



Future of Orthodoxy

...For I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham...

The crown of Imperial Russia was one of the most resplendent in the world, shining with precious jewels and symbolizing a mighty nation that covered one-sixth of the globe. But in the beginning of the 20th century, when the forces of evil arose to topple this mighty nation, the bastion of Orthodoxy, then even more resplendently shone the crown of Holy Russia, made of the purest gold of the New Martyrs and Confessors. And adorning this unique and magnificent crown were the most sparkling and wondrous jewels of all: the royal children-martyrs.

The Romanov children—the Grand Duchesses Olga, Tatiana, Maria, Anastasia and the heir, Grand



Duke Alexei—were extraordinary in their ordinariness. Despite having access to all possible worldly goods, they lived and were brought up like

ordinary children. Even more amazingly, despite the godless and apostate trends of the times, the children grew up to be pious god-fearing and endowed with all manner of Christian virtue. Their royal father ensured that their up-

bringing would be similar to his own: they were to be taught their lessons, learn their prayers, allowed to play, and even fight and be moderately naughty. Thus they were brought up like normal, healthy Russian children, in an atmosphere of discipline, orderliness and

...continued on page 12

Contents

The Panagia Senthenayia.....	2
Socrates' Triple Test.....	4
They are Responsive to the Needs of Men	4
The Monks and the Grapes	7
How is it?.....	8
Refined Silver.....	8
“Batushka, Say Amen”.....	9
How to Live in a Family.....	10
Let Every Breath Praise the Lord.....	11
The Holy Royal Martyrs.....	12

The Panagia Senthenayia - the miracle in Syria

In the year 2004, there was a wealthy young Saudi Arabian Muslim man. He and his wife couldn't have children and the man was pressured by his family to take another wife. He loved his wife, however, and she loved him, so he didn't want to take another wife. Being exhausted and downhearted, he decided to take a break and go on a vacation with his wife. Their Muslim driver noticed that they were always sad about something. He asked them what their sorrow was, and they told him their trouble. The driver told them about an

Orthodox monastery of the Panagia Senthenayia and about many barren couples that had gone there and got children. He also assured them that Muslims have also gotten children after going there. The couple went to the monastery, met the Gerontissa, and the wife was given a little piece of the wick from the oil lamp in front of the Panagia's icon to eat as a blessing. When they returned home, his wife was pregnant, and in nine months she gave birth to a healthy and charming baby boy. The young man, filled with joy, called the driver to take him back to the monastery, because he wanted to give 80,000 dollars as a gift to the



nuns. He also promised to give 20,000 dollars to the driver himself. The driver was not a good man, however, so he called his two friends and told them to

come with him to kill the young man and divide the large sum of money their victim would have on himself. They picked him up at the Damascus airport, and after reaching a remote highway, did as they planned;

they killed him and chopped off his head, arms, and legs and put them in a plastic garbage bag. Blinded by their passion, instead of leaving the bag, they took it with them, in the trunk of their car. Suddenly, as they were driving on the highway, the car's engine broke down. They were forced to stop and see what was going on. A man was driving by in another car and he asked them if they needed help. They, of course, refused and told him to leave. The other man then saw blood dripping out of the trunk of the broken car. He immediately called the police and left in his car. The police arrived and demanded that they open the trunk. The men didn't want to, but the officers made them open it. As soon as the trunk door opened, the man whom they killed came out alive, with his head, arms, legs, and body all reconnected, and he shouted to the shocked murderers and the police that the Panagia had saved him. Seeing this, the three criminals immediately lost their minds and were handcuffed by the police. As they were being taken away to the asylum, they started screaming and raving that it was not possible that the man whom they themselves killed, beheaded, and dissected could

be alive now. The Saudi Arabian man later explained what happened to him after he was killed. When his head was cut off, his soul left his body and went higher and higher, and then he saw the Lady who was in the icon of the Panagia Senthenayia, standing in the air. She told him, "It is not yet your time. I will take you back." She brought his soul back to his body, re-joined his members, and sewed him up very quickly. As soon as She finished sewing up his neck, the door of the trunk was opened by the police and he came out, showing them the lines where he had just been sewn up.

Later he was taken to the hospital and examined by doctors, who were amazed and confirmed that he had really been cut into separate pieces and then successfully re-joined. This was an enormous miracle and the doctors were astonished at seeing it proven with their own eyes. The Saudi Arabian continuously confessed that the Panagia had re-joined his body and resurrected him with the help of Her Son.

