



THE EASTERN ORTHODOX No 105: September 2018

**ЦЕРКОВЬ СВТ. ИОАННА ШАНХАЙСКОГО
ST JOHN'S RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
Military Road, Colchester, Essex CO1 2AN**

**His Holiness Kyrill, Patriarch of Moscow and All the Russias
Most Rev. Metropolitan Hilarion, First Hierarch of the Church Outside Russia
Rt. Rev. Bishop Irenei, Administrator of the Diocese of Great Britain and Ireland**

The Church of St John of Shanghai, built in 1855, is the largest Russian Orthodox church building in the British Isles and is attended by 3,000 Orthodox of 24 different nationalities. It is a parish of the East of England Orthodox Church Trust - part of the Russian Orthodox Church, (Charity No: 1081707) - comprising Colchester, Norwich, Bury St Edmunds and Wisbech and looking after faithful Orthodox in these four counties in the East of England.

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Расписание Богослужений / Timetable of Services

Saturday 1 September

5.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Sunday 2 September

10.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия. Service for those going back to school or studies / Краткий молебен для учащихся

Saturday 8 September

5.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Sunday 9 September

10.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия

Saturday 15 September

5.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Sunday 16 September

10.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия

Thursday 20 September

No services in Colchester – services in London / Богослужений нет в Колчестере – Богослужения в Лондоне

Friday 21 September: Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God / Рождество Пресвятой Богородицы

No services in Colchester – services in London / Богослужений нет в Колчестере – Богослужения в Лондоне

Saturday 22 September

5.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Sunday 23 September

10.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия

Wednesday 26 September

5.30 pm: Vigil for the Exaltation of the Life-Giving Cross / Всенощное бдение праздника Воздвижения Животворящего Креста Господня

Thursday 27 September: Exaltation of the Life-Giving Cross / Воздвижение Животворящего Креста Господня

10.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия

Saturday 29 September

5.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Sunday 30 September

10.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия

Baptisms in July and August

2 July: Danae-Agathi Chrysoula

14 July: David Dumbraenu

3 August: Leonidas Tseopane

4 August: Ana Maria Graciu

4 August: Laura Bitca

11 August: Luca Andrei

21 August: Alexandra Sturrock

25 August: Kirill Lopes

28 August: Adrian Kilic

HER ASCENSION REVEALED HER GLORY

A Word on the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos

[Igumen Andronik \(Trubachev\)](#)

Once, the [Prophet David](#), moved by the Holy Spirit, spoke about the future life of the Most Holy Theotokos: *The king's daughter is all glorious within* (Ps. 44:14). That is, the glory that befits the future daughter of the King (as he called the Most Holy Theotokos) will be hidden, turned within, unseen even by her loved ones.

According to human conceptions, while a man is yet alive, the glory that surrounds him because of his fame, because of his strength or power, because of some deeds, spreads more and more. The man himself usually strives to glorify himself here on Earth while he is yet alive. For we all know that with death, day after day, oblivion comes for every man. The people even have a proverb that the coffin is an advocate for oblivion. And the more time passes from a man's death, the less people tend to remember him.

Therefore, the glory that surrounds a man spreads out from him during his life. Here the Prophet David shows us that the spiritual law, the Gospel law, the law according to which the Most Holy Theotokos lived, the law given to us Christians, acts contrary to the worldly law.

While she was on Earth, she lived in obscurity; it was only from the day of her passing to God (or, as the Church calls it, from the day of her Dormition) that this glory began to spread throughout the Earth. And no matter how far or how great this glory spreads, this God-befitting glory of the Most Holy Theotokos, we see no limit or end!

How do we explain this prophecy of the holy David the Psalmist? Why did the glory of the Most Holy Theotokos, which she was filled with even during her life on Earth, remain unknown to people, becoming known only after her Dormition?

For this, we have to look not only at the Dormition itself, but at the very life of the Most Holy Theotokos; and we will see that all of her virtues, all the fullness of grace that filled her soul and body was concealed by a deep covering of humility—personal humility, to which is added God’s covering—the providential covering that hid her extraordinary glory as the daughter of the King from human eyes.

The protector of her virginity, the [Righteous Joseph](#), began to doubt that his betrothed truly kept her virginity. He seriously suffered from it. He was confused: How could she, who had given an oath, now be pregnant, having a child in her womb?

The word of the Most Holy Theotokos alone was enough to destroy all of St. Joseph’s doubts. She could have told him about the appearance of the Archangel Gabriel; she could have preached to him in detail about the Annunciation and descent of the Holy Spirit. There is no doubt that God would have attested to her every word!

But she was silent, leaving the Righteous Joseph to doubt. She was silent because she was concealing her virginity, concealing the mystery of the Annunciation by her humility. She concealed it so that God Himself, in some way unknown to her, would reveal this mystery to the Righteous Joseph.

