

Chapter Twenty-One
Monday, July 20, 2015.
A Month after the Consecration.
Orthodox-Catholic Cathedral of Christ the Savior,
Moscow, Russian Federation.

It was late July in Moscow, a far northern capital where summer nights last about seven hours and average summer temperatures range from the fifties to the seventies Fahrenheit. At noon, a brilliant blue sky glimmered in the celestial vault above the Russian capital metropolx. Lately, it seemed, the sun had shone with an unusual intensity upon Holy Mother Russia: today, the gold leaf shimmering on the onion domes of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior almost blinded hapless motorists passing by on the riverfront parkway.

Inside the cathedral complex, Patriarch Filaret III of Moscow and all the Russias was convening a historic luncheon meeting. He was joined by the Most Reverend Nicholas Bogmolov, D.D., the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Moscow; Vasily Alexandrovich Polzin, President of the Russian Federation; and several trusted staff assistants from each Church and from the federal government. The topic of their meeting was how to bring about the practical aspect of the reunion of their two Churches.

From a spiritual standpoint, the reunion had taken place already, suddenly and obviously miraculously. But from a practical perspective, the mechanics of uniting the two huge bureaucracies would take time. The Holy Father had asked these men to draft a set of regulations for the Orthodox Rite in the Roman Catholic Church, so that nothing would need to be changed for the Orthodox except those few very minor matters that actually clashed with Catholic doctrine. They had already agreed to study the recent transition of the Anglican Use Catholics, who had returned to Rome from the Church of England and had kept their traditions and liturgy. The main practical issues seemed to be rules for marriage, both for the laity and for priests.

In terms of marriage, the Orthodox had always frowned upon divorce as a necessary evil, and agreed easily that they could establish a tribunal parallel to the one operated by Rome. The issue would be whether a particular marriage could honestly be declared never to have been valid in the first place, since in the Catholic view divorce from a valid marriage was impossible. Contraception also proved to be an issue easy to reconcile: the true Orthodox view always was the same as the Catholic view, except among a minority of liberal Orthodox clergy. When *Humanae Vitae* had been issued by Pope Paul VI in 1968, condemning artificial contraception, it had been lauded by Orthodox hierarchs and theologians all around the world. Here, noted Filaret, was an obvious area where Rome was going to help the Orthodox people get back on the track of true Orthodoxy. And the

recent self-elimination of the liberal wing of Catholic bishops would help enable the Catholic Church to get back on the same correct path as well.

Another issue was marriage for the clergy. In the Orthodox tradition, married men could be accepted as priests; but once ordained, unmarried priests could not later choose to marry. A bishop could only be chosen from among unmarried priests, and priests who became widowed could not remarry. These same rules had been agreeable to the Anglican Use Catholics when they returned to union with Rome. The Orthodox would maintain these same rules, since the Roman Rite rules against married priests represented custom within that rite, and not universal doctrine. All agreed that the best condition for a priest was celibacy, since he could devote his full time to his flock.

The largest areas for discussion involved tenets of the Faith that had been declared dogmas by Rome after the tragic schism of 1054. On close examination, it was not that the Orthodox actually denied the Catholic dogmas. They simply had grown accustomed to saying that they could not know definitively whether or not the dogmas were correct, because after the schism the Orthodox, not having the Pope, had never been able to convoke a valid Church council at which they could settle any doctrinal questions. Historically, two issues had loomed great: whether the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, or only from the Father; and whether the Blessed Virgin Mary was Immaculate from the moment of Her conception, or only after She conceived the Son of God in Her womb. Now, with no status of separation to defend, the Orthodox at all levels were finding no problem admitting that the Catholic position was entirely consistent with the Orthodox liturgy and with opinions of the ancient fathers of the Church which Catholic and Orthodox had always claimed in common.

