity. Father Gottschalk was a great Hero of the Russian Kingdom, and deserved to be decorated as such.

Father Gottschalk was a tall, thin man with a white beard and a balding pate. His meekness and kindness belied the towering strength of his character when it came to standing his ground against any and all adversaries of Our Lady of Fatima and Her message of world peace through obedience to Her simple requests. Father Gottschalk was dressed in a simple black Roman cassock and black shoes. His gray eyes peered

out from behind his wire-rimmed glasses, and he shifted nervously as the Prime Minister publicly praised him. The Tsar then stepped forward to enroll Father Gottschalk in the Order of Saint Andrew the First Called. Under the Romanov dynasty, this highest of Russian orders had been conferred very rarely, mainly on members of the royal family, a few heads of foreign states, and “exceptional servants” of the Russian Kingdom. A plaque honoring Father Gottschalk would be erected in each of Russia’s Catholic cathedrals, both Roman Rite and Orthodox Rite. He would be welcome to spend as much time in Russia as he wished, now that the objective of his life-long work as a proponent of the Fatima message had been brought to such an astonishing fulfillment.

Prince Luke Szczypiorski now conducted the Tsarskoe Selo Palace Guard Men’s Glee Club in a traditional Marian hymn of praise. When the *a cappella* singing ended, Father Gottschalk stood while the Tsar placed around his neck the ornate Chain of the Order of Saint Andrew. The entire Duma rose in a standing ovation, while Father Gottschalk, never one to seek personal recognition, humbly bowed. In himself, Father Gottschalk feared, recalling the words of the Savior: “Woe to you when men shall bless you: for according to these things did their fathers to the false prophets.”¹⁵⁷ But these were hardly all men: these were Russians, citizens of the only great kingdom on the face of the earth that at the present time officially confessed the Faith once delivered to the saints.

Indeed, in the world outside Russia, there was a growing furor as Russia announced an expanding program of just economic policies. Beginning in January 2017, when the new Russian Kingdom Ruble would become the legal currency of the kingdom, foreign buyers of Russian exports would be required to make payment either in goods and services of equivalent value, or to pay the difference in physical gold or silver. Since Russia was both the breadbasket of Europe and the major supplier of natural gas and oil to Europe, and was a debt-free kingdom that had long tended to export more than it imported, the constantly declining value of the Western world’s fiat currencies was going to begin to hit home to hapless citizens of European democracies. Naturally, their governments and media pundits would blame Russia, rather than focusing on the fundamental dishonesty of Western currency systems as the root cause of the problem.

One consequence was that a great many Western citizens, recognizing the personal benefits of living under a government that provided local autonomy and sound currency, were applying to enter the Russian Kingdom. The new kingdom could not process the applications rapidly, nor had a firm policy yet been decided about how much immigration to permit. Therefore, many individuals simply entered the kingdom illegally, and then hoped for the best. Those of Russian heritage often found that relatives in their ancestors’ home districts would welcome them, and make a local decision to permit their continued residence in Russia. But some who entered illegally were apprehended. The Tsar’s policy was

¹⁵⁷ Luke 6:26, DRV..

that illegal immigrants were to be returned to the kingdom border place of their choosing, given a small sum of money, and were to be released unharmed. In order to reward those who sought legitimate immigration, deported illegal aliens would be required to wait five years before they could reapply for legitimate immigration. Only the Tsar could approve personal exceptions.

On November first, the feast of All Saints, Mikhail and Mariya sat in the living room of the private royal apartments in the Alexander Palace, sipping coffee after morning Mass. The Duma had departed the day before, and Mikhail was relieved that another five months of quiet work in his office would now be his daily routine. Most days would consist of a series of meetings with government officials and with citizens who had obtained a private audience with their king. Prince Joseph Szczypiorski, the Tsar's fifteen-year-old errand boy, brought in a copy of his daily schedule. Joseph was the fifth of the six siblings in the Szczypiorski family, and together with his youngest brother Joshua, served the Tsar and Tsarina as personal palace messengers.

