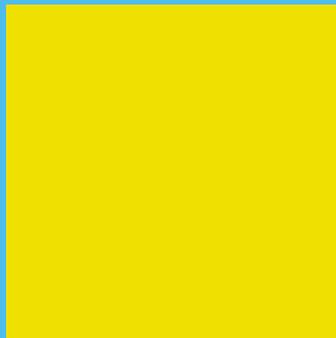


4



WHEN ENCOUNTER BECOMES CONFLICT:
JUST WAR AND JUST PEACE

MODULE FOUR

JUST WAR AND JUST PEACE

4.1 JUST WAR AND JUST PEACE: VIDEO CLIP



Figure 4.1
The Video Clip

The video clip shows a group of friends who are playing a video game together. Although everyone is immersed in the game, Pieter-Jan doesn't seem to be enjoying himself. He even criticizes the game: isn't it too violent and doesn't it ensure that violence is normalized? In the resulting argument Pieter-Jan is reproached for being so quick to judge others, since there is a history of violence in his own Christian tradition. He is surprised: aren't Christians pacifists? Now curious, the friends go in search of how the Catholic Church and the Christian tradition behave towards violence and war, and they discover the just war theory and its true meaning.

4.2 PACIFISM AND HOLY WAR

The just war theory was born out of the discussion about the use of violence: when is a country allowed to use violence? When is a country allowed to go to war? These questions are centuries old and have a long history of origin within the Catholic Church.

When talking about war and peace, different positions can be taken. Two examples are: **'pacifism'** and **'holy war'**.

ASSIGNMENT. Connect the correct term with the correct explanation.

Pacifism	Holy war
It is an attitude that strives for peace and always resists war and violence. There is always an attitude of non-violence.	War waged based on religious beliefs. War is waged by a divine obligation, or in defense of 'holy' territory.



Figure 4.2

💡 **Pacifism** is an attitude that strives for peace and always resists war and violence. There is always an attitude of non-violence. Violence and war can never be good!

💡 According to the **holy war tradition**, the use of violence is acceptable to achieve certain religious goals. This concept is often seen as the opposite of pacifism.

ASSIGNMENT. Think about the vision of pacifism. What do you think of this attitude? Why?



Figure 4.3
Image: © Priscilla du Preez | Unsplash

4.3 THE JUST WAR THEORY

Pacifism and the theory of holy war are two extreme attitudes. We are now going to look at a possible intermediate position in which the use of violence is permitted based on certain conditions: **'the just war theory'**.

💡 What does 'righteous(ness)' mean? And what does 'unrighteous(ness)' mean? Righteous(ness) means 'the right, honest thing'. Being 'just' means being honest and trustworthy. Unrighteous(ness) is just the opposite: something that is unfair or incorrect. An example of this is poverty: it is an injustice that certain children in the world have to go hungry, while other children have enough, or even more than enough.



Figure 4.4
St. Peter's Square in
Vatican City
Image: © Alan Liu |
Unsplash

Throughout history, a tradition has been developed and further elaborated according to context, time and place, about the use of violence and war. This development was given the name **'just war theory'**. **The use of violence is allowed based on certain conditions.**

It is important to remember that 'the' just war theory does not exist. It is a tradition through time in which, depending on the time and place, answers were given about the use of violence and war. Discussions about the conditions of 'a just war' occur in all times. So, this theory can also change through time, even today.

How can we understand this just war theory? Does the just war theory want to allow the use of violence and war? Does this theory make war, military intervention and violence 'normal'?



The just war theory is a theory that defines certain conditions (depending on context, time and place) for entering into armed conflict and for justifying the use of violence. These conditions are meant to avoid war and violence as much as possible.

In sum, **the just war theory** wants to prevent and contain war and violence as much as possible. It gives an overview of conditions to determine in concrete circumstances whether the use of violence and war can be justified.

In general, the following conditions are set today for starting an armed conflict within **the just war theory**. Only when all these six conditions are addressed in a certain situation, is warfare 'justified':

- 1. Just cause:** war may only be waged for a just cause, and not out of self-interest. There must be a thorough and just reason to go to war. War must be aimed at restoring peace.
- 2. Right intention:** the intention behind the war must be right and fair. It must be aimed at a fair and just goal: the restoration of peace. There must be no unjust ulterior motives: for example, saving one's own economy or conquering a new piece of land.
- 3. Last resort:** violence and war should be avoided as much as possible. War can only be a last resort. One must first try all other non-violent means(s) to solve a conflict.
- 4. Probability of success:** if one wants to go to war, there must be a reasonable chance of achieving the goal: peace. Soldiers, but also civilians, must not suffer and die unnecessarily.
- 5. Proportionality:** the degree of violence must not exceed the evil to be combated. The means used must be in proportion to the aim pursued by the war.
- 6. Competent authority:** war may only be entered into and waged by a lawful authority. An authority is a recognized government, the political authority of a community that is responsible for the welfare of its people.

ASSIGNMENT. Read the six conditions of the just war theory and answer the following question:

Do you think these conditions are enough to avoid war? Why do/do you not?



Figure 4.5
Image: © Pixel2013 |
Pixabay

What does the Catholic Church think about this?

