

## 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<sup>134</sup> 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,<sup>135</sup> 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

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<sup>134</sup> A traditional Catholic prayer recited daily at noon, honoring the Mother of God for Her humble submission to the divine will.

<sup>135</sup> 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:<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> “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 aspersion<sup>137</sup> 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,

<sup>137</sup> 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*.<sup>138</sup>

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 ..."<sup>139</sup>

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."<sup>140</sup>

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

<sup>138</sup> The Nicene Creed.

<sup>139</sup> Tobias 7:15.

<sup>140</sup> 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.<sup>141</sup>

The homily was followed by Mozart’s stirring but lengthy *Credo*,<sup>142</sup> 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*.<sup>143</sup> 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

<sup>141</sup> 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.

<sup>142</sup> The Nicene Creed.

<sup>143</sup> 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*<sup>144</sup> 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*<sup>145</sup> 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

<sup>144</sup> 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*.

<sup>145</sup> “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 Brothers<sup>146</sup> 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

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<sup>146</sup> 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.<sup>147</sup> 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

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<sup>147</sup> 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.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Hebrews 13:8