They also served the palace priest, Father Kiril Romanov, as altar boys for daily Mass. Having long been like little brothers to Mariya, Joseph and Joshua fit in very well in this role in the royal household. Because it was a national feast day, only two or three urgent matters were listed. One of them read as follows: "An appeal to His Majesty for clemency, by Alexander Petrovich Kuznetsov, illegal immigrant." Mikhail frowned as the paper was laid beside his place.

"What is it, my love?" asked Mariya. "You look troubled."

"I am to meet today with a man whose name I can't quite place, though it sounds all too familiar."

"What does he want?"

"He wants to appeal his pending deportation. He entered the kingdom illegally."

"You know you have to treat everyone by the same rules, Mikhail. You can't show undue favoritism."

"Joseph, can you come here please?" asked the Tsar. Prince Joseph had been standing in the corner of the room, until the Tsar decided whether any changes would need to be made in his schedule.

"Find out from my secretary, Prince Joseph Shoemaker, whether we have any information about this man, Mr. Kuznetsov. Then report back to me."

"Yes, Your Majesty," said the young prince.

In just five minutes, Prince Joseph Szczypiorski returned, and presented to the Tsar a wrinkled and tattered business card. On its face, the card read:

Romanov Medical Clinic
Nazareth, Michigan
Capt. Mikhail Nicholaevich Romanov, M.D., USMC (Ret.)
Family Practice

As Mikhail turned the card over to read his handwriting on the reverse, he suddenly and clearly remembered the day when he had written: "Alexander Petrovich Kuznetsov is my friend, and is to be afforded every kindness and consideration. Mikhail Nicholaevich Romanov. July, 2015."

"Prince Joseph, will you please summon my personal legal counsel, Prince Andrew Shoemaker? I need his advice this morning before I meet with this man."

"At once, Your Majesty," said Prince Joseph.

"Mikhail, why ever are you crying?" asked Mariya. "That isn't like you."

"This is a man who once came to my clinic in Nazareth to threaten my life. Later, he became my friend, and presented me with the very exquisite icon of The Black Virgin of Russia, which hangs in our bedroom. It was he who first introduced me to the Patroness of the Romanov Dynasty."

"And now he has entered your kingdom illegally, and is asking for your help?"

"Yes. He has my old business card, with my handwritten request that he be shown every kindness and consideration."

"Then he has earned the right to be granted an exception. He is the sort of man you need in your kingdom. We must ask Prince Andrew to find a legal way to grant him an exception."

The morning meeting took only half an hour. The Tsar had appointed Mr. Kuznetsov, formerly a street thug serving certain rogue members of the Romanov Nobility Organization, to serve as assistant to Prince Luke Szczypiorski, the Athletic Trainer and Coach for the Royal Palace Guard athletic teams. It couldn't hurt to have someone accustomed to street fights to balance the gentlemanly kindness of their coach.

Prince Luke, the second-oldest child of the Szczypiorski family, had long been like an adopted brother to Mariya. In many ways Luke closely resembled his older brother Mark: he was tall, trim, well-muscled, and blue-eyed. But he kept his dark brown hair cut short in military style, hinting that the youthful wild streak which was so strong in Mark had been more successfully tamed in Luke. However unfair it might be, Luke had noticed there was a certain advantage in being able to learn from an older brother's mistakes.

Luke was a superb athlete and music director, but didn't have a mean bone in his body. The Palace Guards also needed someone to teach them how to "kick butt" when necessary. That afternoon, when the Tsar met his personal tennis coach, Prince Luke, for their daily tennis match, he explained the circumstances that resulted in Mr. Kuznetsov's appointment as assistant trainer for the palace guards. Feeling challenged by this, Luke played with much more aggression than usual, and soundly defeated his sovereign. Mikhail, though exhausted, felt this was a very good sign. He needed to have a tough corps of guards who could protect his family under the worst of circumstances.