And so her humility overcame St. Joseph’s confusion, and it was not her but an angel that appeared to him and said, “Fear not, your betrothed has not broken her vow! Take her and keep her in your home, because from her will come God, Who will save the human race.”

And then, our Savior was born, the angels in Heaven proclaimed the news, and the magi came from distant lands. The shepherds came to give glory to the newborn Christ. Here it would seem that, together with the glorification of her Son, glory should touch her too—as His mother...

But the magi departed, the shepherds left, and the Heavenly praise remained, it would seem, unknown not only to man, but even to the Jews, who lived nearby. And instead of glorification following the Nativity of Christ, the heavy persecution of Herod and the flight into Egypt awaited her.

Then her Son, having reached the appropriate age, began to preach for our salvation. Perhaps this glory that surrounded Christ during His preaching also touched her? But we see that a certain woman, struck by the Savior’s majesty and the miracles He performed, exclaims: *Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps which Thou hast sucked* (Lk. 11:27). She blesses the Mother of God, but the Mother of God herself remains unknown to her. She doesn’t know her name, otherwise, undoubtedly, she would have said, “Blessed is Mary who bore Thee!”

Others knew her name: those close to her, who lived with her. But they remained unaware that she belonged to the royal family. And, amazed by the miracles and wisdom of the Savior, they said, “Is He not the carpenter’s son; is He not the son of Mary who lives among us, who is simple like us? Whence then does he have such wisdom and such power?!” (cf. Mt. 13:55).

Perhaps the glory of the Mother of God should have touched her and revealed itself through the direct instruction of her Son, as is usually the case when we want to glorify our loved ones.

But we see that, on the contrary, the Savior, Christ Himself, conceals the glory of the Mother of God. When people came to Him and said, “Your mother and brothers want to see You,” He said, as if not taking notice of it, “And who is My mother? He who hears the word of God!” (cf. Mt. 12:46-50).

And we know that there has been no one on Earth who more fulfilled the will of God, who listened more to Christ, the Son of God, than His all-pure mother.

We see that the Most Holy Theotokos was not with her Son in instances when He had some glory, as happened for a short time, for example, during His entrance into Jerusalem; not when, having performed a miracle, He received people’s gratitude; but she is mainly with him when He was experiencing humiliation. She stood at His Cross: at the cross of all His preaching, and the Cross of His Crucifixion—when the people—both His closest disciples and everyone else withdrew from Him.

Then her Son resurrected, and the glory of the Resurrection began to spread throughout the whole world. But we don’t find in the Gospel a single word about when the Mother of God found out about the Resurrection. Church Tradition tell us in our sacred hymns that an angel first appeared to her to tell her about the Resurrection of her Son.

Even Sacred Scripture conceals with humility that which was formed in the heart of the Most Holy Theotokos!

Finally, the apostles went and preached throughout the entire world; and the Mother of God, as Church Tradition tells us, was the soul of the apostolic community. It was she that told the apostles about how the Savior spent His childhood; it was she that told the apostles about the Annunciation; it was she that told the apostles about so much that they could not have known about, for they came to know Christ only when He had already begun to preach.

But the [Acts of the Apostles](#) describes to us the place that the Most Holy Theotokos held in the apostolic community. It tells us that after the Ascension, the apostles were in Jerusalem together with other disciples (and they are listed by name), awaiting the descent of the Holy Spirit. They were afraid, and because they were afraid, they were waiting for this descent all together, being of one spirit.

And having listed all twelve apostles, the Evangelist Luke adds that there were also some women with them, including *Mary the mother of Jesus* (Acts 1:14). This placing of the Most Holy Theotokos by the Evangelist Luke in the last place in the first Christian community truly shows that, despite the fact that she enjoyed the honor, veneration, and respect of all Christians, beginning with the very first, and even with the apostles—she held the place of an ordinary woman who had no say in the decision of ecclesiastical questions.

They addressed her as the Mother of God, but she herself took the last place—lower than the apostles.

Although, it can be said that she is the first among the apostles as a preacher of the Resurrection of Christ.

It is only when the hour of her death arrived (and it behooved the Mother of God to submit and pass through the gates of death, as it does us all) that she who is barely mentioned in the apostolic preaching received extraordinary glory!

The apostles flew to her on angelic powers to honor her Dormition, her departure to God. Having given each of them an instruction, she told about how the Archangel Gabriel appeared to her again and notified her of her imminent union with God.

Church Tradition further tells us that the death of the Most Holy Theotokos was unusual: She seemed to just quietly fall asleep, painlessly. And it wasn't angels that received her soul, as with ordinary people, but the Lord Jesus Christ Himself appeared to receive the soul of His mother into the Heavenly habitations.

This is where the glory of the Most Holy Theotokos is revealed!

