

A Quick Look at...

HOW TO TALK ABOUT WAR & CONFLICT

Diocesan Youth Minister Meet-Up Notes from December 14, 2021

Key Points from Presentation with Deacon Dan Powers:

- First of all, you need to know that war is possibly the stupidest thing ever. Second... It *really is* a can of worms... especially for Catholics... and extra especially for Catholics in the military and their families. It's tough for them.
 - For example... If you say "Hey church... Is murder OK? Absolutely not! Hey church... Is abortion OK? Absolutely not! Hey church... Is war OK... Absolutely... Maybe."
 - What we're talking about here is the Catholic Church position on the morality of war... killing people and destroying things... and whether or not there is a moral "upside" to all of that. Is it morally worth it?
- 7 Components to Just War Doctrine (by Saint Thomas Aquinas, groundwork set by Saint Augustine):
 1. Just Cause: The reason for going to war must be morally correct (to fight an invader, rescue an ally)
 2. Declared by competent authority (ex: President/Congress), not a private organization or political party
 3. Comparative Justice: do the rights and values involved justify killing, wounding, and destroying property?
 4. It must have the right intention: for just cause, not retaliation, revenge, or total destruction of enemy
 5. Last resort: all peaceful options must have been exhausted first
 6. There must be a probability of success: There has to be a reasonable hope of winning.
 7. There must be proportionality: The evils and suffering that result from the war must be proportionally less or smaller than the evils and suffering which would have ensued had there been no conflict.
 - ◆ Just War Doctrine doesn't "justify" war, but instead gives it a moral context.
- Beyond Just War Doctrine, the Church says:
 - The legitimate defense of others is a *grave duty* for those who are responsible for the lives of others.
 - Principle of Discrimination: Ability to distinguish between civilian and soldier, hospital and weapon factory
 - Principle of Proportionality: Is the amount of force we will use the appropriate response to the situation?
- We need to remember that prayer is efficacious, and we need to pray for moral discernment, justice, and peace.

- Suggested Questions for Small Group Discussion -

1. When is a war "just" - under what circumstances? Can a pre-emptive war against a possible or probable aggressor be "just" according to the Just War Doctrine? If a smaller and weaker ally is being threatened by an aggressor, is the bigger moral obligation to pre-emptively protect the ally or to refrain from starting a war?
2. I am in the army, fighting in a "just war". I have been sent to fight the enemy... which means I will possibly have to kill them. OK... Perhaps that is my job. But what do I do if I am on reconnaissance and I find 3 enemy soldiers asleep under a tree. Should I kill them all right now? Why, or why not? Are there alternatives? What if I get cold feet, but my buddy next to me kills them in their sleep. Is that a problem? Would I need to go to Confession?
3. Isn't deciding what is "unjust" a matter of personal opinion, based on your personal morals? Exactly how "unjust" is unjust? Are there degrees of "unjustness?" Or is that ridiculous?
4. Aren't Catholic participants in an unjust war really in a catch-22 situation if they must follow the orders of a secular military to participate in an action labeled unjust by their faith? What options do they have?