"Well done, Luke," said the Tsar, as he shook hands at center court with the young prince. "You defeated me fair and square, and it's a very

good thing for a Tsar to be put in his place from time to time. Otherwise, the king is at risk for mistaking the deference shown to his office for some much undeserved deference to his person.”

Luke beamed with the appropriate pride of a talented youthful athlete. In his heart he thanked God for bringing him to Russia to serve such a noble king, who just happened to be the brother of his family’s beloved pastor, Father Kiril.

Before supper, Mikhail and Mariya walked, hand in hand, in the Alexander Palace gardens. Although it was the first of November, there was no snow on the ground as yet, and a bright moon had already risen even while the clouds in the western sky glowed in red and gold from the setting sun. A gentle breeze stirred in the barren limbs of the birches, and a few nervous squirrels scurried across their path with some final Fall nuts to stash in their winter nests in the oak trees high above.

“My mother Katarina is very excited,” said Mariya. “Her proposal to form a special program for University of Michigan organ students to study with her at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory has been approved. They can begin with the winter semester in January.”

“What about your father?”

“Oh, the Saint Petersburg University Medical School is only too happy to have him on their faculty full time. He has been upgraded from Distinguished Visiting Professor to a Full Professor of Psychiatry.”

“And are you happy, my dear, living in this huge yellow building where the floors creak and the winter winds will howl, and the world will be watching us as if we live in a fishbowl?”

“Oh, yes, Mikhail! I feel as if I have everything I want. I have the Faith, I have you, I have our baby growing inside me, I have many of my dearest friends from the Cova, and I have my music. It is all almost too perfect.”

“Mariya, I have asked Vladimir and Mark to build their next new pipe organ for the Alexander Palace. Not only will you and I have a place to practice, but the students of the Tsarina’s Mother may occasionally give command performances for the king and queen.”

“Oh, that’s wonderful! With all you have to worry about, I did not want to ask for anything so special. But ... Mikhail, are you happy?”

“Every day I have to pinch myself to be certain I am not dreaming. I spent so many years telling everyone, including myself, that being the crown prince of Russia would not even get me a discount at Starbuck’s. Telling my family story was like reciting a fairy tale that everyone loves to hear, all the while knowing that such things can no longer ever happen.”

“And now, here we are. Back in Detroit I used to feel that when I entered the grounds of the Cova parish, I was entering a little island of peace and true Christian civilization. It was a place of refuge from the cold and crass world that is either too busy to remember God, or too proud to submit to the one true Church founded by Christ. Now, I live in a kingdom where every city, every town, nearly every person I meet, create

that same feeling in me: this entire kingdom seems more and more like a giant Cova parish. So I can't feel homesick at all."

"I have noticed the same thing, my love. But just as we always had to leave the Cova and go back out into the world, so we will have to deal with the world of nations, who will be opposed for the most part to what we are doing here in Russia. I don't know yet what forms the opposition may take, but we have already been warned that there are men in high places who would like to put a stop to Our Lady's miraculous work here. Those who strive to live according to Christ's commandments may sometimes and for a time enjoy many temporal blessings. But earth is not our home, and earthly kingdoms are not our true country. We are always going to be pilgrims and strangers on the earth, seeking for a better country, that is, the Kingdom of Heaven."¹⁵⁸

Hand in hand, they walked in silence for a while, breathing deeply of the fresh cool air, and noting the first stars begin to twinkle in the twilight sky above them. Mornings would come, and then dark nights. Joy would be interwoven with sorrow. Every day there would be the cross. Sometimes it would be hidden from others, and their suffering would be secret and silent. Other times, the whole world would see their tribulation, as they sought to do justice and maintain peace in a world whose dark prince hated souls and their salvation. But together they would fight the good fight, and with God's help and the special graces obtained by the Queen of Heaven, they would persevere, growing old together in hope and faith and faithfulness.

They would be forever grateful for the Russian Sunrise, which had happened in their day, and for their vocations to play a central part in that great and miraculous Christian revival. But always they would remember that the best kingdoms on earth offer but a foretaste, a small hint, of the glory that awaits those who, by carrying their cross with diligence, day after day, obtain entrance at last into that Eternal Sunrise, the Mystical East, the kingdom where Christ is King and Mary is Queen, where the saints and angels are gathered together in eternal bliss around the very throne of God.

