

## Chapter 9

### Fyodor Dostoevskii

After the War of 1812, Mikhail Dostoevskii returned home from the battlefield to settle on the outskirts of Moscow. Mikhail's father was an Orthodox priest and although Mikhail had studied theology at seminary he discerned that his calling was to the medical profession rather than to the ministry. He was working in Moscow as a doctor in a hospital for the poor when in 1819 he married Anna. Together the Dostoevskii's would raise seven children, the second of whom, born on October 30, 1821, they called Fyodor.

The Dostoevskii household was the very picture of pious devotion. Saturday evenings were spent at the hospital chapel where the children heard the preaching of Christian sermons while Sunday mornings were devoted to visiting Moscow Cathedrals and Kremlin Churches where they would sing hymns, hear more sermons, and say their prayers. Fyodor recalled how "*In our family, we knew the Gospels from our earliest childhood.*" Together, the Dostoevskii family would read devotions from the book of 'One Hundred and Four Stories From the Old and New Testaments' and by the age of eight, Fyodor had already himself read through the Old Testament book of Job. Every October, the family would pack up and travel the eighty kilometres north to the Church of the Holy Trinity at the Sergei Radonezhskii Monastery where Dmitrii Donskoi once visited with the saintly abbot before his historic battle on the Field of Kulikovo. There they would spend two days with other Orthodox faithful celebrating the Christian faith and commemorating the Russian liberation from Mongol captivity.

At the age of sixteen, Fyodor followed his older brother to St. Petersburg to enrol in the St. Petersburg Academy of Military Engineers. There Fyodor was able to receive a respectable profession. But in 1844, Fyodor, a sub-lieutenant in the Imperial Russian Army, resigned his military commission and set out in pursuit of a career in the field that had always captured his imagination – literature. It was a calling ideally suited to his constitution, for Fyodor suffered from occasional mild epileptic seizures.

And so, in the winter of 1844-45, Fyodor, at the age of twenty-four, wrote his first novel. It was called simply *Poor Folk* and it became an instant success. Fyodor did not address any questions of deep religious or moral significance in this, his very first

publication but by the time he would sit down to write his last novel, these would be the dominant issues around which his book would revolve. But between these two books, there was much to be learned, much to suffer and a whole life to be lived.

Suddenly young Fyodor was an acclaimed writer, a rising star on the Russian literary scene. Around that time, Fyodor became acquainted with the Petrashevskii Circle, a group of political radicals holding secret meetings, reading illegal publications and planning socialist ideas for Russia's future. One of their members, Belinsky, a literary critic, would come to have a powerful impact upon the young novice author. Fyodor recalled how:

*“We were infected by the ideas of the theoretical socialism of that time, all those new ideas in St. Petersburg... seemed to us to express the highest levels of holiness and morality and most importantly, we saw them as universal, being a law for all of mankind without exception. Long before the Paris revolution of 1848, we were captivated by the fascinating influence of these ideas. By 1846, I was already devoted to the full truth of the coming ‘new world’ and to all the holiness of the future communist society.”*

The group was a new generation of Russian intellectuals animated by the atheistic philosophy of the French Revolution. They did not know all that their fathers had gone through, the bloodshed, the loss and the sacrifices they made to oppose this philosophy in its incarnate form. Although their hearts were set on the return of paradise to earth, they hoped and expected, as the Frenchmen before them, to accomplish this without the aid and assistance of God. In such company, Fyodor's Christian faith was often seen as unwelcome, superfluous and even as a betrayal of their liberal ideology. “Why have you mixed up Christ in all of this?” the atheist Belinsky would indignantly ask of Fyodor.