When her bier was being carried to burial, the Jewish High Priest Ananias, wishing to desecrate the burial of the Most Holy Theotokos, stretched out his hands to overturn the casket; but the angel of the Lord cut off his hands with a sword. Seeing this miracle, he came to believe and joined the apostles.

The apostles were all together after the burial of the Most Holy Theotokos. By Divine providence, the Apostle Thomas was not with them during the burial. Thus, in order to assure the Apostle Thomas, to give him the enjoyment of beholding the face of the departed Most Holy Theotokos, the apostles led him to the cave where the Most Holy Theotokos was buried.

When they opened the cave, they found that it did not contain her body.

And indeed, we know from Church history how many relics of the saints of God we have throughout the world, including ascetics, bishops, fools-for-Christ, and righteous ones!

The Church has pieces of the clothes of the Most Holy Theotokos; it has the remains of her belt with which she once girded herself. But we have never heard anywhere that the Church has any particle of her righteous body.

This is because her body was assumed into Heaven and received by Christ the Savior Himself, and it is this ascension that revealed her glory: She went to God before the Last Judgment, and therefore she intercedes for us as the all-powerful mother of the Christian race.

Church Tradition recounts for us that when the apostles would sit and eat, they would usually leave one piece of bread in memory of the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself was invisibly eating with them. When they elevated this piece of bread in memory of their Teacher, then the Most Holy Theotokos suddenly appeared to them in Heaven, who had earlier ascended in her Dormition, and pronounced the words once spoken by her Son, the Lord Jesus Christ: “Rejoice! I am with you always, even unto the end of the age!” The apostles answered these words with the exclamation, “Most Holy Theotokos, help us!”—the same exclamation with which we have addressed her from the first century.[\[1\]](#)

And since then, dear brothers and sisters, when the glory of the Theotokos was spread in Heaven, when she was glorified in Heaven, then the Lord was pleased to spread her glory across Earth as well.

And here the Gospel law began to work contrary to the worldly law: The farther we are from the time of the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos, the more the world glorifies and venerates her, the more the world feels her intercession, and the more the world feels her living contact with the entire Church.

Therefore, in her Dormition, as during her entire life, the Most Holy Theotokos gives us a great Christian lesson that none of us should care about glory, but, on the contrary, should conceal our glory while yet living on Earth.

If it is necessary, the Lord will reveal the glory of a righteous one on Earth when he passes over to Him in the Heavenly habitations. Thus, the Most Holy Theotokos edifies and protects us by her Dormition. We turn to her on this feast with pure hearts and with the same exclamation with which the apostles once addressed her: “Most Holy Theotokos, help us!” Amen.

A SCANDALOUS TOPIC: I'M NOT A DESCENDANT OF APES

[Priest Valery Dukhanin](#)

I'm not their descendant, and that's it. That's why it sounds so scandalous. I've read a lot on this topic, but just as I didn't believe in it before that, I still don't now.

I'll also mention that on a social media page, one Orthodox girl wrote a beautiful thought: "I'm not ashamed to be a daughter of the Heavenly Father. Let those whose ancestors are apes^[1] be ashamed." I am also not ashamed that I am a son of the Heavenly Father (albeit a sinner, but a son; after all, in the Gospel there is the Prodigal Son—a son not rejected by his father), and my soul does not accept the theory of evolution.

I'm ashamed when fellow priests write to me, who say with conviction, "Evolution is a proven fact; every student knows this; it's obvious! How can you so ignorantly dismiss the evidence?" Sometimes they send articles and materials on the topic. But you might as well talk to a brick wall: Just as my soul wouldn't accept it before, it still won't accept it now.

For some reason, the words of [St. Paisios the Athonite](#) and the [Holy Hierarch Luke \(Voino-Yasenetsky\)](#) sound more convincing. One was uneducated in worldly terms but acquired the Holy Spirit and therefore also the gift of insight; the other was the greatest of scientists who thoroughly knew the human body. And they both speak as one about the falsity of the theory of evolution. And it's not just them. It's a common Patristic intuition, whether it's [St. Theophan the Recluse](#) or [St. Seraphim of Sarov](#) (to whom people attribute evolutionary views in vain, apparently not having read his pages in full, taking only a few words), or whether it's the New Martyrs and Confessors of the Russian Church: [Hieromartyr Vladimir \(Bogoyavlensky\)](#), Hieromartyr Nikolai (Pokrovsky), Monk-Martyr Varlaam (Nikolsky), the Holy Hierarch Makary (Nevsky), and many others. In the Greek Church there is [St. Nektarios of Aegina](#), and in the Serbian Church—[St. Nicholai \(Velimirovic\)](#). No matter which saint—they reject evolution.