¹⁵⁸ 1 Peter 2:11; Philippians 3:20.

Chapter Thirty-Three

Epilogue

Sunday, November 6, 2016.

**Board Room, Federal Reserve Bank of New York,
New York City.**

On Sunday, November 6, 2016, a group of world financial leaders had been summoned to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York for an emergency meeting commencing at one o'clock in the afternoon. In the historic Board Room of the flagship bank, ten of the most powerful men in the world once again took their places around the massive board room table. As had happened many times before on such occasions, a trim, elderly man dressed in a very expensive suit strode briskly into the room and took his seat at the head of the table. They all knew him to be the scion of a fabulously wealthy European banking family which preferred to remain anonymous. Suddenly the Chairman spoke:

“Gentlemen, thank you all for coming together on short notice on a Sunday afternoon. As often happens, our business is sudden and serious. Let the record reflect that today is Sunday, the sixth day of November in the year two thousand sixteen of the Common Era, and one o'clock in the afternoon, Eastern Daylight time, in New York City, in the Board Room of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. Present around this table are eleven men representing the apex of international finance. Let the record reflect that I am an anonymous senior member of a European family which prefers no media attention, and which is a major stockholder in the Federal Reserve System. Also present are the Chairman of the Federal Reserve System, the Secretary of the United States Treasury, the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, the President and Co-Chief Operating Officer of the New York Stock Exchange, and the chairman or chief executive officer from each of the three largest banks and three largest corporations doing business in the United States.

“Our focus today is on the renegade Russian Kingdom, which has inexplicably risen, like a Phoenix, from the ashes of the old Romanov empire. Ninety-eight years ago the Communists buried the corpses of the overly-religious Romanovs in the remote Russian woods. For the next seventy-four years, men like us, who understood centralized control of the economy and who competed with us, empowered themselves by ruling Russia with an iron fist. Then, during the past twenty-four years, the switch to unbridled ‘free market’ capitalism had given us hope that control of the Russian Federation’s new post-Soviet government could be bought by our friends, just like in any other modern democracy. But many strange things, which cannot happen in the modern world, nevertheless have happened. The simple people all believe Russia’s recent religious revolution was a miracle sent from Heaven. But we do not believe in

Heaven, though we may pretend that we believe when it suits our purposes with the gullible public.

“As I warned you at our meeting here in August of 2015, the Russian Kingdom is about to mount a massive offensive against our worldwide financial hegemony. In January 2017 they will launch the Russian Kingdom Ruble, a reversion to old-fashioned currency actually convertible into physical gold and silver at fixed ratios. Since it is impossible to inflate such a currency, money-manipulators cannot easily transfer wealth by stealth from the little people into the coffers of the big people.

“This is a direct and impudent assault on big men like you, who came to the pinnacle of power in your respective organizations through a ruthless respect for the bottom line, and an acceptance of the need for most capital in the world to be controlled by a small number of visionary men of legendary capabilities. Men of superior intelligence and self-assertive character have always found ways to amass capital sufficient to create corporate conglomerates that can keep governments under their control – enforcing rules that give them a considerable advantage over any competition.

“Now Russia is threatening to outlaw corporations altogether, and to enforce a social model where businesses must remain small and locally controlled.

“They also plan to implement a decentralized form of government where most control is exerted at the local level, the level where people actually know what is going on and will not tolerate ‘self-serving behavior’ by company leaders. ‘Excessive’ compensation for executives is also to be prohibited, so that wealth will become widely distributed and it will become very difficult for a few men to buy control of even the local rulers.

“There are three main reasons why the new Romanov rule in Russia must be terminated. First, Russia has reverted to hereditary autocracy, which places real power in the hands of an automatic succession of men who are not for sale to big money. This cannot be allowed to continue, especially in a powerful nation that controls a nuclear arsenal effectively rendering it untouchable.