President Polzin noted that, up until now, the Russian Federation had been officially Orthodox, but that it was not an Orthodox Confessional State. The government had simply acknowledged that the majority of Russians self-identified as Orthodox, even if most had been non-practicing. But the government had also listed several other religions with a long history in Russia, which were officially recognized and allowed to function without any strict limits. These included Islam, Judaism, and some Protestant sects. Catholics had been viewed as breakaway Orthodox, seeking to steal sheep from the one true Church of Russia, and so were officially restricted. Now, the vast majority of the Russian people was reverting to the practice of the Orthodox Faith, and were clamoring for Russia to become a confessional state.

“Almost all the people being interviewed on the streets are saying they want Russia to once again become an Orthodox Confessional State, but this time in union with the Pope in Rome. They want the government to be run according to Orthodox principles, and they even want to have their Christian king back. What is new is that they want the Pope to come from Rome and crown the new Tsar, and they want to make sure that

the policies of the Orthodox government are completely in harmony with Catholic social teaching.”

“Truly, what we are witnessing is a miracle,” agreed Filaret.

“How do the news organizations explain it?” asked Archbishop Bogmolov.

“The best answer is that they can’t,” said President Polzin. “But they do admit that, if one takes at face value all that was reported about Fatima, one can only conclude that, very shortly after the consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary by the Pope and all the Catholic bishops in union with him, the overwhelming majority of the Russian people underwent a profound change of heart. The Fatima literature explains that when Jesus appeared to Sister Lucy in Spain, in 1936, He told her that He wanted the whole world to know that Russia had been converted by the intercession of His Blessed Mother, so that the world would come to place devotion to Her Immaculate Heart alongside devotion to His Sacred Heart. What has happened can’t be explained by any human means. It is obvious that we have witnessed an unprecedented miracle from Heaven. The people in the mainstream media all know this, because they are intelligent people. But they can’t bring themselves to say so explicitly.”

“You know what is remarkable to me?” asked Archbishop Bogmolov. “The Immaculate Conception was one of the two bogus reasons used to justify the independence of the Orthodox Church from Rome. And Heaven placed that very issue, the Immaculate Heart of Mary, at the epicenter of Russia’s miraculous conversion.”

“The other issue was the *filioque* clause of the Nicene Creed,” noted Filaret, “saying that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son. Now, suddenly, the Orthodox no longer have any problem about this. People can never get the truth about Jesus quite right until they first get the truth about the Blessed Virgin Mary right. ‘*Ad Jesum per Mariam*,’ you Catholics would always say: ‘To Jesus through Mary.’ Now, at last, we Orthodox get it right too.”

“Your Excellencies,” said President Polzin, “we must address some practical issues. One, people are clamoring for a Christian government, and they remember that Russia has a deeply-rooted tradition of Christian kings dating back to the Baptism of Prince Vladimir in 988, when Russia first became a Christian state. They say the Romanov’s ruled Russia well for three hundred and fifty years, right up until godless, unchristian infiltrators from outside the nation came and engineered the atheistic revolution in 1917. They remember that God always chose the king by dynastic succession, and they have been noticing the recent surfacing of the American physician, Mikhail Romanov, in the world news.”

“Could he be a plant by the enemies of Russia?” asked a Russian presidential aide. “They say he was an American war hero. Russians don’t trust the United States military machine. After the Cold War Russia kept its word and withdrew its military presence from all of Eastern Europe. But the United States reneged on its part of the agreement, and moved

right in, expanding NATO right up to the borders of Russia. That is hardly a recipe for preparing the Russian people to accept an American Tsar.”

“There is no chance at all that Dr. Romanov is a United States government agent,” said Filaret. “We checked out his genealogy, and he is without doubt the foremost candidate for the Romanov throne according to the rules of the dynasty as they existed up until 1917. What impresses me is this: until very recently, he had absolutely no interest in claiming any position among the Romanov family in exile. He spent his life in service to others: a talented musician thrilling others with the beauty of his music; a consummate athlete and United States Marine who was wounded in battle rescuing others and was decorated by the United States President for his valor; a skilled physician who teaches both in America and in Russia, and who has organized compassionate medical missions to some of Russia’s most remote and underserved backwaters. No, he has all the characteristics one would expect in one chosen by God to lead Russia into a new era of Christian peace and prosperity. Up until recently, the fact that he converted from Russian Orthodox to Roman Catholic as a teen would have been an impediment. But now, the fact he is grounded in both traditions is a huge advantage.”