(Author: Age 15)

Socrates' Triple Test

One day, an acquaintance met the great philosopher Socrates and said, "Do you know what I just heard about your friend?"

"Hold on a minute", Socrates replied, "before you tell me anything, I'd like you to pass a little test. It's called the Triple Filter Test."

"Triple Filter?"

"That's right", Socrates continued, "before you talk to me about my friend, it might be a good idea to take a moment and filter what you're going to say. That's why I call it the Triple Filter Test. The First Filter is Truth. Have you made absolutely sure that what you're about to tell me is true?"

"No", said the man, "actually I just heard it and..."

"All right," said Socrates, "So you don't really know if it's true or not. Now let's try the Second Filter, the Filter of Goodness. Is what you are about to tell me about my friend something good?"

"No, on the contrary..."

"So," Socrates continued, "you want to tell me something bad about him, but you're not certain that it's true. You may still pass the test, though, because there is one filter

left: The Filter of Usefulness. Is what you want to tell me about my friend going to be useful to me?"

"No, not really".

"Well", concluded Socrates, "if what you want to tell me is neither true, good or even useful, why tell it to me at all?"

(Author: Age 15)

They are Responsive to the Needs of Men

"Holiness is not simply righteousness, for which the righteous are accounted worthy to enjoy blessedness in the Kingdom of God, but rather such a height of righteousness that men are so filled with the Grace of God that it flows from them and out upon those who are in fellowship with them. Great is their blessedness, which proceeds from love for God; they are responsive to the needs of men and to their supplications, and become mediators and intercessors for them before God."

-Saint John Maximovitch

Saint John, without question, falls into that category. If he didn't, I and many others would not exist. Saint John has helped many people have children. And we all know that he adopted and raised many orphan children. As a bishop once said, "Saint John cares for children before the womb, in the womb, and after the womb."

I encourage you all to buy and read (if you haven't already) *Man of God: Saint John of Shanghai and San Francisco* and *Lantern of Grace*.

Saint John, as we all know, was an ascetic. The Russian verb, wear, "*носить*" also means "to carry." People would give him shoes; he would thank them and carry the shoes. They would complain to the Metropolitan, and the following is one of Saint John's replies to the Metropolitan: "Your instructions were carried out. You wrote that I should use the shoes, but did not write that I should wear them on my feet, and so I used them, i.e., carried them. But now, I shall wear them." A bishop once told me, my family and a few others the

following stories:

"In the space of fifteen years, Saint John cared for 2800 orphan children. If you do the math on that, on an annual basis, that's a lot of children every year. Some of the orphans still attend the church of Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk, which is where Saint John's cell is located [and where his San Francisco orphanage was]. There aren't many of them left now, but some still do attend there.



"I was His Favorite"

"The photo in this book called *Lantern of Grace* [p. 176, or in the first print p.132] is the most well-known photo of Saint John. You can all see the beautiful expression on his face. He's looking at his orphan children.

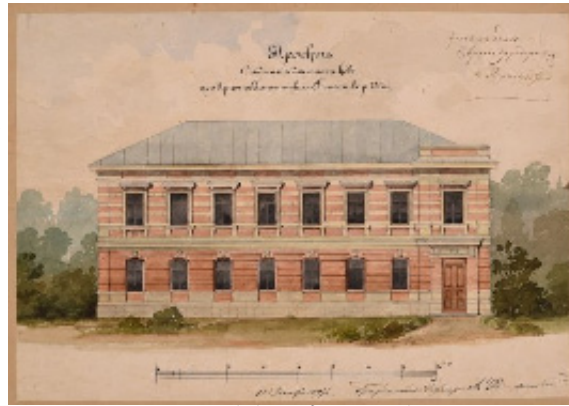
"Let's say I was working for a newspaper, and the editor of the newspaper asked me to write a caption for that photo. The title I would give that photo would be 'I was His Favorite.' Because anyone who looks at you with that much love and regard would make you feel that you are his favorite.