The same St. Theophan openly wrote about the ideologues of evolution:

They have heaped up a multitude of fanciful suppositions for themselves, elevated them to the status of irrefutable truths and plumed themselves on them, assuming that nothing can be said against them. In fact, they are so ungrounded that it is not even

worthwhile speaking against them. All of their sophistry is a house of cards – blow on it and it flies apart. There is no need to refute it in its parts; it is enough to regard it as one regards dreams. When speaking against dreams, people do not prove the absurdity in their composition or in their individual parts, but only say, ‘It’s a dream,’ and with that they resolve everything. It is the same with the theory of the formation of the world from a nebula and its supports, with the theory of abiogenesis and Darwin’s origin of genera and species, and with his last dream about the descent of man. It is all like delirium. When you read them you are walking in the midst of shadows. And scientists? Well, what can you do with them? Their motto is “If you don’t like it, don’t listen, but don’t prevent me from lying.”^[2]

St. Ambrose of Optina counseled those who came to him: “Don’t believe at face value all kinds of nonsense without investigation: that something can come into being [of itself] from dust, and that people used to be apes.”^[3]

Why can’t I agree with the position of the saints?

And how much should I distort Scripture to argue that Adam had anthropoid parents, that is, a redundant couple that fell away into nothingness after their purpose was up? How would Adam feel, seeing their deaths in Paradise, himself being a descendant of death, giving birth to likewise mortal descendants? Where is life here, if death reigns all around the primordial Adam? Why redeem him from sin if he is a child of death not because of sin, but because of biological laws? What sin is there to speak of if there are just animal instincts, subject neither to reason nor human will?

How should I interpret revelation, believing that Adam’s poor ancestors chased one another with mouths agape, and whoever was smarter found the first club? What is this crown of creation, crammed with ancient irresistible instincts that we mistakenly call passions? What sin is there to speak of if, I repeat, the whole theory of evolution speaks of passions as animalistic necessities, inherent in any biological creature? Let’s not deceive ourselves: There’s nothing angelic, and what’s more, nothing according to the image of God in principle in such creatures. Conscience, and ethics, and etiquette—everything in this paradigm is a result of evolution, driven by death.

And the Bible itself, in their conception, is, to add insult to injury, the product of the evolution of ancient myths and epic tales, included in religious collections and carefully redacted through the centuries. What Divine revelation is there here if everything is the continuous evolution of myths?

No, we will not be deceived. The theory of evolution works for destruction.

Now I'll say something that won't be scandalous because it's an obvious fact.

Science studies the world in its fallen state, according to the loss of the paradisiacal harmony, according to the Fall of man and the invasion of the law of death and corruption into the universe created by God. Therefore, the starting axiom of the theory of evolution is death: How would species have evolved if no one died before Adam? How does an ape become human if the weakest don't die to leave space for the miracle-mutation—man?

Therefore, the cosmogony of evolution moves from the unsuccessful to the accidentally successful, from the excess waste material of living beings that didn't limp their way to biological perfection to new species accidentally fixed at new stages. That is, in their conception, God couldn't hold on until the creation of a beautiful, harmonious, perfect world. But then, what God is there in evolution?! Their God is evolution itself, a kind of wizard, alchemist, casting magic spells from one nature to another, from a crocodile to a pterodactyl, from a bear to a whale, from a lama to a giraffe, from a primitive ape to a human. All of this is taken from their books. What would he do—this crocodile—when his feet morph over the generations into stumps, to then turn into pterodactyl wings? Who will help this evolutionary invalid, whose paws mutate but has no wings yet? But for those to whom it's interesting, evolution was contrived by a wily alchemist.

Science sees a picture of the world in its broken state, with the remnants of a harmony, but the obvious loss of the paradisiacal harmony. How can the current realities be transferred to the beginning of our existence?

Let these scholars of the mind tell us what microscope or what super-electron equipment, what analysis they can use to study the Resurrected Christ and the state of His Body at His Resurrection; His nature—in need of no food, of breathing the air, lacking natural necessities, inaccessible to microbes and bacteria, diseases, and ailments—in general, a nature in which there is no death, but life, and moreover, life everlasting, without old age and wrinkles, without “I want to eat” or “I have to go to the bathroom;” a nature fully human but equal to the angels, having defeated death and corruption? How would they define the nature of the True Man, resurrected for us in order to return the paradisiacal harmony to us? How can they touch the nature of the first Adam, whose qualities we lost as soon as Adam severed his connection with God? This is why the New Adam—Christ—came. He returned immortality to people, returned that which was lost in Paradise, and gave us yet more; and they say that Adam was born from death and the entire first-created world was filled with death, destruction, and ruination as something wholly natural. What would Christ return to us then if everything was controlled by mutation from the beginning?

How can they investigate the ever-virginity of the Mother of God, where God the Holy Spirit acted rather than the laws of biology?

No, science will not say a word about what is higher than the created world and higher than disintegrating nature, about deification, about the transfiguring action of the grace of God. It can say nothing about the condition of the world before the entrance of the law of sin into it.

Studying the world according to the Fall, we only see part of the picture of the universe. So how can we believe such science?!