“Second, Russia has announced a new currency, honestly convertible into gold and silver, and completely independent of any other currency except gold bullion. Such a currency will be to the great benefit of the common man; but it will be greatly to the detriment of us big men who have grown accustomed to wielding the real power, behind the scenes, through calculated manipulation of the artificial ‘fiat currency’ money supply.

“Third, Russia has done the unthinkable, and become a Catholic Confessional State. This directly challenges the materialist and relativist principles by means of which we have controlled vast populations and blinded them to the injustice of our *de facto* plutocratic rule. Sexual libertinism, women’s ‘liberation,’ easy divorce, disparagement of traditional religion, vacuous education, mind-numbing entertainments, and widespread recreational drug use have weakened the will of peoples all across the developed world.

“If Russia persists in actively restoring old-fashioned Christian morality and stable social structures, it will rapidly become a formidable challenge to the continuation of our rule. The danger is that people in other nations will observe the Russian common people grow accustomed to wealth and freedom and personal contentment under such an intolerable regime. Already, people in many other nations are trying to enter the Russian Kingdom.

“If this dangerous liberation of the little people is not soon stopped, many will be clamoring to restructure their own nations after the example of Russia. The Czech Republic is already talking with the Russians about becoming a second Catholic Confessional State. If this happens, our power and wealth will soon begin to fade.

“But, as I warned you last year, the greatest danger is that someday such regressive religious regimes could even think to charge us, the very masters of the universe, with crimes against humanity!

“Last August we agreed that the referendum in Russia should be watched closely, and that, even though the Russian government was going to forbid lobbying and campaign funding, every effort would be made to influence the referendum against autocracy. Our influence did not prove effective, and Mikhail Romanov was definitively endorsed as Tsar by the Russian people.

“Worse, they also chose to make him a Christian autocrat. We had also agreed that, should he be elected Tsar, steps would have to be explored to ensure that he did not survive long enough to be crowned. Again, his FSB security has proven to be formidable and effective, and the coronation has now taken place.

“But we still have at our disposal certain dedicated and talented men who faithfully serve the lords of high finance. For them, the elimination of unwanted rulers has always been an entirely routine matter. Given time, we will act to defend our power and our wealth, no matter what the consequences to the little people who matter not to us.

“As long as they continue to work and to produce wealth, we can work behind the scenes to extract that wealth by stealth, employing such useful academic fictions as ‘free markets’ and ‘elastic currencies.’ We can continue to rule the world, and to have our heaven here and now. ‘Pie in the sky when you die’ is not for men like us. Let us resolve to send those who dare to oppose us, and who do cling to such superstitious suppositions, to their ‘eternal reward’ – the sooner the better.”

And so the battle was joined, between the new Christian kingdom in Russia and the dark powers of the kingdom of mammon. But the global unfolding of that great struggle will be for yet another story to be told.

Afterword

In or about the year 2000 I received from Father Nicholas Gruner of The Fatima Center two tiny first-class relics of Blessed Jacinta and Blessed Francisco, two of the three shepherd children to whom Our Lady of Fatima appeared in 1917. They have resided in a small gold-plated reliquary in a place of honor on our living room mantle, next to a statue of Our Lady of Fatima. Having been with us so many times during our family Rosary, I believe they have obtained grace for me to explore the message of Fatima in depth, and to imagine what could actually happen if specific obedience to Our Lady's requests brought forth fulfillment of the associated promises in our modern world.

But there is a story of historical artifacts as well. In 2004 my wife and I happened upon an exhibit at the Museum of Fine Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico that profoundly captured my imagination: *Nicholas and Alexandra: At Home with the Last Tsar and His Family. Treasures from the Alexander Palace*. Sponsored by The American-Russian Cultural Cooperation Foundation of Washington, D.C., the exhibit included a wide array of personal belongings of the last Russian Tsar and his family. Furniture, clothing, toys, photographs, paintings, decorative artworks, and handwritten diaries and letters (many in English, the Romanov family's private household language) all spoke to me of a lost world of elegance, grandeur, and faith under-girding everything else.

