

A message to Final year secondary students

What or who is worth dying for?

Best seller titles and song lyrics give suggested answers.

On the USA Canada border is the remaining lands of the Mohawk Indians. Their reservation is cut by the St Lawrence River. Over a century of broken treaties, treachery and dirty politics have cut the Indians off from resources and what is important to them. Some years back a false case regarding a stolen chain saw and cutting of trees became an issue. The BIA and FBI demanded the arrest of a Mohawk chief.

This was the end of a series of harassments and the tribal elders decided to resist. Some of the Mohawk braves had been to Viet Nam and had military experience. They ringed the reservation with foxholes and posted warriors. Food was stockpiled and the media alerted. A blockade commenced. In the cities support groups were encouraged to make political pressure on behalf of the Indian cause.

One university Christian group collected winter clothes and some food for the besieged community. With the parcels went scriptures and notes of encouragement. As the face off got more dangerous and violence more likely a peace line of pacifists was asked to stand between the two confronting armed forces

Only one student from the Christian group decided that this was a cause worth the risk of life and limb. It's one thing to believe, to write letters, to march in demonstrations, to pray, to give gifts and money. But it's a whole new level when one thinks of putting one's body in harm's way.

The student wrote a post card home to his parents, thinking this might be the last correspondence with home. So in a coded way, that would only make sense in a bereavement situation, final greetings and affirmations were recorded.

I have that post card, and inherited it from my grandfather's estate. It's in my possession as I was the 21 year old who went out into that situation, and I was part of the New York organisation RAIN leadership.

I did this crazy stuff because one of my heroes said,

"A man who won't die for something is not fit to live".

Martin Luther King

Since then we've seen young people choose to step out, because they believe in a righteous cause, on many occasions. One of the most famous is also from the USA, Cassie from Columbine High School, who said to the two young gun men perpetrating that awful massacre, that she "believed in God", and she was consequently martyred.

Tonight I'm not trying to enroll you into some precarious activity. What I am sharing with you what Heller is stating-

You need to believe in someone/something so much that it's of sufficient worth to die for.

Only then will your life be authentic

rather than bland,

courageous and dynamic

rather than pedantry,

fulfilling rather than just busy.

Patriotism and family might come to mind as causes and people of worth. And I affirm both tonight. But there is something, and indeed someone, who is worth dying for--- and by corollary =worth living for.

This is of course, God, revealed to us in Jesus.

Jesus, we understand, stood on the threshold lots of times for you and me. He decided to turn his face towards Jerusalem and away from his family and friends. He walked directly into danger. Then in that garden of Gethsemane, he again considered you and me and chose to proceed into a death by slow torture for us.

We need something bigger than ourselves to live for;

We are too tiny and selfish.

Our football team, family or tribe, or job, or financial nest egg, is not enough.

Fairy tales and myths extol the one who goes out heroically and courageously. Such heroes of the quest find their destiny and themselves outside comfort and on the edge.

We find our true self when we deny one's self,

when we put aside our rights to safety, affirmation, and comfort.

It's in the mythical type adventures, out on the brink, where we see miracles happen.

You were designed for the ups and downs of the seven seas, not merely the bay or to be tied up to the pier.

I hope that your Christian schooling ruins you for the ordinary;

I hope that your eyes look beyond the 'burbs' and your first car, job, romantic relationship....for there is more.

There is a world of adventure awaiting you outside the protective school gates.

In the cause and the person of Christ lie something worth living for, and someone worth risking all of life for...

In prison Paul of Tarsus wrote:

To live is Christ and to die is Christ. His cause gives purpose and courage to live and to face death.