This is why those who have acquired grace, who ascended to the contemplation of Christ and His Uncreated Light even during this life, that is—neither you nor I, but holy people—live by a different intuition. This intuition leaves the scientific data of the moral world behind in view of the first-created paradisiacal world. Studying the world according to the Fall and man in his sinful state, we only see part of the picture—that is, not even close to everything. Science that has studied only part is not objective, not seeing the whole picture—neither in the universe nor in man himself.

It's hard to reach an agreement with people who have varying views on origins. The connection with our genealogy is like a pillar of existence, the core, defining the man and his behavior. Everyone takes something from his genealogy, copies it in life, and some justify themselves, citing their ancient origins. The choice is up to us all.

I understand that in response they'll splatter formulas and data from biology, geology, archaeology, paleontology and all the rest, and evidence from Ilya Prigogine, Stephen Hawking, and the other luminaries of this world. They'll say, "How are you not the descendant of a primitive ape? Look, see for yourself." No, my friends, I am not their descendant, though you may kill me with the same ancient club. The proponents of evolution are my brothers and sisters, but a chimpanzee is not my brother, and a monkey is not my sister.

In the Gospel of Luke, we read about the genealogy of Christ, and it is written there that He, according to His humanity, traces back to the root of the species, the son of Enos, Seth, Adam, and God (Lk. 3:38). There is no other ancestor between the first man Adam and His Creator God—no transitional link.

Which is closer and dearer to us—Christ with His transfigured nature, or a myth about the origin of the tailed primates?

“BOW TO HIM, AND HE WILL HELP YOU!”

Testimonies of Miraculous Help from Tsar-Martyr Nicholas II

[Archpriest Alexander Shargunov](#)

*For the 100th anniversary of the martyr's death of the Royal Family, Sretensky Monastery published the book of Archpriest Alexander Shargunov *Tsar: A Book About the Holy Royal Passion-Bearers*. Fr. Alexander regularly preaches about the holy Royal Passion-Bearers on the "Radonezh" Orthodox radio station, answers readers' letters in the journal "Russian Home," and is the compiler of several collections of miracles of the Royal Martyrs. This book is about the role of monarchy in Russia's fate, about the path of confession of the last Russian emperor and the members of the august family, and about the miracles manifested by prayers to the Royal Martyrs.*

A letter I received, with a request to give it to the Commission for the canonization of the Royal Family (Fr. A. S.):

Dear Commission for the canonization of the Royal Family of Nicholas II!

For a long time I have not dared to talk about what happened to me, Orthodox Christian Evgenia Nikolaevna Mikhalova, and my friend, Lyubov Florentevna Mironova, in October 1991. On October 15, 1991, we went to the village of Krasnitsa, 15 miles from Pushkin (near St. Petersburg), to pick cranberries in the marshes. Having picked the berries, we began to leave the marsh even before dark, at 4:30, but we couldn't get out, although we were not far from the way onto the path we needed. It gets dark quickly in October, and we lost our orientation—the marsh is huge, and there are many paths. Then we went towards the sound of a train and got completely lost.

I started praying out loud, but the farther we went, the more it became impassable—bogs, fallen trees, and there were no roads back either. The darkness advanced at once; screaming was useless—there was no one around. I continued to pray and walk, feeling the depth of the water with a stick. Suddenly I remembered, like an epiphany, the incident described in the book *Letters of the Royal Family From Captivity*, about how the detachment of Cossacks was surrounded in the swamps, and together with them was a convoy with children and the elderly, including a priest. They started praying to the Royal Martyrs and were able to get out of the swamp onto their path.

In despair, I began praying to Heaven with the words that formed in my heart: “O murdered, right-believing Tsar-Martyr Nicholas; O murdered Tsarina-Martyr Alexandra, O murdered martyrs Grand Duchesses Olga, Tatiana, Maria, Anastasia, O murdered martyr Tsarevich Alexei and all those murdered with them, for the sake of Jesus Christ, lead us out of this dark forest, out of this swampy marsh! O Royal Martyrs, save us, the servants of God Evgenia and Lyubov!” It was a prayer of hope and of despair, and in absolute darkness in the middle of a swamp—we felt land with our stick and started walking. Where to—we had no idea.

I shouted out my prayer twice—and something in the dark lit up. It was a branch of a tree, without any bark, and another, and another. Grabbing for them, we walked along on a long tree, with no water beneath our feet. Reaching my hand forward, like a blind man, I walked and continued shouting my prayer to Heaven. Lyubov was walking behind me. With five prayers we came out into a wide clearing. The moon was shining, footprints were clear on the road, and we walked along this path for a long time and arrived at Susanino.