"On my first Pascha when it



phans were sitting on my right and one on my left. I asked them to tell me what it was like for them to be at the orphanage with Saint John and they said, ‘Well, he used to sneak into the dorm when everyone was asleep, tuck everyone in, bless everyone, and make sure every single one of us was properly covered. He was like a wonderful mother to all of us.’ When all the stories were all finished, the lady nearest to my right whispered to me, ‘I was his favorite.’ The lady directly across from her overheard this assertion, and she looked with a kind of frown at her fellow alumni from the orphanage across the table and said, ‘You were not! I was his favorite.’ and the lady one down from the one on my right

came time to break the fast and enjoy all the wonderful Easter treats that are made, we were all seated at a table, and two or-



Saint Tikhon's Orphanage

rose up from her chair with great confidence and said to her fellow alumni from the orphanage, ‘I hate do disappoint the two of you, but he personally told me that I was his favorite.’ and that lady was named Valentina.

“In 2008 Valentina told a family that was visiting from Canada, ‘When I was a little girl around 7 or 8 [she was born around 1930] because I didn’t have a regular family, I sometimes suffered from depression. The way I was going to fix my problem was I was going to reinvent myself, and in doing so, I would have no history of sorrows. So, I went to Saint John and said, “Vladika, I am no longer going to be Valentina.” He looked

at me, and he studied me, and he knew exactly what was going on in my heart. So, he said, “We have to pray about that, Young Lady. Then tomorrow, you and I are going to

have a little talk after Liturgy.” So, we prayed, and we prayed for a long time, and at the end of the prayer, Saint John blessed me. So, after Liturgy the next day we sat down, and Saint John said, “You know, Valentina, I have many duties during the day.” and he

started to list off all the things he had to do during the day and his day was full from morning until evening. He had no time to himself. Then he said, “Do you know that in the midst of all these duties, I have one activity that brings me very great joy. Do you know what that is?” “No, Vladika. What is it?” “It’s when I visit my orphan children here at the orphanage. And out of all my orphan children, you are my favorite. Now, what am I going to do if my favorite little Valentina has suddenly become somebody I no longer recognize? I don’t even know. I’m going to be very, very sad. Would you be the reason for me to be sad?” “Oh no, Vladika” “Then would you, for my sake, please remain Valentina?” “For you, Vladika, OK.” ‘

“I went to the parish where Valentina attended. It’s in a little city called Burlingame; it’s about fifteen minutes south of San Francisco. It was their parish feastday, and I joined her at the table for lunch after the Liturgy. I said, ‘Is it really true that Saint John told you that you were his favorite?’ and she said, ‘Well, of course, he told me I was his favorite.’ and she reached around her neck and pulled up on the end of a chain little heart-shaped locket. She opened it, and

inside was a photo of Saint John’s father, Boris, and his mother, Glafira, and Valentina said, proudly, ‘Saint John personally gave this to me, and all the other orphans are jealous.’

“So, every time I see that beautiful photo of Saint John smiling, I always think of ‘I was his favorite.’ A story I will never forget.”

(Author: I., age 14)

The Monks and the Grapes



Once there was an elder who received a basket of delicious, sweet grapes from a kind peasant. The elder thought of an old hermit who was in much more need of the grapes. After the elder brought the grapes to the hermit, the hermit thought of someone who needed the grapes more. Because they make you strong, he took them to a monk working in the field. When the monk in the field received the grapes, he thought of the monk shepherding high in the mountains.

Upon receiving the grapes high in the mountains, the father thought



of a hermit that needed the grapes more than him. The grapes were passed from monk to

monk as each father put the needs of their fellow monks above their own.

Eventually, the grapes were given to the elder once more. The elder called all the holy fathers together, reminding them always to put the needs of others above their own needs.

These really were the grapes of true love!

(Author: A., age 12)

How is it?

How is it that a \$20 bill looks so big when you take it to church, but so small when you take it to the mall?

How is it that a couple of hours spent at church seem so long, but how short they are when watching a movie?

How is it that we get thrilled when a game goes into extra innings, but we complain when a service is longer than usual?

How is it that we find it hard to

read a chapter in the Bible while we find it so easy to read a hundred pages of a best-selling novel?

How is it that people want to get a front seat at a game or concert, but insist on standing at the back of the church during the services?

How is it that we need two- or three-weeks' advance notice to fit a church event into our schedule, but we can adjust our schedule for other events at the last moment?

How is it that people find it difficult to learn a simple Gospel passage well enough to tell other people, while these same people have no problem understanding and repeating gossip?