On the day when I toured the Santa Fe exhibit, surrounded by hundreds of personal belongings of these royal Russian Orthodox daily communicants, I felt profoundly moved that someday I must do what little I could to further the cause of Russia's healing. It occurred to me that there could be a certain symbolism in the very location where I was touring these Russian royal artifacts: in a city named by the Roman Catholic Spanish empire in honor of the Holy Faith. Our Lady of Fatima promised that it would be that Holy Catholic Faith that would someday bring Russia the healing that follows conversion.

Now six years have passed, and my study of the traditional Catholic Faith and of Russian history has continued. This novel represents a compilation of my current understanding, of what things we may hope will yet come to pass in Russia, and in our deeply troubled post-Christian world. Perhaps this labor of love – this effort to ponder, through fiction, what future blessings can be extrapolated from the whole truth about Fatima – has helped to fulfill that sense of urgency, to do what little I can to promote the cause of Russia's healing.

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English Reader's Guide to Russian and Other Foreign Names

Since Russian names are spelled in the Cyrillic alphabet, they have to be "transliterated" into the Latin alphabet used for modern English. In this process, an effort is made to spell the names exactly as they should be pronounced, with no silent letters. The following table shows pronunciations for many of the names in *Russian Sunrise*. Italics designate syllables receiving emphasis in pronunciation.

Russian Name	Pronunciation	English Equivalent
Alexandra	ah-lek- <i>zahn</i> -druh	feminine form of Alexander
Alexandrovich	ah-lek- <i>zahn</i> -dro-vitch	son of Alexander
Anastasia	ah-nah- <i>stah</i> -see-ya	feminine form of Anastasius
Belarus	<i>byel</i> -ah-roos	White Russian
Bogmolov	<i>bawg</i> -mo-lawv	one who prays to God
Daniil	<i>dah</i> -nee-eel	Daniel
Eduardovich	eh-doo- <i>ar</i> -do-vitch	son of Edward
Filaret	<i>fee</i> -lah-ret	Filaret (virtue of love; goodness)
Fyodovsky	fee-oh- <i>dawv</i> -skee	Theodore-ish
Gavrilovna	gah-vreel- <i>awv</i> -nuh	daughter of Gabriel
Georgovna	Gay-or- <i>gohv</i> -nuh	daughter of George
Grigory	<i>gree</i> -go-ree	Gregory
Ivan	<i>eye</i> -van	John
Ivanov	<i>eye</i> -van-off	son of John
Katarina	kah-tah- <i>ree</i> -nuh	Katherine
Kiril	<i>keer</i> -ill	Cyril
Kuznetsov	kooz- <i>nyet</i> -soff	Smith
Marina	mah- <i>ree</i> -nuh	of the sea
Mariya	mah- <i>ree</i> -yah	Mary
Mikhail	<i>mee</i> k-hyle	Michael
Mikhailov	<i>mee</i> k-hyle-off	son of Michael
Mikhailovich	<i>mee</i> k-hyle-o-vitch	son of Michael
Mikhailovna	<i>mee</i> k-hyle- <i>awv</i> -nuh	daughter of Michael
Misha	<i>mee</i> -shah	Mike
Nicholas	<i>nee</i> -ko-lahss	Nicholas
Nicholaevich	<i>nee</i> -ko- <i>lie</i> -ye-vitch	son of Nicholas
Nicholovna	<i>nee</i> -ko- <i>lowv</i> -nuh	daughter of Nicholas
Oleg	<i>oh</i> -leg	Holy
Olga	<i>ohwl</i> -guh	Helga
Petrov	<i>pyeh</i> -trawv	Peterson
Petrovich	<i>pyeh</i> -tro-vitch	son of Peter
Polzin	<i>poll</i> -zeen	Merchant or businessman
Popov	<i>pah</i> -pawv	Priest
Rafael	rah- <i>fie</i> -yel	Raphael
Romanov	<i>ro</i> -mah-nawv	Romanov or Romanoff