Having wandered in the dark for six hours, we arrived home at midnight, not even believing we were alive. I ordered a panikhida for the Royal Martyrs, and since then, the Tsar-Martyr Nicholas II and his family are for me saints—our lifesavers. In gratitude, I anointed the eyes of the Tsar on the portrait with oil from the Holy Sepulchre, and from his eyes rolled a tear, to which my children and guests can testify.

My son Fr. Evgeny and his Matushka Olga were waiting for me to come from the forest and were very worried. When I got home, I immediately told them everything and Lyubov Florentevna called her daughter Natalia, and everyone heard about the miracle of our being saved by prayers to the Tsar-Martyr Nicholas II and his family.

Lyubov Florentevna was not a strong believer at that time, and her testimony about what happened may be more objective.

I told Vladyka Basil (Rodzianko) about it when he was serving in the Theodore Sovereign’s Cathedral with my son. He advised me to write to the commission, but for some reason I decided not to. Maybe this occurrence I’ve told you about will be useful for examining the question of the canonization of the martyrs for the Russian land—Tsar Nicholas II, his family, and those martyred with them. For us, Orthodox Christians, they are an example in life, in patience, and in the *podvig* of martyrdom. He is a true Orthodox tsar, uniting us, and worthy of being a saint of the Russian land now for our salvation.

With love in the Lord, Evgenia Mikhailova, mathematics teacher

Lyubov Mironova, employee of the Russian Museum, St. Petersburg

A story from Vladyka Melchizedek (the Archbishop of Ekaterinburg and Kurgan at the time):

In the mid-70s, Vladyka was the representative of the Moscow Patriarchate in Berlin. On one trip back home, he took with him in his baggage a fair number of Church books published abroad and dedicated to the communist persecutions against the Russian Church after the 1917 revolution. At that time, it could be qualified by the authorities as importing anti-soviet literature, with consequences under the relevant article of the criminal code.

At the border, customs officers began (for the first in Vladyka's several years of regular trips abroad) a detailed inspection of his luggage. Vladyka placed the books, banned in the USSR, in his luggage with his vestments, in a folded sakkos. If they had found the books, then in the best case it would have ended with him being sent into retirement. Vladyka began to pray fervently, especially earnestly turning to the Tsar-Martyr Nicholas II whom he had long venerated as a saint. The customs officials were slowly looking through the suitcases, taking out every item. They took out the sakkos with the heavy books hidden there. They reached the bottom of every suitcase, and again, not hurrying, began to put everything back. Vladyka didn't stop praying to the Tsar. The officers didn't pay any more attention to the vestments with the books than to any of the other items in the hierarch's baggage.

A parishioner of the Joy of All Who Sorrow Church on Bolshaya Ordinka, Juliana Yakovlevna Telenkova, an eldress, a simple, illiterate woman, her whole life dedicated whole-heartedly to serving the Lord, told me not long before her death how she started venerating Tsar Nicholas Alexandrovich. She knew little about him and never thought about him or his fate. When she and her family found themselves in hopeless financial troubles that threatened the entire family, she saw the Tsar in military uniform who said, handing her a silver ruble with his image:, "Serve a panikhida for me, and everything will be fine." And that's what happened: After the prayers for the Tsar, sudden help came, and from then on she has always remembered him and prayed to him as to a second Nicholas the Wonderworker.

"In November 1981, we, three young parishioners of the Joy of All Who Sorrow Church on Bolshaya Ordinka, heard about the glorification of the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia by the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. The last Russian Tsar and his entire family were included in the host of new saints. This fact evoked indignation and night-on protest in us. We started vying with one another to recall all the negative things we knew

about the Tsar from soviet historical books and the few memoirs of his contemporaries available to us then. We took the canonization of the Tsar, and especially of the Tsarina as nothing other than a political act.

Our conscience was extremely perturbed, and we turned to our spiritual father for clarification. He, as it seemed, having long venerated the Royal Passion-Bearers, tried to reveal to us the genuine face of the Tsar and his family, cleared of slander and misunderstandings. But we laid out our counterarguments with vehemence and confident categoricalness, as is characteristic of young people, practically not even listening to Batushka. Batushka quickly fell silent, but then, seizing a pause in our stream of words, said with great significance and power, “They are saints.” And he got up, letting us know the conversation was over.

I arrived home with a heavy heart: I had argued rudely with my spiritual father, the question about their canonization was still not cleared up, and the main thing—there was some nasty residue from the retelling of these so-called “objective” facts from the life of the Royal Family. I prayed before sleep that the Lord would calm my soul and resolve my sincere bewilderment.

The next evening my believing friend offered me a book for a night, secretly brought to her from the special collections of the Lenin Library. I was just about petrified seeing its title: *The Personal Correspondence of Nicholas II and His Family, 1914-1917*. I read this book in one breath, like I once read the book of St. John of Kronstadt *My Life in Christ*, or the writings of the Athonite Elder Silouan (by the way, they also weren't canonized as saints of our Church then). These books had one and the same spirit, one and the same lightness and sorrow in Christ, one and the same soul-warming feeling of touching the high *podvig* of the life of the saints. No traces of my heartfelt burden and doubts remained. I had complete clarity and firm assurance in finding those closest of people—saints.