How is it that we follow our doctor's orders, but disregard what our priest tells us?

(Author: X., age 15)

Refined Silver

“He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver.” (Malachi 3:3)

This verse puzzled some women at a Bible study and they wondered

what this statement meant about the character and nature of God. One of the women offered to find out the process of refining silver and get back to the group at the next Bible study.

That week, the woman called a silversmith and made an appointment to watch him at work. She didn't mention anything about the reason for her interest beyond her curiosity about the process of refining silver.

As she watched the silversmith, he held a piece of silver over the fire and let it heat up. He explained that in refining silver, one needed to hold the silver in the middle of the fire where the flames are hottest as to burn away all the impurities.

The woman thought about God holding us in such a hot spot, as she thought again about the verse: "He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver." She asked the silversmith if it was true that he had to sit there in front of the fire the whole time. The man answered yes, he not only had to sit there holding the silver, but he



had to keep his eyes on the silver the entire time it was in the fire. If the silver was left for a moment too long in the flames, it would be destroyed.

The woman was silent for a moment. Then she asked the Silversmith, "How do you know when the silver is fully refined?"

He smiled at her and answered, "Oh, that's easy- when I see My image in it".

(Author: L., age 15)

Batushka*, Say Amen!

"There was once a little boy holding a staff for Saint John who was giving a sermon here at the Old Cathedral [The bishop was telling these stories at the Old Cathedral.] The little boy was next to Saint John, and his sermon just kept going and going. So, in order to give him a little bit of a hint, the little boy tugged gently on Saint John's vestments. But, Saint John just smiled at him and continued with his sermon. The little boy took a deep breath and determined to endure until the end. But the sermon just kept going and

*Batushka means "Father" in Russian

going and going. The little boy's patience meter started going, 90, 80, 70, 60... So, this time, he looked up at Saint John and tugged with a little more emphasis on Saint John's vestments. Saint John looked at him, repeated the smile, patted him on the head, and continued his sermon. The little boy thought, 'He didn't get the hint.' So, he took another deep breath and determined to endure until the end. But, Saint John's comments just kept going and going and going. Finally, the little boy's patience meter went all the way down to zero, and there was no refill available. So, this time he yanked on Saint John's vestments. Saint John looked at him and said, 'What is it, young man?' This tiny little boy looked up and said, '*Батюшка, скажи аминь!*' which is Russian for 'Father, say amen!' So, I will say amen and wish you all a blessed day and may he intercede for you all."

(Author: I., age 14)

How to live in a family

There was an old man who had five sons. When he felt that his time

was near, he decided to give his children some advice for their future life and called them to his bedside. He took a bundle of twigs and told his oldest son to crack the bundle in half. However, even though he tried hard, the son could not break it. Neither could any of his brothers. Then, the father told them to untie the bundle. They each took a stick and easily broke every one of them.

The father then told his sons, "This is what will happen to you. If you stay together, help one another, and always agree with one another, no one will be able to separate you and break your brotherly bond. However, if you leave one another, separate from one another, and do not live in peace and love, you will be easily broken and ruined. I want you to always keep your brotherly love and to always help each other."

The man's sons listened to him, and after he died, always took care of one another, and helped each other. By heeding their father's advice, they always lived happily and peacefully.

...Let Every Breath Praise the Lord...

I live on a small farm with my five siblings. We have goats, chickens, and many cats. It is my chore to give water and food to the goats. One day, after I came back from the



Pascha Service in the morning, I went to do my chores at the animals. While I was filling the buckets up with water, I said, "Christ is Risen!". And to my surprise, all of the goats stood up and said, "me-e-e-e-e!". I believe that they said, "Truly He is Risen!"

(Autor: M., age 12)

Pentecost is such an important event that even the ants keep the feast of Pentecost and do not work on this day. This is how I found out about

it. In the late morning on the Feast Day, I went to an ant hole to feed them. I like to feed the ants and watch them take the food to their underground cellars.

The weather was sunny, the sky was clear and blue, and it was not windy at all. Then I saw that there were no ants there! I put some leaves right outside the hole, where they could probably smell them, and they still did not come out! I came out to look at the anthill now and then, and to see whether the ants had come. They did not come all day long. The next day I came out at about the same time in the morning and I saw ants gathering the leaves and putting them into their hole. Great is the Feast of Pentecost!

