



PROLOGUE

ELDER EPHRAIM

ABBOT OF VATOPEDI MONASTERY OF MOUNT ATHOS

The Orthodox world has had a difficult and often martyric history. Centuries-long oppression and severe persecution have troubled and continue to trouble its communal life, testing its faith and driving it to the limits of its endurance. And so the Russian people have lived through a recent “Babylonian captivity” during the twentieth century, enduring a reign of tyranny and fierce persecution for seventy years.

Setting aside all human imperfections and weaknesses, we discern in the life of the Orthodox faithful who have confronted these difficult conditions two characteristic traits: an eschatological mindset and a forgiving spirit. Furthermore, these also characterize all the holy Martyrs of the Church as their proper traits.

An eschatological frame of mind does not imply passivity or indifference to daily life. On the contrary, it implies, rather, activity and care for its proper use. It also implies an awareness of God's paternal providence, not only for His welcome gifts, but also for those that are unpleasant. Characteristic of this is the letter that Empress Alexandra sent during her period of exile in Tobolsk: "The way of the cross first—then joy and gladness.... The more we suffer here the fairer it will be on that other shore where so many dear ones await us.... How can one ask more? We simply give thanks to God for every day safely ended."

A forgiving spirit manifests love and humility. The self-centered man never forgives because he has no love in his heart. Egoism does not leave room in the heart of a man to be able to forgive his neighbor. Even more certainly can he not forgive his enemy. But this is true Christian love, the love that forgives even one's enemies. This selfless love inspires the forgiving spirit of the Orthodox faithful.

In one of Olga Romanov's notebooks, which was found after her terrible execution, was a handwritten prayer that said, among other things, "Grant us Thy patience, Lord, in these our woeful days, the mob's wrath to endure, the torturer's ire; Thy unction to forgive our neighbors' persecution, and

3 | mild, like Thee, to bear a bloodstained Cross. ... And when
 the hour comes to pass the last dread gate, breathe strength
 in us to pray, ‘Father, forgive them.’”

We view as praiseworthy and God-pleasing the initiative of the Monastery of St John the Forerunner in Mesa Potamos to publish this present book on the Romanov Holy Royal Martyrs. We pray that the readers of this book may be edified and inspired by the virtues of these seven Holy Royal Martyrs of Russia.

Archimandrite Ephraim

Abbot of the Holy and Great Monastery Vatopedi

The image shows a handwritten signature in cursive script. The signature is written in black ink and appears to be 'f. 'doux. 'Spain'. The letters are fluid and connected, with a large initial 'f' and a long, sweeping underline.