“Well, what about his girlfriend, then?” persisted the aide. “She might just be a ‘gold digger’ hoping to go along for the ride. It is all just too perfect.”

This remark caused President Polzin to remember that this aide was a personal protégé of his anti-religious Prime Minister, Daniil Mikhailov.

“Not a chance there, either, my friend,” replied Filaret. “We also thoroughly investigated her genealogy, and discovered that she is a full European princess of royal blood, and a suitable consort for a Tsar. If Mikhail Romanov marries her in the Orthodox – uh, or Catholic – Church, their children would inherit full rights to the Russian throne. She didn’t even know about her royal heritage until I myself informed her parents, who are now friends of mine.”

“Too weird,” said the aide. “And now even Prime Minister Mikhailov is beginning to soften on this religion thing. Where are we going to get practical heads who can run a modern country instead of dreaming fairy tales?”

“I can see that only the vast majority of Russians have converted, and not every last one,” said Filaret, scowling at the aide.

“Right now, gentlemen, Russia is still officially a secular democracy,” said President Polzin. “Since it seems obvious from the daily polls that the majority of the Russian people want to restore the Romanov dynasty to power, we should set up a special referendum so the people can vote for the new Tsar. We could have one candidate, and the option to write in anyone else people might like. At the same time we can ask what form of government they prefer: Christian autocracy; Christian constitutional monarchy; or a Christian republic with a ceremonial monarch, like Great Britain. Again, people could also write in any other idea they might prefer.

That would settle two questions at once.”

“The polls are showing a growing desire for Christian autocracy,” said Filaret, “like Russia always had in the past. People are saying they are tired of ‘the best government money can buy,’ because it always gets bought by ‘big money.’ So-called ‘democracy’ can’t ever work properly at the national level, because it always becomes a slick disguise for an oligarchy of un-elected money-changers. A republic can work, but carries the same danger of ‘big money’ buying out the political parties, as has happened in every Western ‘democracy.’ The Russian people want to avoid that. Some are talking about a parliament to serve as an advisory body to the Tsar, to help him know what each local region wants and needs. But they want one good man, chosen by God, who is a devout Christian and above party politics, to make and enforce the laws.”

“Some are talking about the former Holy Roman Empire and its successor, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, as a good model,” said Archbishop Bogmolov. “It was an autocratic Catholic Confessional State. There, more than one hundred local ethnic groups enjoyed self-rule in almost everything, while the empire mostly provided protection against encroachments from neighboring groups or from external aggressors. Taxes were minimal, and served to provide military protection, roads, and a few other empire-wide projects that could not be done better at the local level. The Catholic principle of subsidiarity was followed explicitly: all decision-making was done at the most local level possible. There was no expectation of uniformity among local regions, except that all were required to provide freedom, justice, and equity, and to officially confess the one true and universal Catholic religion. The degree of freedom and local self-rule and self-sufficiency can hardly be imagined by those who are oppressed to live in today’s modern ‘democracies.’ Today’s so-called ‘free’ governments try to micro-manage everything from on high, and to enforce a stifling sameness in all localities through endless regulations and enforced uniformity of thought.”

“So you think a Christian autocracy might actually fly in a national referendum?” gasped the aide. “Can you imagine what the news media would say?”

“Do we actually care what they say anymore?” countered Filaret. “I am much more interested in what Heaven has to say.”

“And, all of a sudden, most of the Russian people seem to agree with you,” said Archbishop Bogmolov.

“Okay, so we hold a referendum soon,” said President Polzin. “But what about some sort of parliament?”

“Well, we’ve all seen what an unmitigated disaster modern nations have gotten with elected bodies of full-time career politicians,” said Filaret. “Now modern Russia is heading in the same direction, with emerging political parties seeking to sell special favors in exchange for obscenely excessive funding from ‘big money’ interests.”

“Even under the last Tsar, there was a parliament,” noted the aide.