Fyodor's faith was challenged. Could the political program of the Petrashevists really be the modern outworking of the Christian faith or were they overlooking some very significant factors, such as Easter and the power of the resurrected and living Christ. Belinsky sought to sanctify the political radicalism of the Petrashevists by acclaiming a dead Jesus as the original forbearer of their own philosophical ideas. “He was the first to

bring to people the teaching of liberty, equality, and charity....” Belinsky would insist, adding that the French philosopher, “Voltaire was more the son of Christ than all your priests and patriarchs combined!” Although Belinsky had accepted the Christ of history and even honoured him as a wonderful human being, he had not accepted the Christ of faith, and could not, therefore, honour Him as God and Saviour.

Fyodor had grown up a faithful churchgoer, reading the Scriptures, praying, and unquestioningly accepting the truths of the Bible. In contrast to his physical development, however, as he grew into manhood, his spiritual development had not progressed far beyond a child’s level. The tradition and pageantry of his Orthodox faith began to crumble under the force of seemingly irrefutable philosophical arguments piled up one by one against his beliefs until they menacingly towered over what suddenly seemed to him as his simple and stupid child like faith. The young Fyodor’s foray into the intellectual jungle of political radicalism was undertaken without an adequate support in serious Christian theological reflection and left him vulnerable and unable to respond to the modern philosophical challenges to Christianity being offered by the Petrashevists. The irrefutable attacks on his faith were therefore felt all the more sorely as they cut all the more deeply into his tender soul. Never before had his faith been so strongly tested. Little by little, he began to think more and more like the Petrashevists. Fyodor later confessed that, *“I passionately accepted all the doctrines of Belinsky and transformed myself into a western liberal, and I almost lost Christ.”*

Then one day, all of a sudden the intellectual and spiritual clash between the politics of French socialism and the religion of the Christian faith abruptly ceased. On April the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1849, Dostoevsky, together with thirty-two other members of the Petrashevskii Circle was arrested and imprisoned in the Petropavlovsky Fortress.

The sentence delivered by the Imperial Court upon most of the members was death by firing squad. After an eight month prison term in the stony fortress on the north bank of the Neva River in St. Petersburg, on a cold day in December, three days before Christmas, Dostoevsky and the others were taken by carriage to the Semenovskiy Parade ground where their sentences were read out to them. Fyodor, walking up to one of his comrades spoke to him saying, *“We will soon be with Christ.”* But his atheist friend answered, “No, but we will soon be a handful of dust.”

Fyodor stood fourth in the line of men sentenced to death awaiting their execution. The first three were called out to present themselves before the firing squad. The sergeant was already giving the orders: “Get ready...aim...,” when all of a sudden an officer halted the execution with a notice from the Tsar waving in his hand. The officer announced that the Tsar had absolved all the members of the Petrashevsky Circle from their penalty of death. Instead, their sentences were remitted to a ten year exile to Siberia.

The next eighteen days were spent on a journey by rail to the Siberian prison in Omsk. On a cold January day, Dostoevskii finally lay down on his prison cot upon which he would sleep, read and pray for the next four years. It was his ultimate disgrace. But Fyodor resolved that he would use the opportunity of living in close quarters with convicted criminals to gather material for his next novel— *Notes from the House of the Dead*. Fyodor recalled how during the week of Easter:

*“we went two or three times a day to a church not far from the prison. I had not been in church for a long time. The Lent services familiar to me from my early childhood in my father’s house – the solemn prayers, the prostrations, all stirred in me the memory of things long, long past and awoke my earliest impressions to fresh life. I remember so clearly how happy I was when in the morning we were marched off to God’s house, treading the frozen earth, under an escort of soldiers with loaded muskets. The escort remained outside the church...then I recalled how as a child I used to look at the common people who stood huddled at the door...and now I myself stood in the ranks of the common people – no, not even that, for we were outcasts and in chains. Everyone shunned us. We were feared and alms were slipped into our hands as though we were beggars. I remember that all this gave me the strange sensation of a refined and subtle pleasure. “So be it,” I thought.... The convicts prayed with deep fervour. Every one had with him his poor farthing for a little candle or for the collection for church expenses. “I too*

