



### ***If you want to find perfect love...***

*And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions. And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? And Jesus looking upon them saith: With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.*

Mark 10, 17-27

**St. Cosmas of Aetolia**, who toured occupied Greece around 1750, establishing schools, gives us the price of heaven. Starting with perfect love, he says:

“If you want to find perfect love, go sell all your belongings, give them to the poor, go where you find a master and become a slave. Can you do this and be perfect?”

“You say this is too heavy? Then do something else. Don’t sell yourself as a slave. Just sell your belongings and give them all to the poor. Can you do it? Or do you find this too heavy a task?”

“All right, you cannot give away all your belongings. Then give half, or a third, or a fifth. Is even this too heavy? Then give one tenth. Can you do that? Is it still too heavy?”

“How about this. Don’t sell yourself as slave. Don’t give a penny to the poor. Only do this. Don’t take your poor brother’s coat, don’t take his bread, don’t persecute him, don’t eat him alive. If you don’t want to do him any good, at least do him no harm. Just leave him alone. Is this also too heavy?”

“You say you want to be saved. But how? How can we be saved if everything we are called to do is too heavy? We descend and descend until there is no place further down. God is merciful, yes, but he also has an iron rod.”

– *St. Cosmas of Aetolia*

*The only prominent public figure to condemn the [anti-semitic] pogroms [during the civil war that followed the Bolshevik revolution] openly and unequivocally was the head of the Orthodox Church, Patriarch Tikhon.*

– *Richard Pipes, Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime (Harville Press, 1994)*

“The Fools Theodore and Nicholas lived in Novgorod. A great bridge joined two sections of the city, Torgova and Sofia. On this bridge many horrible fights broke out between the rival families of either side of the river. The bishop often had to rush to the bridge and put a stop to the violence. Then the Holy Fools Theodore and Nicholas began to fight on the bridge, to demonstrate, as only Fools can, the stupidity of violence. Theodore would not let Nicholas cross over, and vice versa. Then a nobleman invited Theodore to cross over and visit him. And Theodore, after much begging, agreed. He crossed over, and suddenly Nicholas appeared. Nicholas chased Theodore along the bank of the Volkhov River, then Theodore ran right onto the river. Nicholas rushed into a nearby garden and grabbed a head of cabbage, and then he too ran onto the river. And Nick hurled the cabbage at Ted. Many people witnessed this event. And Blessed Nicholas was given the name ‘Kochanov’ meaning ‘cabbage head’.”

In 1944, the Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko’s mother took him from Siberia to Moscow. They were among those who witnessed a procession of twenty-thousand German war prisoners marching through the streets of Moscow:

The pavements swarmed with onlookers, cordoned off by soldiers and police. The crowd was mostly women — Russian women with hands roughened by hard work, lips untouched by lipstick, and with thin hunched shoulders which had borne half of the burden of the war. Every one of them must have had a father or a husband, a brother or a son killed by the Germans. They gazed with hatred in the direction from which the column was to appear.

At last we saw it. The generals marched at the head, massive chins stuck out, lips folded disdainfully, their whole demeanor meant to show superiority over their plebian victors.

“They smell of perfume, the bastards,” someone in the crowd said with hatred. The women were clenching their fists. The soldiers and policemen had all they could do to hold them back.

All at once something happened to them. They saw German soldiers, thin, unshaven, wearing dirty blood-stained bandages, hobbling on crutches or leaning on the shoulders of their comrades; the soldiers walked with their heads down. The street became dead silent — the only sound was the

shuffling of boots and the thumping of crutches.

Then I saw an elderly woman in broken-down boots push herself forward and touch a policeman's shoulder, saying, "Let me through." There must have been something about her that made him step aside. She went up to the column, took from inside her coat something wrapped in a colored handkerchief and unfolded it. It was a crust of black bread. She pushed it awkwardly into the pocket of a soldier, so exhausted that he was tottering on his feet. And now from every side women were running toward the soldiers, pushing into their hands bread, cigarettes, whatever they had. **The soldiers were no longer enemies. They were people.**

– *A Precocious Autobiography*, Yevgeny Yevtushenko, Collins, London

Source: <http://www.incommunion.org/2004/10/14/stories/>