

Bathing in Blood

Imagine being a frightened teenager caught in the middle of a mass genocide, that would result in the deaths of millions. Pino Lella was just a young man interested in the usual music, girls, and food but it all went wrong when air raid sirens pierced the cool night intruding on the calm movie Pino and his little brother watched.

Anti Aircraft guns rang into the night. Over 300 bombs fell on Milan, whistling as they came down. A bomb landed right behind the movie theater. Shrapnel flew everywhere as Pino and his brother ran. Bombs fell around them as they sprinted home. His mother and father hid in the basement of their house. Mimo (his little brother) was sent to a safe house in the Italian Alps, called Casa Alpino.

Months later, Pino's uncle's shop was bombed and totally destroyed. Pino was sent to Casa Alpino with his brother. Father Re welcomed Pino on two conditions. He must climb every day on a route Father Re gave him and was to study 3 hours a day. Each day Pino climbed for hours on end. Going on countless trips that lasted for most of the day. One night, in the chapel Father Re explained what was happening to the Jews, how they were being tortured and killed just for being Jewish. Pino was horrified and offered to risk his life in order to save Jews who were being hunted by the Nazis.

From then on Pino would lead refugees on treacherous climbs over huge cliffs, down steep valleys, and through the dark woods. He would help safely deliver them across the border. Pino never stopped to consider his own safety. This displays tremendous amounts of physical and moral courage.

After one of his hikes to safety he was about to enter the safehouse when a nearby boy named Nico picked up an egg looking object to show his friends. The explosion was near instant, it knocked

Pino off his feet. Nico's face was torn apart and his arm gone. Pino ran to Nico's side, and scooped him up. Running as fast as possible he delivered the boy to his mother. She wept by his side as Nico's eyes lolled back in his head. Nico was dead, Pino cried over the spilled blood as he told Father Re what happened.

Pino repeated the cycle of bringing refugees across the border until a cottage that they used for a hideout along the way was bombed. They couldn't use the easier path anymore. The other route was much harder and stretched much higher than any other. This climb was much longer and harder than any other. Yet Pino still continued and persevered through the hardest terrain leading a pregnant mother through the Alps and digging a family out of an avalanche.

Pino showed incredible moral courage when he agreed to help the innocent Jews even though he risked his own life every time he helped someone. To me, moral courage means doing the right thing even when no one is looking and sacrificing yourself for what you believe in. Even though Pino's example is extreme and heroic, we can do this everyday in small ways. I try to demonstrate moral courage by standing up for weaker kids facing bullies, by shutting down racist talk from friends who are gaming and by encouraging others who are doing the right thing. Sometimes, moral courage can even be just being authentically who you are. Peer pressure is real and these things can be hard to do sometimes.

I think as a society we need to demonstrate more moral courage by standing up against companies who are treating people poorly. A recent example is the human rights violations in the sugar cane fields in India, where people are being forced to work countless hours to supply sugar to Coke and Pepsi. If we all took a stand and stopped buying products, then these conditions would change.

In the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, the brave team from Iran refused to sing the national anthem to call attention to the murder of Mahsa Amini- a woman in police custody. Another great example is when Colin Kaepernick took a knee in protest of the social injustices in America. Even though he was banned from the NFL, he changed the conversation around race in sports and people followed his lead. As the preacher Billy Graham once said, “Courage is contagious. When a brave man takes a stand, the spines of others are often stiffened.”