*am a man,” each of them said, perhaps, as he gave his offering. In God’s eyes, we were all equal.”*

Fyodor again began to diligently read his New Testament. It was the only literature the prisoners were allowed to have with them. And so every day, as he was able, Fyodor would open the little book and learn all over again the principles of his faith. There was a young Muslim man among the prisoners named Ali whom Fyodor had befriended and who had always wanted to learn to read Russian. Fyodor began to teach Ali how to read using the only book that was available - the Russian New Testament. As they read through the New Testament together, Ali found himself drawn more and more to the truths of the Christian message until he decided that he too wanted to trust the Saviour and so become a Christian.

On another occasion, there was a young ten-year-old girl who had become acquainted with Fyodor in the prison hospital as she came to visit her dying father. One day while outside the prison compound, she recognized Fyodor as he was passing by in his chains and under escort. She ran up to him with a kopeck, “There, poor unfortunate,” she said, “take a kopeck for Christ’s sake.” The young Russian girl’s little copper kopeck suddenly became one of Fyodor’s most valued and dear possessions.

In 1854, Dostoevskii was released from prison. He was thirty-three years old. As part of his sentence, he was required to remain in Siberia and serve out a term of military duty as a regular non-commissioned soldier. He had lost his freedom, he had lost his rank, and the years were passing by. Without a family, without a future and far away from home, he began more and more to reflect on the meaning of his life and the substance of his faith. It was then that Fyodor began to correspond with a Christian lady, N.A Vonfizina who had befriended and tried to encourage him. He responded to her in a letter:

*“I am a child of the age, a child of unbelief and doubt, up till now and until the grave shall cover me. What frightening tortures it cost me and still costs me this thirst to believe, which is all the stronger for the proofs I have against it...but sometimes God sends me such moments, in which I am completely at peace. In such moments I love and find that I*

*am also loved by others and in such moments I have shaped for myself a faith where everything is clear and sacred for me. This faith is very simple, here it is: I believe that nothing is more beautiful, profound, sympathetic, reasonable, manly and more perfect than Christ. And I tell myself with a jealous love not only that is there no one else like Him, but that there can never be anyone else like Him. Even more, if someone proved to me that Christ is outside the truth and that in reality the truth were outside of Christ, then I would still prefer to remain in Christ rather than with the truth.”*

Despite his doubts, Dostoevskii now began to turn his attention more and more heavenward, and to set his gaze once again on Christ. But the road ahead of him on earth would still prove to be a rocky one spotted with temptations, enticements, and snares for the flesh. To walk the narrow path of Christ would require discipline. Dostoevskii would still have to learn the way.

It was neither through university lectures nor through discussions with the Russian intelligentsia, nor through any special miraculous revelation that Dostoevskii, like the prodigal son, made his return home to the Father. Dostoevskii would later recall how it was, *“from the people I received again into my soul Christ whom I had known in the family home when still a child and nearly lost when in my turn I was transformed into a European liberal.”* He would not look to European philosophy again except to expose it for what it was, a dangerous intellectual snare for the Russian soul and spirit.

It was in Siberia that Dostoevskii also met and married his first wife, Maria Dmitriievna Isaev. She was a twenty nine year old widow with a son from her first marriage. Having spent ten years in Siberia, Fyodor served out his sentence and together with his new family made his return to St. Petersburg. The year was 1859.

Upon his return to the city, however, doubt and turmoil once again found their way into Dostoevskii’s heart poisoning the next few years of his life. The springs of joy and new hope that his new circumstances seemed to be promising were suddenly drying

up. The expectations the Dostoevskii's felt at beginning a new life together soon became disappointments and the disappointments soon turned into regrets.

In 1862, Dostoevskii decided to leave his family and country and travel Europe. With his ill wife alone at home, Fyodor set off on his tour. Along the way, he took to gambling, began to smoke, and entered into an affair with a young feminist writer. Having lost all of his money at the roulette wheel, he was forced to sell all his personal valuables at the local pawnshop raising barely enough money just to buy a ticket back home.

