

Letter to my son, who wants to be a police officer



Dear Son,

When you turned six last summer, you got a police officer's uniform and wore it everywhere. You told me you want to be a real police officer when you grow up so that you can catch bad guys. But, I didn't want you to spend your days experiencing only the worst that life has to offer, so I encouraged you to consider becoming a teacher (like your mother) or a farmer (like your father). You know; something "safe."

By the time you got your uniform, the Freddie Gray riots had just subsided in Baltimore. There and in other places throughout the country, people were questioning the integrity of police officers. I tried to explain to you that police officers are human beings, and that sometimes some of them don't make the right decisions. We should still trust that most men and women in uniform chose their professions because they wanted to serve others. Most cops are good guys. But, I didn't want anyone to get the wrong idea about you some day. I didn't want you to be disrespected - or hurt - because of the badge you wore.

In December, a police officer was shot in our community. I was afraid to leave the house that day until your dad convinced me to go look at Christmas lights. As we drove through our neighborhood, we talked about what happened to Officer Eaton. We talked about how brave he was. You made him a card with a picture of him handcuffing a bad guy while a helicopter soared overhead. You were right beside Officer Eaton, in your uniform - locking up another bad guy.

That day in particular, I knew I wanted to talk you out of being a police officer. I didn't want to be on the other end of that call, that knock at the door. You always ask me when you can go to heaven, and I tell you "When you're an old man, and I'm already up there waiting for you." Maybe if you're a teacher or a farmer, that can happen, I reasoned.

But, any time anyone asks you what you want to be when you grow up, you say, "a policeman." You did a "heroes" project in your first grade class in January. You chose Mommy and Daddy's friend, Officer Jamie, who is brave not only for fighting crime, but for fighting cancer, too. We think you picked a great guy to look up to. He's survived the kinds of things that would make me fall apart.

I try not to watch the news anymore. The stories keep getting worse and closer to

home. The world I want for you slips further away. So, when I was flipping through the channels on Ash Wednesday and saw that two police officers were shot in the Abingdon shopping center we visit several times a week, I was devastated. I watched and waited for hours, hoping for good news. It never came. Instead, two brave men, Senior Deputy Patrick Dailey and Deputy First Class Mark Logsdon, lost their lives protecting the community they loved.

We talked about it on the way to Ash Wednesday Mass. "We're going to church tonight because it's the start of Lent. It's a time we think about how Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice for us. He died so that we could live."

"Like the police officers did," you said.

In that moment, I understood you a little more. I never thought you realized how dangerous police work is, but maybe you do. And maybe, like Officer Eaton, and Officer Jamie, Senior Deputy Patrick Dailey and Deputy First Class Mark Logsdon, you were born with the courage to fight for others - to fight for what is right - no matter the risk. This is called "valor," and it's a gift from God. Pretty much every man and woman in uniform has it. (I think you might, too.) For that, we should thank God and those heroes on Earth.

Because of Senior Deputy Patrick Dailey and Deputy First Class Mark Logsdon's valor, along with the other police officers involved in that day's events, not one bystander was harmed by the gunman who took their lives. These cops weren't just the good guys, they were the best guys. And you know what, son? I can see why you want to be like them. As long as you remember what it means to be a good guy, I think you're going to make an excellent police officer someday.

Love,

Mommy



This beautiful portrait of Harford County's fallen heroes was created by Shawn Forton, who is both a police officer and an artist.