Soloviev	<i>sow-low-vee-yev</i>	Nightingale
Stepan	<i>steh-pon</i>	Stephen
Vasily	<i>vah-see-lee</i>	Basil
Vladimir	<i>vla-dyee-meer</i>	Vladimir
Yevgenyevich	<i>yev-gain-ee-yeh-vitch</i>	son of Eugene

Other Names	Pronunciation	Language	Meaning
Battista	<i>bah-tee-stah</i>	Spanish	Baptist
Gottschalk	<i>gott-shalk</i>	German	Servant of God
Ignacio	<i>ig-nah-see-oh</i>	Spanish	Ignatius
Jacques	<i>zhah-k</i>	French	Jack
Michel	<i>mee-shell</i>	French	Michael
Ritter	<i>rit-ter</i>	German	Prince
Szczypiorski	<i>sh-chee-pyor-skee</i>	Polish	son of Simon

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This novel presents Russia in a positive light. Yes, Russia needs consecration and resulting conversion so that it loses its status as God's chosen instrument of punishment of the wicked world; but when this is realized, Russia will become an example for all the other nations and an instrument of bringing about a true Christian peace.

– **Michal Semin**
St. Joseph Institute
Prague, Czech Republic

Russian Sunrise, extremely well written and highly interesting, is truly a “novel of faith and hope” as mentioned on the book's front cover. It offers one very plausible scenario of how the Consecration of Russia can possibly and very practically take place, followed by its very positive effects realized in the nation of Russia and with promise of major benefits accruing to the world in the near future. Providing a very engaging and entertaining story, more importantly this book identifies what Russia could realistically look like following (and directly as a result of) the Consecration of Russia – becoming a truly Catholic Confessional State instead of the secular totalitarian state it currently is. Sparing no details, the author then defines exactly and in many specifics what this actually means for most aspects of Russian life, including in terms of: politics, economics, finance, commerce, education, healthcare, law, culture, etc. I read the entire 400-page book in one week, often staying up very late at night, unable to put this captivating novel down.

– **Andrew M. Cesanek**, M.S.E.C.E.,
co-author of *The Devil's Final Battle*
New York

Russian Sunrise is truly a work motivated by Divine Inspiration. The realistic intrigue and danger that encompass the potential scenario Dr. Walters presents (with some very important and true political and financial history) concerning the events that finally lead the Pope and bishops to make the Act of Consecration of Russia to Our Lady's Immaculate Heart keep the reader in suspense. One is struck by the fact that the longer the Pope delays the more difficult it will become for him to accomplish Heaven's request in our increasingly anti-Christian world.

Reading what we have to look forward to — the establishment of a truly Catholic State beginning with Russia and eventually followed by all the states of the world — restores the spirit to do all one can by prayer and sacrifice to make this happen. When faced with the trials of everyday life, this book will help the Catholic faithful stay focused on the real goal of a Catholic striving to work out his salvation — the Triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the Social Reign of Christ the King, heralding an era of true worldwide peace and subsequent achievement of the eternal salvation of many souls.

– **Joanna Swords**, BSN, RN
Former Captain USAR, AN

With the appearance of *Russian Sunrise*, the discourse on Fatima has turned a corner. The Consecration of Russia is shown to be eminently doable, as relations with the Orthodox and other questions that have stymied Church leaders for decades fall surprisingly into place. Now we can begin to glimpse the world *after* the Consecration, with its own practical tasks.

Dr. Walters draws the reader into the lives of his appealing characters as they establish the first Catholic confessional state in the post-Communist era, and restructure the new society according to Christian principles. This provocative book leads the reader to consider what challenges a newly converted nation would face, and what he personally might be called upon to do as Our Lady's promises unfold. *Russian Sunrise* is truly an infusion of hope.

– **Suzanne Pearson**
Author of *Blessed Karl and Fatima*;
Catholic Church musician; Senate staffer
Washington D.C.

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