

I want to talk to you about something linked to what Mr Blair and the Chaplaincy Team have been addressing in sectional assemblies this term- that is one of the Ten Commandments. The second commandment, in short, says 'do not worship false or graven images'. Today I would like to take that in a secular way. In every era we make the mistake of 'worshipping' false idols. Today we wrongly hold up some people in the media from our 'pop culture' as heroic. In the 5<sup>th</sup> Century a man named St. Simeon lived in what is today Northern Syria. He became known as St. Simeon Stylites and he started a hermitic movement called stylitism. For 20 years he sat atop a tall pillar without ever coming down. His food and drink was passed up to him and he passed his waste down. People came from far and wide to marvel at him. He was a hero or idol of his age, but he was a false one. He did not do one solitary bit of good for others.

So I ask you, who are your heroes? Do you worship false idols or hold up genuine people who give their all and live life to the full. Take your inspiration from the right heroes both near and far. Firstly, take your inspiration from those around you. I was watching all the young men come onto the stage today to be congratulated for things they have done so well and I was thinking that they were, they were heroes too. I often come plodding out of the Dell on my twice-weekly runs to see Fraser Scott bounding down. He is a hero to you all, as so many of you are. So secondly who are your distant heroes. I often talk to those in my History classes about my heroes. I suppose Winston Churchill and Nelson Mandela spring to mind. The thing I like about these two is they had their faults, they were flawed heroes, but one thing for certain is they lived their life to the absolute full. They did not live the life of hermits and nor did they stand on unnecessary pomp or ceremony. So it is alright to make mistakes, but we need to use them to make us stronger, to move on.

You live in a fantastic community. Merchiston is a great school. You have marvellous opportunities here, so take them and live your life to the full always. I am going to miss you all, both boys and staff. I have thoroughly enjoyed myself for the last five years, so thank you very much.