“Yes,” said President Polzin, “after the revolutionary uprisings of 1905, when outside agitators stirred up riots, Tsar Nicholas gave in to a partially-elected, partially-appointed ‘Duma.’ But the Tsar retained the right to override this legislature, and so remained an autocrat. When problems arose, he disbanded it to make clear who had the power.”

“The real point is for the ruler to have accurate, unbiased information about what is going on, and what needs to be done, in each local region,” said Archbishop Bogmolov. “Tsar Nicholas attempted to send personal scouts out into his empire, but they tended to be bought off and corrupted, so that it was difficult for him to gather accurate information. Like Austro-Hungarian Emperor Franz Josef, he tried to meet with common people on a regular basis, but corruptible aides largely controlled access to him.”

“What is needed,” said President Polzin, “is a national advisory body, composed of persons who cannot make politics into a career, and who must lead productive and highly moral lives back in the communities they claim to represent. Such an advisory body should only meet twice a year, for no longer than a month, and might also be on-call in case of a national emergency. Each member should be elected directly by the local community, and should be required to be self-employed full-time in a small business employing a moderate number of workers.”

“Yes, and such members should have to pass a religious test, and be certified by their local bishop,” said Archbishop Bogmolov. “In a Christian Confessional State, no one can be forced to convert to the one true Faith, but neither can they be trusted with an important office if they are unwilling to submit to the stringent moral requirements of the Faith. Those who reject the Faith are rejecting the truth, and therefore are not to be trusted with high office. The same holds true of professed Catholics who are unrepentant public sinners, who publicly flaunt or deny Church teaching.”

“The sort of advisory body you gentlemen propose would naturally consist of persons of exceptional integrity,” said Filaret. “With people like that to rely on for information, a Christian Tsar could make good decisions that would be well accepted locally.”

“In modern democracies,” said President Polzin, “candidates seek elected positions because they crave power and money. Then once they get in office, they try to find ways to enrich themselves in exchange for unjust favors to others. After they leave office, they are often given enormously over-paid positions requiring no real work, as a payback for their corrupt favoritism while in office. ‘Big money’ also rigs the elections, so that only candidates who can be bought, and have been bought, can ever get elected. Russia needs to find a better way, and what you gentlemen describe seems like the answer. A religious test for office would never be acceptable to the mainstream media outside Russia, but I believe it would be very much to the liking of the newly-converted Russian people.”

“So what have we decided, gentlemen?” asked Filaret.

“We’re going to have a national referendum to choose a Tsar,” groaned

the aide, “and to choose whether he will be an autocrat. We’ll also ask whether the people want a new part-time Duma, strictly as an advisory body for the Tsar. Duma members have to have real jobs and have to be certified by their local bishop, so they must be Catholics in union with Rome, either Orthodox Rite or Roman Rite or any of the other Catholic Eastern Rites.”

“Okay. Now the next issue is the economy,” said President Polzin. “You can’t base a Christian state on fake money and usury.”

“What?” said the aide. “That’s how the whole world works nowadays!”

“Precisely. But Russia is not the whole world. Russia is about to become the modern world’s first Christian Confessional State. Russia will be different. Russia will lead the way in looking out for the interests of the common man and his family. And the first way a nation can do that is to have real money as money.”

“And what is real money?” asked Filaret.

“A real commodity which has a universally agreed stable value and which is easily exchangeable in divisible quantities,” said President Polzin. “Something you can’t create out of nothing in unlimited quantities. Something that imposes the discipline of fundamental honesty upon all sectors of the economy equally, including the government and the banks.”

“Sounds suspiciously like the barbaric relic, gold,” moaned the aide. “Or maybe silver, which is just as bad.”

“The Sacred Scriptures take it for granted that gold and silver are money,” said Filaret. “It was gold from the Magi that funded the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt. Thirty pieces of silver were enough to buy the betrayal of Christ from Judas. The Roman coin with Caesar’s image and superscription, which was presented to Christ for inspection when He was asked about the lawfulness of paying taxes, was certainly made of precious metal. It was not until the latter third of the Twentieth Century that anyone seriously imagined that real money could be paper instead of precious metal.”