(Author: D., age 8)

The Holy Royal Martyrs...

continued from page 1

almost ascetic simplicity.

They also grew up in an atmosphere of extraordinary spiritual love. Their parents' marriage was truly blessed in heaven, and God granted the Imperial pair that rare gem of happiness on earth—an idyllic union, so that during the first ten years of their marriage they were blissfully happy, both in their union and in their family life, and all the children were born into this atmosphere of love and tenderness. Moreover, both parents were deeply religious and represented the ideal of both aspects of Orthodoxy—by birth and through conversion.

Tsar Nicholas was, of course, born Orthodox, grew up in a strongly Orthodox atmosphere and had a nearly thousand-year-old heritage of Orthodoxy behind him. This heritage blossomed in him because of his innate qualities: great piety, modesty, tenderness of soul, generosity, trustiness, love of all of God's creatures. And this was the heritage which he passed on to his children.

The Empress Alexandra, though born Lutheran, grew up in a family that was also very religious. For this reason, and due to the sincerity and honesty with which she lived her faith, for a long time she could not agree to convert to another

religion, even despite her great love for the Tsar. It was only after acquiring a deep understanding of Orthodoxy as the one true Faith that she was able to convert. However, when the Empress embraced Orthodoxy, she did so completely, with all the sincerity and honesty of her soul, so that she truly lived as an Orthodox Christian. It was this sincerity and honesty of faith which she passed on to her children and which was part of the fabric of their daily lives.



The Romanov children were beautiful—not only in their outward appearance, which was striking, but primarily in their inner qualities. From their father they inherited the traits of kindness, modesty, simplicity, and unshakeable sense of duty and an all-consuming love for their homeland. From their mother they inherited deep faith, straightforwardness, self-discipline and strength of spirit. The Empress herself abhorred idleness and taught her children to be fruitfully engaged at all times. When World War I began, the Empress and her four daughters participated wholeheartedly in the war effort: they were tireless in visiting military hospitals and bringing cheer and comfort to the wounded soldiers. The Empress and the two older daughters even qualified as

Sisters of Mercy and performed the often anguishing tasks of surgical nurses. “The higher a person’s position in society,” the Tsar-Martyr used to say, “the more he should help others without ever reminding them of his position.” Being himself a prime example of gentleness and attentiveness to the needs of others, the Tsar-Martyr brought up his children to be the same.

Within the framework of collective family qualities, the royal children were quite individual in character and temperament.

Olga, the oldest daughter, born in 1895, was fair, with golden-brown hair (the lightest in the family) and beautiful blue eyes. She was innocent, modest, sincere and kind. She liked simplicity and paid little attention to dress. She was most similar to her father, whom she loved better than anyone else. She had a quick mind and possessed the virtue of reasoning. According to her tutors, she had a “crystal” soul and a bright smile; inner joy radiated from her and had an uplifting effect on those around her. Like her father, Olga deeply loved Russia and the Russian people. When faced with the possibility of marriage to a foreign prince, she flatly refused, saying, “I do not want to ever leave Russia. I am Russian and wish to remain so.” Thus she stayed on in her homeland to receive the crown of martyrdom.

Tatiana, the second daughter, born in 1897, was a tall, thin and elegant girl. She had a darker complexion than the oth-

ers. She was somewhat reserved, dutiful and pensive; she was often more decided in her opinions than her sisters. She was a talented pianist and also painted and embroidered well. Tatiana was her mother’s favorite, having inherited the Empress’ nobleness and sense of discipline. The younger children nicknamed Tatiana “the Governess.”

Maria, the third daughter, born in 1899, was strong, broadly-built and good looking, with light gray eyes. She could

Submissions

We appreciate and accept all articles with a theme that supports the Orthodox Faith from youth of all ages. The word limit for all articles is 450 words. The deadline for all articles is the last Sunday of each month. All youth of the age of twelve or above, is asked to send articles digitally to the following email:

futureoforthodoxy@gmail.com

All children under the age of 12, please give your articles to Michael Larsen, or you may also send your articles by email, or send them to the following address:

Michael Larsen, Chief Editor
23411 E. Orville St.
Florence AZ 85132



paint and draw, and played the piano competently. She was very fond of children and inclined to domesticity, and would have made an excellent wife and mother. Maria had the rare quality of being perfectly happy in all surroundings, even when the family was imprisoned in Tobolsk. For this reason she was chosen by her parents to accom-



The Royal Martyr Children: Olga, Tatiana, Maria, Anastasia, and Alexis

pany them when they were forced to separate from the family and embark upon their last fateful journey to Ekaterinburg.