The same thing soon happened with my friends.

Olga Alexandrovna L, Moscow

Svetlana Alexandrovna Rumyantsev from Moscow recalls:

The event I want to talk about is nothing special in and of itself, but its consequences for our family were unexpected and considerable.

On the eve of the commemoration of the murder of the Royal Family (July 17), my nephew was preparing for a mathematics exam (algebra and geometry) and became completely despondent—he couldn't prepare enough for an A, but with any other grade he couldn't enter the competition at the technical school. I persuaded him to rely on the will of God and the intercession of the Tsar-Martyr and to go to the test with the words "Lord, have mercy." I myself asked the Lord at Liturgy, if it be His holy will, to help my nephew by the holy prayers of the Tsar-Martyr. With tears, I entreated the Tsar and all the members of his family to beseech the Lord to have mercy upon us, sinners. The thing is that my mother and I were really hoping that if he entered the technical school, my nephew would have less time to hang out on the street and get into obscene and malicious acts with friends.

And something incredible happened: Having received a question with a theorem he didn't know, he was taken aback. The exam moved along as if in a dream. He didn't remember how he answered and what follow-up questions they asked him, but nevertheless, he received the desired grade. It was a miracle for him, for me, and, most importantly, for my mother, until recently not just an atheist, but one that caused a scandal every time I went to church for a decade and a half. Nothing—no words and no events—could shake her active opposition to faith. Now she venerates the Tsar-Martyr and prays to him and other saints she knows, especially St. Seraphim of Sarov, in difficult situations, and maybe even all the time, and she tries to convert my sister—her daughter—to faith."

My grandfather Theodore Pavlovich served in the royal court—in which rank I don't know—but for his faithful service he received a written certificate from the Tsar that his sons could study in any higher educational institution, apparently at state expense, and namely in a military institution, because my grandfather was a military man and not rich. I knew this from early childhood from my father Alexander Feodorovich, now reposed (he died in 1989).

He greatly suffered because neither he nor his brother received any kind of systematic education, and he was greatly embarrassed when filling out forms, because he held prominent positions and should have put something in the "education" field. He once tried to explain that he studied in school for two winters, but he was ridiculed and told to write, "Incomplete higher education." In fact, he and his brother received a home education, which was enough for them and for me for our whole lives. Therefore, my father was very happy when I brought home the first diploma from Moscow State University. Then my brother graduated from MSU and became a doctor of science, and then my son studied too. We considered it our merit, our accomplishments: From the provinces to MSU.

Many years passed. His Holiness blessed a panikhida to be served for those innocently murdered. They served a long panikhida in Holy Trinity Church (a dependency of Optina Monastery). I knelt and wept, remembering my father and his relatives who suffered terribly. My grandfather and great-grandfather went to jail, and my grandmother and the children died of hunger. But especially I felt sorry for my father; I really loved him, and he us with the

most devoted love. Suddenly, it was if some voice, only without sound, or a thought, but not mine, clearly addressed me: “And what are you crying about?” I mentally answered: “I feel bad for my grandfather and grandmother who suffered, and my father and uncle who didn’t receive any education.” Suddenly I heard the answer, silent but very clear: “They didn’t get one? Two were promised, and three received one: You, your brother, and your son! The royal word does not perish, even if there is no tsar.” And it added: “You thought a girl could just come from anywhere and so easily enter Moscow University?”

My tears instantly dried up, I rejoiced, and got up from my knees, and wanted to smile, although it was uncomfortable to do so at a panikhida. Only I know the miracles by which I started studying at the university (which before the revolution was imperial), having come to Moscow with my father from a small town with a factory in the remote steppe.

There was another time where I had help from the Tsar and his wife Tsarina Alexandra Feodorovna. It was an event with a purely personal meaning.

There was a photo of the Tsar in uniform hung in a frame under glass on the wall in my room. At my request, a hieromonk I knew anointed it with oil from the Holy Sepulchre that I had brought from Jerusalem. On January 29, 1995, at 9:00 PM, the Tsar’s portrait began to stream myrrh. I immediately asked my spiritual father about it and he replied, “Rejoice” (and I was a little afraid at first).

Maria Alexandrovna V., November 8, 1995

I would like to tell you about real help from the New Martyr Nicholas II, manifested to a teenage boy who had been sick for a long time. I, his mother, always commemorate Tsar Nicholas both in church and at home. My mother told me about him and told me to always commemorate the Tsar.

My grandfather on my mother’s side, a simple village man, was a soldier in the war in 1914 and he saw the Tsar. When he heard that they had shot the Tsar, he wept, saying, “Now we have no father.”