“Letters of credit existed even in the ancient world,” said President Polzin, “but they represented the fact that real money existed on deposit somewhere and could be exchanged for the paper on demand. Counterfeit certificates of deposit were criminal, and severely punished, because they threatened the integrity of the economy. They threatened to reward the vice of avarice and to mock the virtue of diligence in labor. The Church has always condemned usury, the practice of loaning out money and then demanding back more than was loaned. Such a practice tends toward the same problem: rewarding avarice and punishing honest labor.”

“The Catholic Church has held that the lender must be at risk with the borrower,” said Archbishop Bogmolov, “so that the lender will be motivated to help the borrower succeed in his endeavor. That way, the lender would have a just claim to his share of the profits. But if the enterprise should fail, then the lender must forfeit what he has loaned out. That motivates lenders to perform due diligence and only loan where

there is a realistic likelihood of success for the borrower. Lenders at risk can't enslave hapless borrowers by enticing them into bad loans, and then demanding payment even when the enterprise fails. Investing in stocks is completely moral, because the lender is at risk with the borrower. But blindly lending money at interest is a sin, which means that interest-bearing bank accounts, risk-free by government insurance, are probably unethical. But money market funds are relatively ethical, because one presumes the fund management is doing due diligence before they lend funds to enterprises, and the fund is at risk with its borrowers if they go bankrupt."

"The real problem is one of scale," said Filaret. "When most businesses are locally owned and operated, local investors can be directly involved. Small local businesses might be a little bit less efficient than huge, centralized conglomerates, but the social benefits they produce far outweigh that deficiency. Small, locally owned businesses employ people whom they know, and they tend to value them as human beings and often as friends. They tend to keep basic wages higher, and to reasonably limit compensation to the upper management. Small businesses normally don't expend a lot of energy in policy and procedure, because management works right alongside the front-line workers. Actually, excessive government regulation of business tends to make the cost of doing small business prohibitive, by requiring excessive policy and procedure, so that only huge conglomerates can afford to comply with all the regulations."

"Back to money," said President Polzin. "Imagine this: there was a period of more than one hundred fifty years, when the British Empire was on the gold standard, without any inflation at all. Actually, there was very gradual deflation, which tended to slowly enrich the common man who saved a little bit over time. Saving was rewarded, whereas debt was deadly because the unpaid balance actually increased in value over time. But in the corrupt money system in place in the world now, saving is punished, and debt is rewarded, because of continuous inflation. And that inflation, caused by a constant steady increase in the amount of money in circulation, is a stealth tax levied on the common man, and is possible only with worthless paper money that can be created out of nothing without limit. In contrast, the amount of gold and silver mined increases only very slowly over time, and so the value of gold and silver money tends to remain fixed and reliable. Real money protects and rewards the common man, and drastically limits the ability of avaricious money-changers to extract wealth from those who produce real goods and services through their labor. The new Russia must have gold and silver as money. God's money."

"But if the rest of the world remains on a fiat-currency, fake-money basis, how can Russia survive?" asked Archbishop Bogmolov. He seemed surprised the aide had not asked this, but then supposed the aide was reluctant to call the world's fake money by its real name.

"Russia is unique," said President Polzin. "She is blessed with

unmatched natural resources, including fresh water, oil, natural gas, vast mines for precious and industrial metals, and vast agricultural lands. She is both the breadbasket and the major supplier of energy for herself and also much of Europe. Since the implosion of the Soviet Union, she has strictly limited her military expenditures, and as a result she has no significant national debt. She has quietly amassed one of the world's largest reserves of physical gold and silver, as a potential basis for a sound new currency. She is poised to become industrialized, and stands at a crossroads where she can either opt for takeover by huge international corporations, or she can opt to favor small, locally-run productive enterprises that favor humanity over mammon. In one sense, Russia does not really need other nations. Possibly no other nation is as ready as Russia to adopt Christian principles for her new social organization, because Russia is uniquely ready to be completely self-sufficient for a good long while."

"Every nation ends up having to buy some things," retorted the aide.