Soon after his return, Fyodor penned the following entry into his diary: "*Maria is dead. Will I ever see her again?*" Once again questions of eternity came rushing into his life.

His own personal experiences of tragedy were the well from which Fyodor would draw new material for his next two novels, *The Gambler* and *Crime and Punishment*, both published in 1866.

*Crime and Punishment* was a novel about the life of a young university student named Raskolnikov who has abandoned his studies. Raskolnikov is a young man whose pockets are painfully empty but whose head is filled with strange philosophical ideas. His ideas of right and wrong are shaped by the philosophy of utilitarianism, which judges goodness not on the basis of God's commandments but on the basis of whatever brings the greatest happiness to the greatest number of people. Guided by his philosophical ideas, Raskolnikov decides that the killing of an evil old woman who had been selfishly hoarding up her wealth all for herself could be justified if her wealth were to be used for the benefit of many more others.

Raskolnikov, having substituted foolish philosophies for the holy and eternal laws of God, considers himself justified and commits the murder. It seems to him the most logical, the most rational and the most natural thing to do. His soul, however, soon revolts against him. And guided by the simple faith of his newfound girlfriend Sonya, a former prostitute who becomes a Christian, Raskolnikov later turns himself in to the authorities.

In a tender moment of togetherness, Sonya reads the eleventh chapter of John to Raskolnikov:

*“She was trembling, in a real physical fever...She was getting near the story of the greatest miracle and a feeling of immense triumph came over her. Her voice rang out like a bell; triumph and joy gave it power. The lines danced before her eyes, but she knew what she was reading by heart. At the last verse, “Could not this man who opened the eyes of the blind...” dropping her voice she passionately reproduced the doubt, the reproach and the censure of the blind disbelieving Jews, who in another moment would fall at his feet, as though struck by thunder, sobbing and believing... “And he – he too – is blinded and unbelieving, he too will hear, he too will believe, yes, yes! At once now” she was dreaming, and she was quivering with happy anticipation.*

*“Jesus, therefore again being deeply moved within came to the tomb. It was a cave and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, ‘Take ye away the stone.’ Martha, the sister of him that was dead, said unto Him, ‘Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days.’*

*She laid emphasis on the word four.”*

Raskolnikov is sentenced to seven years in prison in Siberia. Dutifully, Sonya follows Raskolnikov to the Siberian prison. The closing paragraphs of the novel read:

*“Under his pillow there was a New Testament. He took it out mechanically. This book belonged to her, the very one from which she had read to him about the resurrection of Lazarus. At the beginning of his prison life, he thought she would torment him with religion, would talk about the Gospels and press books on him. But to his great astonishment, she did not once speak of it, not even once offering him the New Testament. He himself had asked her for it not long before his illness and she brought it to him without a word. He had not yet opened it. He did not open it even now, but an idea flashed*

*through his mind: "Could not her beliefs become my beliefs now? Her feelings, her aspirations, at least..."*

*...But that is the beginning of a new story, the story of the gradual renewal of a man, of his gradual rebirth, of his gradual passage from one world to another, how he learned to know a hitherto completely undreamt of reality. All that might be the subject of a new tale, but our present one is ended."*

The next number of years would be a time of fruitfulness for the busy author. His most highly acclaimed novels would be written during that period. Besides *Crime and Punishment*, he also wrote *The Idiot*, and *The Possessed*. After a season of busy fruitfulness, however, a laboriousness and contemplativeness set in during which time Fyodor would manufacture only one work. It would be his last but also his most influential work, precisely the one novel his whole life experience had prepared him to write. It was his prize, the harvest of a lifetime of faith, struggle and suffering. It would reflect his settled, tried and matured Christian faith. He called it *The Brothers Karamazov*.