My son suffered from Bechterew’s disease from childhood, and my heart suffered for him. Then one day I had a dream. Tsar Nicholas II was sitting on a stool facing me. I recognized him from the picture we had and the feeling from his spirit. I saw him and rejoiced and said, “Tsar Nicholas, I commemorate you.” He was silent and didn’t look at me, but I saw that he did not have a harsh face. I came closer behind his right shoulder and said, “Tsar Nicholas, will my Valery recover?” He was silent. I got even closer and again asked, “Will my Valery recover?” “He will recover,” he tenderly answered, and the dream ended.

And it came true. My son suddenly got sick with meningitis. They carried him on a sheet to the ambulance, and he lay in the hospital unconscious for two weeks on a drip. The doctors pronounced the verdict: “Either he won’t come out of this state, or he’ll be disabled.”

Day and night, I didn’t let the Psalter out of my hands at his bedside. Then one day, everything suddenly disappeared. He raised himself up and began to speak normally. The doctor was amazed: It was a miracle!

It ended with them having the hospital blessed.

Marina Vladimirovna Mikheeva, Voznesenka, Sumy Province

And another testimony from Monk Hippolytus of Zosima Hermitage:

Before I entered the monastery, I remember I took my parents a portrait of Emperor Nicholas II and his wife the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna.

Taught at that time in the soviet period to think about the despotism of the Tsar, my parents were bewildered about what glorification there was to talk about, uneasily looking at these two portraits, hung in a prominent place. My mother, an author by education, immediately brought up Bloody Sunday in 1905 and the Lena Massacre, but, being God-fearing from her youth, she refrained from saying much, only asking herself, “How could it be?!”

My father, an unbeliever as he called himself, was not stingy with his remarks, but at the same time, having animosity towards the communists, he expressed regret about the fate of the Royal Martyrs.

The nervousness of the home atmosphere with various comments about the Tsar was intensified by my parents’ critical situation, or rather—my father’s: They were threatening him with jail, because, in his simplicity and ignorance, he fell in with a crowd of swindlers. A criminal case was already underway, there had already been interrogations, and a court date had been set.

Then my father had a dream one night: The Tsar was standing there in the uniform of an officer in the Tsar’s army, with epaulettes, tall, blue-eyed, all radiant, standing half-turned to my father, and someone in black said to my father, “Bow to him and he will help you!” and he bowed. Also, the Tsar’s family was there with him.

After that, my father and mother went to a small village church in honor of the Archangel Michael and all the Heavenly Bodiless Powers and ordered a panikhida for Tsar Nicholas and his family.

Three or four days later there was an upheaval in Moscow, with the famous shelling of the White House. Then a revolution immediately happened in the province, and they also replaced the regional administration head, who hated my father and wanted to accuse him and send him to prison in any way possible. The change of officials gave hope for a lenient attitude towards my father. His trial soon happened. My father was given a year of probation, and then amnesty, and his conviction was removed, and his was the only one removed out of the six defendants.

After this incident, my father's attitude towards the Tsar changed and he even became reverential. Having once felt his real help, hitherto decrying all that is holy, he stumbled upon another problem, and he ran to him from whom he'd already received this help—to Tsar Nicholas II and all the Royal Martyrs. My father, a farmer, found himself in a situation where there was nothing to sow. There were no seeds to sow, and it all threatened not just to go without money, but also to surrender all of his property to settle his debts. He and my mother again ordered a panikhida for the murdered Tsar Nicholas II. Immediately after that, the abbot of a nearby monastery went to their house and told my father that he had a friend who wanted to give him seeds. The whole land, 150 hectares, was sown.

As we already said, in the testimonies of the miracles of the holy Passion-Bearer Tsar Nicholas manifested in recent times, there are characteristic features that connect his image with St. Nicholas the Wonderworker. He hurries to help those who are in trouble or in danger, who have lost their way. He is especially compassionate to simple people whom he so loved and with whom he easily found a common language during his life. He often appears to people who never sought his intercession—those who as if represent the whole of our deceived people, for whom he laid down his life and who betrayed him by their rejection or indifference. The Tsar emphatically asks us to pray for him and to him, because receiving a prophet in the name of a prophet, we will receive the reward of a prophet, as says the Lord.

Or, as St. John of Shanghai said, “The greatest crime, committed against the Tsar, must be atoned for by fervent veneration of him and the glorification of his *podvig*. Rus' must prostrate before the one humiliated, slandered, and martyred, as the people of Kiev once bowed before the venerable Prince Igor martyred by them; as the people of Vladimir and Suzdal before the Grand Prince Andrei Bogolyubsky who was killed. Then the Tsar-Passion-Bearer will have boldness before God and his prayer will save the Russian land from the afflictions it bears. Then the Tsar-Martyr and his co-sufferers will become new Heavenly protectors of Holy Rus'. Innocent blood will revive Russia and bless it with new glory.”