Anastasia, the youngest daughter, born in 1901, was initially a tomboy and the family clown. She was shorter than the others, had a straight nose and beautiful gray eyes. Refined and witty, she had the talent to make everyone laugh. She was kind and loved animals. She had a small dog of Japanese breed, whom the whole family loved. Anastasia carried this dog in her arms when she went down into the cellar at Ekaterinburg on the fateful night of July 4th, and the little dog was killed together with her.

Alexei, the heir apparent, was a very special child. He was born in 1904, in response to prayers offered by the Imperial family and the entire faithful populace during the days of glorification of Saint Sera-

phim of Sarov, asking God to grant Russia an heir. However, though born the heir to the throne of the Russian Empire, Alexei could not inherit it, since Russia was already set on its apocalyptic course; instead, he inherited an incomparably higher kingdom—the Kingdom of Heaven.

Alexei was destined for martyrdom from the moment of his birth. He was born with the dreaded illness of hemophilia, which showed up when he was only six weeks old, and which caused him great pain and suffering for the entire 14 years of his brief life. It was also the cause of the greatest anguish for his family, especially his parents, and was a contributing factor to the fall of the Empire. And yet this young boy bore his terrible burden with great fortitude, silently and without grumbling, in a true Christian manner. At the same time he was like any other boy: he

enjoyed games and horseplay, engaged in outdoor activities with other boys whenever possible, loved to go sailing with his father, teased his sisters, liked to make boats and other paper models, and, though a very clever boy, was not fond of books. He had a kind heart, liked to give presents to everyone, and he loved animals. He was a lively and cheerful child, a universal favorite, beloved by all with whom he came into contact. His mother loved him greatly, suffering a mother's indescribable anguish over his pains and his illness.

God granted these extraordinary royal children a spiritually royal fate on earth: after having spent their childhood and youth in a most glorious Orthodox way of life, in absolute innocence and purity, they were ready for the crowning touch—the shining crown of martyrdom. Their Calvary began on March 2, 1917, the day of the Tsar-Martyr's abdication—first in their palace at Tsarskoye Selo, then at the Governor's house in Tobolsk, and finally, at the Ipatyev house—the “House of Special Purpose.” In Ekaterinburg, they suffered increasing stages of harassment, humiliation and deprivation. Their prison guards became progressively more insolent, heartless and brutal, subjecting them to insults, mockery and torment. The royal martyrs bore it all with great fortitude, strength of spirit, true Christian humility and total acceptance of the will of God. They sought solace in church services, home prayers and spiritual reading. They were heinously murdered, these pure and innocent children, in the night of July 4,

1918, and from the blood-soaked cellar in Ekaterinburg they passed triumphantly into the royal palace of the King of Heaven.

More than a century separates us from these holy children-martyrs, and yet they are very close to us, very real to us, for we, the last Christians, have much in common with them. They lived at the threshold of the godless Communist rule—that seventh apocalyptic “king” of Revelation, who would “continue for a short space,” while we live at the threshold of the coming of Antichrist—the beast who is the eighth (Rev. 17:10-11). They were surrounded by a godless, totally apostate society, while we live in a godless, totally apostate world. And yet, they serve as a shining example to us, Orthodox children and parents who strive to raise Orthodox children in a pagan world, that with the help of God and through the intercession of His righteous ones, it is still possible to live a truly Christian life and raise a truly Christian family, even in our most evil modern times.

O holy Royal Martyrs Nicholas, Alexandra, Alexei, Olga, Tatiana, Maria and Anastasia, pray to God for us, that we, too, when the hour of trial comes upon us, may remain faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Adapted by M.S.L. (age 12) from Matushka Natalia Sheniloff, “Russia's Crown Jewels: The Royal Martyr Children”, <https://orthochristian.com/62837.html>

*Thank you very much
for reading this newsletter!*

If you want to subscribe, donate, or contact us
look us up on our website:

futureoforthodoxy.com

Future of Orthodoxy
Volume 1, Number 2
5th Sunday of Matthew
July 12, 2020