1867 was the year of his second marriage to a young Swedish Lutheran lady named Anna Grigoriievna Snitkina. Anna was working as a secretary for a publisher when Dostoevskii met her - he was forty-four and she was twenty. They married and left Russia for Europe where they spent the next four happy years together. They would be the very best years of Fyodor's life. Upon their return to Russia, Nikolai Strakhov, a friend of the Dostoevskii's, described the change that had taken place in Fyodor's life:

"There is no doubt that it was precisely abroad in that setting amid those long serene reflections that the peculiar revelation of the Christian spirit which had always dwelt in him was consummated. This fundamental change was revealed very clearly to all those who knew him then when Fyodor Mikhailovich returned from abroad. He would constantly bring the conversation around to religious themes. Not only that, his manner changed, acquired greater mildness, sometimes verging on utter gentleness. Even his features bore traces of that frame

of mind, and a tender smile would appear on his lips...It was evident that the highest Christian feelings dwelt in him, those feelings were expressed in his works more often and more distinctly. This was the man who returned from abroad.”

Between the years of 1876 and 1877, Dostoevskii published a journal called *The Diary of a Writer* in which he expressed his private thoughts and reflections on life in modern Russia. It was his foray into non-fiction writing and it was greeted with popular acclaim. “*Without a higher idea neither man nor any nation can exist,*” he wrote. “*But on earth there is only one higher idea, that is the idea of the immortality of the human soul, for all the other ‘higher’ ideas of life, by which man can live, flow from that alone. I declare that love for humanity is completely unthinkable, unintelligible and altogether impossible without concomitant faith in the immortality of the human soul.*”

Dostoevskii’s last and greatest novel - *The Brothers Karamazov* was finished in 1880. On the surface, it was a story about the lives of three brothers - Dmitrii, Ivan, and Alyosha Karamazov but at its core, the book’s message was about faith in Jesus Christ. Concerning the purpose of the novel, “*I will compel people to admit,*” wrote Dostoevskii, “*that a pure ideal Christianity is not an abstraction, but a vivid reality, possibly near at hand, and that Christianity is the sole refuge of the Russian land from all its evils.*”

The oldest of the brothers is Dmitrii, a military officer whose moral life often conflicts with his profession of Christian faith. In a conversation with Alyosha, Dmitrii seeking to make his youngest brother wise to the ways of a world gone astray and given over to lust and immorality, asks, “*Can there be beauty in Sodom? Believe me, for the vast majority of people, that’s just where beauty lies – did you know that secret? The terrible thing is that beauty is not only fearful, but also mysterious. Here the devil is struggling with God and the battlefield is the human heart.*”

Alyosha decides that he would rather not finish his last year in high school, but instead join the monastery. He is described in the novel as:

*“...to some extent a youth of our latest generation, that is, honest in nature, desiring the truth, seeking for it and believing in it and having believed in it, seeking at once to serve it with all the strength of his soul, seeking after its immediate victory,*

*with a strong desire to sacrifice everything to it, even life itself. Though, unfortunately, they do not understand, these young men, that the sacrifice of life is, probably in most cases, the easiest of all sacrifices and that to sacrifice, for instance, five or six years of their seething youth to hard and tedious study, if only to multiply ten-fold their powers of serving the truth towards that victory which they have come to love and have set before them as their goal – such a sacrifice is utterly beyond the strength of many of them.”*

Alyosha’s faith is real. He has accepted the Christian message in all its fullness, the grandeur of its salvation together with the stark reality of its justice. The hope of eternity with Christ, is no less a myth than the starkness of the judgment of hell. Alyosha’s father, in a half-drunken dialogue with his son, asks:

*“So you want to be monk? And do you know I’m sorry to lose you, Alyosha. Would you believe it, I’ve really grown fond of you. Well, it’s a great opportunity. You’ll pray for us sinners. We have sinned too much lounging around here. I’ve always been thinking who would pray for me? Is there really such a person in the world who would actually do so? My dear boy, I’m really stupid about that. You wouldn’t believe it. Awfully. You see, however stupid I am about it, I keep thinking, from time to time, of course, not all the while...isn’t it possible, I think, for the devils to forget to drag me down to hell with their hooks when I die. Then I wonder – hooks? Where would they get them? What would they be made of? Iron? Where do they forge them? Have they a factory there of some sort? The monks in the monastery, for example, probably believe that there’s a ceiling in hell. Now I’m ready to believe in hell, but only without a ceiling. It makes it more refined, more enlightened, more Lutheran, that is. And after all, what does it matter whether it has a ceiling or hasn’t? There’s the damnable*

*question. If there's no ceiling, there can be no hooks, and if there can be no hooks, it all breaks down...which again is unlikely, for then there would be no one to drag me down to hell and if they don't drag me down, what justice is there in the world? They would have to be invented, those hooks, on purpose, especially for me, because if only you knew, Alyosha, what a scoundrel I am."*

*Quietly and serenely, looking gently at his father, Alyosha spoke. "There are no hooks there," he said.*

The spiritual battle being fought in the hearts of men is vividly portrayed in the lives of Alyosha and Ivan. Ivan is the intellectual, a graduate from Moscow University, and an atheist, or rather, a sceptic with a strong tendency towards atheism. When he accepts the idea of God, his heart begins to rage against Him, or rather, the world He has created. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Ivan's atheism inevitably leads him to acknowledge that if there is no God, then morally, "*all is permissible.*" In another episode, Alyosha meets his brother Ivan at a tavern where they have a heart to heart discussion:

*"You see my dear, there was in the eighteenth century an old sinner who stated that if God did not exist, he would have to be invented. And man has indeed invented God. And the strange thing, the wonder would not be that God really exists, the wonder is that such a notion – the notion of the necessity of God – could creep into the head of such a wild and wicked animal as man – so holy, so moving, so wise a notion which does man such great an honor. As for me, I long ago decided not to think about whether man created God or God created man...I accept God, pure and simple...It's not God that I do not accept, you understand, it is this world of God's, created by God, that I do not accept and cannot agree to accept.*  
*"Will you explain to me why you " do not accept the world?"*  
*said Alyosha.*

Ivan recites a poem to Alyosha called 'The Grand Inquisitor'. Alyosha responds:

*“Your poem is in praise of Jesus, not in blame of Him, as you meant it to be... You don’t believe in God,” he added, speaking this time very sorrowfully.”*

Alyosha concludes the discussion by saying,

*“You asked just now if there is in the whole world a being who could and would have the right to forgive. But there is such a being, and He can forgive everything, forgive all and for all because He Himself gave His innocent blood for all and for everything. You’ve forgotten about Him, but it is on Him that the whole structure is being built...”*

Writing, for Dostoevskii, was a delicate and ‘holy art’. In this, the last of his novels, Dostoevskii, as a Christian, did not want to write a novel censored of the fiery arrows of error and deception that the powers of evil have let loose upon the world, but one that gives full voice to the devil and to the reality of his power. He wanted the best arguments, the most seductive deceptions and the biggest lies that the devil had in his arsenal to be given full voice on the pages of his book, to realistically portray the actual spiritual struggle being waged in the world and in the hearts and minds of men.

At the same time, however, he also wanted his novel to contain a strong and solid Christian response to that voice. This was a point of worry for him, for he did not want the arguments of Ivan’s scepticism to seem as though they were irrefutable, triumphant, and therefore true. Concerning the Christian responses Dostoevskii penned to all the arguments of Ivan’s scepticism and atheism, he confessed that, *“I tremble for it in this sense – will it be a sufficient answer? The more so that this answer is not direct, not point by point to the theses expressed in ‘the Grand Inquisitor’ and before, but is only implied. This is what disturbs me – will I be understood?”*

In the end, Ivan’s denial of the reality of the Christian worldview leads to his mental breakdown. An unexpected encounter with the demonic realm leads Ivan to deny the reality of his supernatural experience. He chooses rather to accept his worldly philosophy and deny the reality of his experience than to deny his philosophy and accept another worldview.