"Well said. But if Russia goes on a gold standard, it will mean that she will try to buy from other nations only as much value as she sells to them. That's known as 'balance of payments.' She will demand payment in gold from nations that buy more from her than they sell to her. She won't accept anything but real money, gold, in payment. She will also avoid buying more from any one nation than she sells to them, because she would also have to pay them in real money, gold. As Russia's production of quality products increases, then her ability to buy more will increase as she sells more. But Russia's wheat, oil, gas, coal, and other natural resources are already in such high demand from other countries that Russia can take time to develop the small, local business model, and easily keep her payments balanced."

"In other words, the national economy will be run just the same as a household budget," observed Filaret. "With complete honesty."

President Polzin then spoke.

"Okay, to sum up, gentlemen: we elect a Tsar, make him a Christian autocrat, set up an advisory body excluding career politicians and persons resisting the one true Faith, establish gold and silver as money, outlaw usury, and encourage small, locally-owned businesses. What about education and health care?"

"Education is the primary responsibility of parents," said Archbishop Bogmolov. "Parents have complete rights to oversee the education of their children, and they will answer to God for it. So homeschooling would be the natural form of education. But local cooperative efforts can be good, provided they are based upon the Faith. Government schools are inherently dysfunctional, and tend toward evil outcomes. So, the government's business in education is to stay out of it. It needs to be left up to parents and to the Church. Schools operated by the Church may be ideal, but they too must be directed at the most local level possible. Now, higher education may require universities and trade schools, but these too should be locally run and guided by the Church rather than the

government. Universities were invented by the Catholic Church, because the Church has always been about the pursuit of truth.”

“But don’t people need the government to pay for education?” asked the aide.

“No. Local communities can figure out how to fund what they need. Possibly there can be a national scholarship system to reward high academic achievers pursuing needed fields that do not pay well. But if primary and secondary education have been excellent, most men will be better off to attend a trade school, and then enter a labor guild that protects their employment and guarantees a living wage for honest work. Only a minority of men are gifted scholars who should go on to a university.”

“Well, everybody has a right to health care,” said the aide. “So the government has to pay for that.”

“You can’t have a ‘right’ to the fruits of another man’s labor,” countered Archbishop Bogmolov. “Health care comes from the work of doctors and nurses and research scientists. Men have a right to social justice, and justice demands that communities find ways to take care of those who cannot take care of themselves, such as widows, orphans, and the infirm.

“But most of the high cost of modern health care comes from the profit-skimmers, money-changers who produce nothing of real value, and from greedy lawyers who pretend that life should be risk-free and that money (a good percentage of which always goes to the lawyers) can somehow compensate for physical or psychological injuries. Health care cooperatives run in local communities, and supervised directly by those who use the local system, seem to be the best plan.”

“Does anyone ever think that the very concept of a ‘corporation’ is demonic?” asked Filaret. “I mean, is it good to pretend that a company can go on existing as a fictional ‘legal person’ apart from real souls who must answer to God on judgment day for what they have done and what they have failed to do?”

“I see what you are thinking,” said Archbishop Bogmolov. “We moderns have all been brainwashed into thinking that fake money and fake persons are the greatest advances in economic history. And really, corporate governments are just as bad. The government in Heaven is personal – One God in Three Persons. Earthly governments should reflect that reality, and also be persons, real souls who must answer to God.

“And companies should be real persons too. Now, if you avoid inheritance taxes, then when people who run companies die, their heirs, who are also real people, can easily continue the enterprise. But you always have someone in charge who must answer to God. And finally, if you replace fake money with real money, then natural limits on the amount and value of the currency promote a fundamental honesty that becomes universal throughout the economy. It gives the little man a level playing field with the rich.”

“Summary time again, gents,” said President Polzin. “We elect a Tsar, make him a Christian autocrat, set up an advisory body excluding career politicians and persons resisting the Faith, establish gold and silver

as money, outlaw usury, and encourage small, locally-owned businesses. And we make education a parent-based enterprise with local cooperatives permitted, but no government involvement. Finally, we make health care a local enterprise to be worked out by local people as they see fit. Anything else?"

