

The Heroic Tale of the Village Idiot

The important thing is this: To be able at any moment to sacrifice what we are for what we could become.

- Charles Dubois

Moral courage is the ability to do what's right and speak up for one's beliefs in spite of the dangers and obstacles blocking the path to righteousness. One does not have to act or look like a comic book superhero to possess moral courage. People of all age, size, color, and ability are capable of demonstrating acts of altruism, as long as they have the power and urge to do so. For example, Anton Sukhinski was a small man – a loner and an outcast. He never married and lived in a modest house on the verge of poverty (*The Righteous among the Nations*). His neighbors called him the village idiot, and he was always made fun of; nevertheless, Anton performed an epic deed worth remembering for years to come.

Anton Sukhinski rose to the occasion when the killing and deportation of Jews began in Zborow. Unlike his neighbors who participated in the collapse of morality, Anton preserved human values by being responsible for the lives of six people during the Holocaust (*The Righteous among the Nations*). Over time, the neighbors discovered about the hiding of the Jews in his home and began harassing the Jews along with Anton. They obtained money by threat but that did not stop Anton from helping the Jews. This extortion of money led to a shooting fight which caused the fugitives to flee from the fear that they would be caught; however, they soon returned to Anton's home and he accepted them warmly. For nine months, the six people hid in

his cellar while Anton tried to feed them with the lack of money he had. He sacrificed his life in order to keep the Jews safe from what he knew was nothing of virtue.

Even after the name-calling and ridiculing from the neighbors, Sukhinski was hospitable enough to offer shelter to those who needed help from the periodic wave of killings of Jews. He knew that he had to risk his life in order to help. The thought of saving as many people from dying overpowered the terror of being caught by the Germans. Anton not only affected the hearts and minds of the six rescued people, but he also taught the neighbors to follow the right path in difficult situations. Although the Germans killed thousands of Jews they found in the town, Sukhinski, who opposed the killing of God's creatures, saved six (Cohen).

Of all the stories of Holocaust rescuers, the tale of Anton Sukhinski was the most memorable because there seems to be a connection between me and him. I am a high school girl with many friends but sometimes, I feel secluded and alone, like Anton. I suppose that some students think I act strangely during the days of my solitude, but I still give aid to those who need my assistance during school. Also, Sukhinski was a believer of God and therefore believed that the killings had to be prevented in any way. Opposing to the idea of killing God's creatures, Anton suffered harassment as he hid the Jews from being caught and killed (Cohen). He stood up for his religious beliefs and illustrated his faithfulness when people asked him for protection. As a member of the Catholic Church, I too believe in the preservation of all living things. I try to make a difference such as Anton did by acting in ways that I think God would approve. I take community service opportunities such as working at a homeless shelter or a club that ships medical equipment to third world countries to assist people who need all the help they can get. Though these performances may not have been as heroic and memorable as that of Anton, I am

positive that I have made an impact in some way or another in people's lives even though I may not be aware of it.

Anton Sukhinski has inspired me to be courageous and speak up for not only my religious beliefs but any faith as well. His legend educates that any person, regardless of size and popularity, can fight against evil with outstanding audacity. I hope everyone can learn the story of Anton Sukhinski and follow his example of selflessness. If one is ever in a situation where doing the right thing is a tough choice to make, remember "little" Anton who rescued six people from falling into their deaths in spite of his low esteem and eccentricity. As Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You must do the thing which you think you cannot do."

Bibliography

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