*“Not for a single moment do I take you for the real truth,” Ivan cried, somehow even furiously. “You are a lie, you are my illness, you are a ghost. Only I don’t know how to destroy you, and I see I’ll have to suffer through it for a while. You are my hallucination. You are the embodiment of myself but of just one side of me...of my thoughts and my feelings, but only the most loathsome and stupid of them. From that angle, you could even be interesting to me, if I had the time to bother with you...”*

Dostoevskii maintained a lively correspondence with his readers and friends. In reply to a student who wrote to him concerning Ivan’s atheism, Dostoevskii explained that: *“In Europe there has never been such a powerful expression of atheism, nor will there be. The truth is that my faith in Christ and my proclamation of my faith is not that of an infant – my Hosanna has passed through a furnace of doubts...”*

In another letter of 1880, concerning an alternative basis to morality besides a morality based on the Word of God, Dostoevskii wrote:

*“Determining morality on the basis of how one has conformed to one’s personal beliefs is just not good enough. One must immediately ask oneself – are my personal beliefs true? There is only one way of checking them – Christ...I cannot accept your thesis that morality is conformity to one’s inner beliefs. That is only honesty, but not morality. I have no other moral example and ideal except one – Christ.”*

In reply to a letter from a concerned father asking Dostoevskii what books he would recommend for his young son to read, Fyodor writes: *“Only those books which produce beautiful impressions or give rise to lofty thoughts.”*

In another correspondence, Dostoevskii counsels a Russian lady reader to accept the faith of Christ, just as he himself so many years before in Siberia had been encouraged by a Russian lady writer to do likewise:

*“What is this that you have written about ‘duality’?...My dear, greatly respected Katerina Fyodorovna, do you believe in Christ*

*and in His promises? If you do believe, or you really want to believe, then give yourself over to him fully, and the sufferings you are enduring from this 'duality' will be greatly relieved and you will receive comfort for your soul, and this is most important."*

This was to be one of his last letters, for the following year, in 1881, at the age of sixty years old, Fyodor Dostoevskii breathed his last. He had run the race, he had kept the faith.

At the Novodevichy Monastery in Moscow, the nuns were asked whether Fyodor's corpse could be interned in the monastery's famous burial ground for distinguished Russians. They replied that although Dostoevskii was not recognized among them as a man of great importance, yet they were willing to supply a burial plot for him in exchange for a large sum of money. The Metropolitan of Russia, confirming the nuns' appraisal of Fyodor, also remarked that Dostoevskii "was a novelist and no more, and had never written anything serious."

On the day of Dostoevskii's death, however, a national cry of mourning was heard to resound throughout all the land of Russia. All university lectures were cancelled for the day. Hearts were bowed. Voices were hushed. The nation wept.

It was decided that Fyodor would be buried in the Alexander Nevskii Monastery in St. Petersburg. As the body was being taken to its resting place, a long funeral procession crowded the street following his casket. It was estimated on that day that anywhere from thirty thousand to one hundred thousand mourners had joined the procession. It was a procession that was unequalled in its show of sympathy and respect in all the history of Russia.

Before internment, his body was taken to the Church. One of the mourners recalled how "at first sound of prayers being intoned everyone bowed their heads and many of us were moved to tears...at that moment everyone somehow truly felt the breath of God, unbelievers no less than believers." The people of Russia, heads bowed in mourning, suddenly recognized the depth of their immeasurable loss.

In Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevskii, the people of Russia had been truly blessed. A great author, a great man and a great Christian, Dostoevskii shared his life and his faith

with his generation. Silently, through the power of his pen, he spoke in a voice that resounded throughout the Russian Empire proclaiming that “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty!” His books still continue to point many others, not just Russians, but men and women, young and old from all nations in all languages of the world to the faith and salvation of God in Christ Jesus.