"Well, of course the Tsar may see fit to enforce a social code of conduct that is becoming to a Christian nation," said Filaret. "The Church will simply advise him if he is making any serious errors which could place his own soul in jeopardy before God. No doubt he will limit free speech in certain areas, since error cannot have equal rights with truth. There will be complete freedom for the one true religion, but not for other religions, which all contain at least some error.

"They may have to be tolerated but cannot be officially promoted in any way. Also, pornography would be forbidden, because it advocates immorality and is destructive of family life. The Tsar will also have to try to limit certain common but immoral behaviors that have caused Western civilization to implode, such as prostitution, homosexual acts, abortion, and unnatural methods of contraception.

"Equally important, laws will have to be enacted to positively encourage right behaviors. Marriage will be held in high esteem, and there will be a presumption that those entering into a sacramental marriage in the Church have consented to forfeit any right to a future divorce. Only non-Christians in a civil marriage could have a civil divorce.

"Local guilds will be encouraged, in order to foster the practice of a living wage that increases with the size of one's family, so that the generous procreation of children in large families is made practical, and so that women called to the vocation of full-time motherhood can be liberated from the need to work outside the home. And these ideas only represent a beginning, a few first thoughts."

"I propose that we form a work group," said President Polzin. "We can have regular weekly meetings at the Catholic cathedral. There is a vacant modern office building almost next door, which the government should lease as a temporary ministry to help facilitate the transition. The government, the Orthodox Church, and the Catholic Church should all work together in the new transitional ministry.

"I think we should name the ministry in honor of the Black Virgin of Russia, the Patroness of the Romanov dynasty. And we should invite the Pope to come to Moscow eventually as our honored guest, to bless the new work group and the nation. As soon as the new Tsar has been elected, he can become chairman of the group. Until then, I suppose I, as President, can be the acting chair."

There was immediate consensus that this seemed to be the right approach for the time being. The three leaders and their aides agreed to meet again in a week, and in the meantime to storm Heaven with prayers for wisdom and grace, so that they might serve the people of Russia with true honor and integrity.

Archbishop Bogmolov counseled them to remember young King Solomon, and read aloud the following passage from the Old Testament:

And behold that night God appeared to [Solomon], saying: Ask what thou wilt that I should give thee. And Solomon said to God: Thou hast shewn great kindness to my father David: and hast made me king in his stead. Now therefore, O Lord God, let thy word be fulfilled, which thou hast promised to David my father: for thou hast made me king over thy great people, which is as innumerable as the dust of the earth. Give me wisdom and knowledge that I may come in and go out before thy people: for who can worthily judge this thy people, which is so great?

And God said to Solomon: Because this choice hath pleased thy heart, and thou hast not asked riches, and wealth, and glory, nor the lives of them that hate thee, nor many days of life: but hast asked wisdom and knowledge, to be able to judge my people, over which I have made thee king, Wisdom and knowledge are granted to thee: and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and glory, so that none of the kings before thee, nor after thee, shall be like thee.¹⁰¹

“We must pray for our new Tsar,” concluded the Archbishop, “whomever he may prove to be, that, like Solomon, he will seek the will of God and the good of the people over whom God has called him to rule, rather than to preferentially serve himself and his immediate friends.”

“We must also be praying specifically for Doctor Romanov, the heir apparent,” said Filaret. “He appears to be a man of stellar character and profound Faith. Please remember, gentlemen, that Doctor Romanov was Orthodox in his youth, became Catholic on the threshold of young adulthood, and will be uniquely able to bridge the remaining gaps as we Orthodox grow into complete union with our Catholic brethren.”

“And we must begin praying for our Pope, too,” added President Polzin. “We Orthodox are not accustomed to this, but it is clearly the will of God. We must pray that the Holy Father will soon plan his first visit to Russia.”

All nodded in agreement, except the aide, who pretended not to have heard these closing remarks. And after that, they departed in silence, contemplating the momentous work before them and being moved to seek the face of God in prayer and supplication.

¹⁰¹ 2 Chronicles 1:7-12, DRV.