From what perspective is this theory viewed in the Catholic Church? Within the **Catholic Church**, this theory still has a great impact on thinking about war and peace, both in the past and today.

 For the **Catholic Church**, war, military intervention and violence is an ongoing and disturbing thought. Counteracting all kinds of injustice and oppression is also a first and foremost concern. Christians must not only prevent violence and war as much as possible, but they must also stand up for the rights, freedoms, and welfare of victims of violence.

For the Catholic Church it is not about just war, but about **just peace!** It is also about **building a just society** where violence and oppression do not exist.

ASSIGNMENT. How can the just war theory be understood in the Catholic tradition?

- It is a theory that condemns any use of violence.
- The use of violence and going to war to spread and protect the Catholic faith is justified by this theory.
- This theory is not meant to condone violence just like that. It is a way to first look for peaceful solutions in a conflict and to avoid the use of violence and war.



Figure 4.6
Image: © Sunguk Kim |
Unsplash

ASSIGNMENT. Read the statements below and choose the one that appeals to you the most. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why do you agree or disagree?

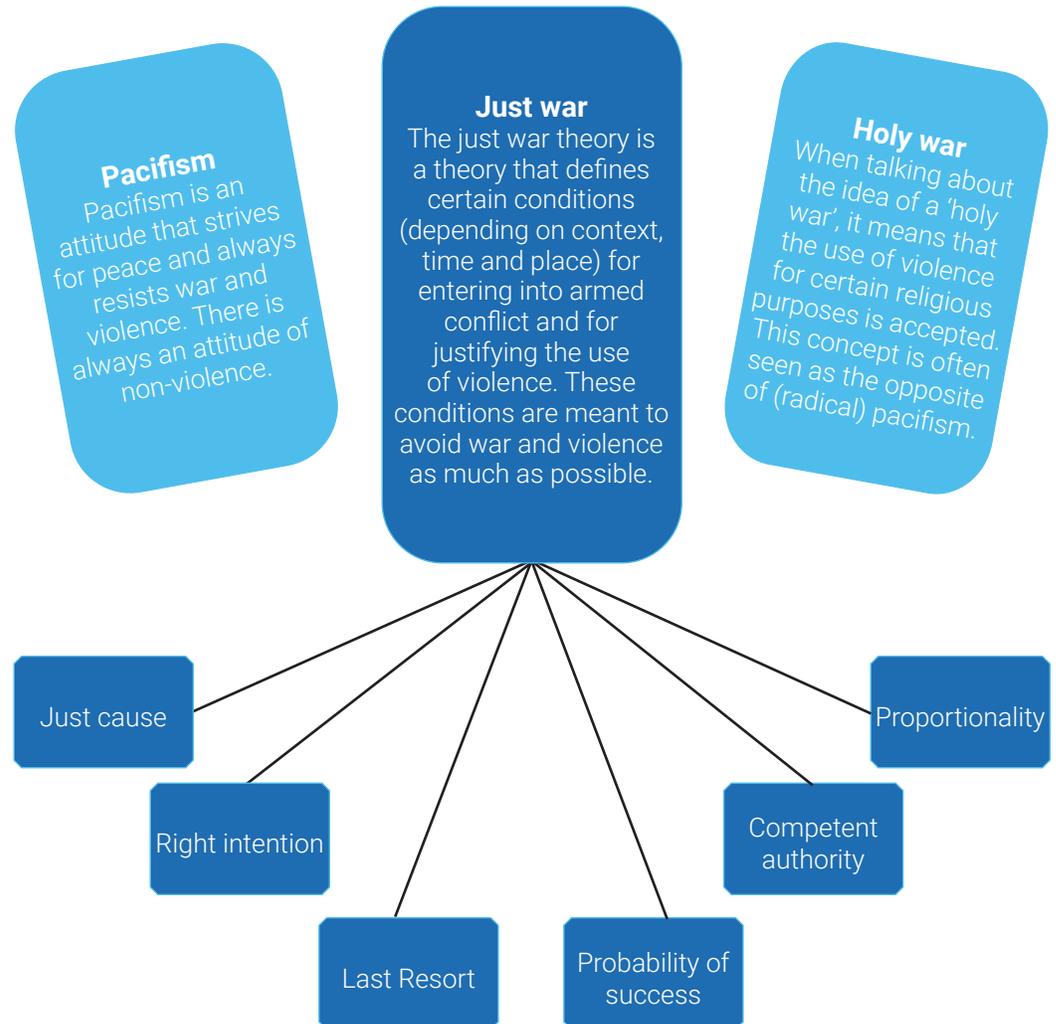
- *“War is never justified.”*
- *“Peace can only exist if there is also war.”*
- *“Never do anything in a war that will make reconciliation impossible afterwards.”*
- *“A world without violence is not realistic.”*
- *“Violence begins or ends with yourself.”*
- *“Even in times of peace, it is important for a country to invest in weapons.”*
- *“Risking your own life for strangers in a foreign country is pointless.”*
- *“The just war theory allows the use of violence.”*



Figure 4.7
Image: © Free-Photos |
Pixabay

4.4 SUMMARY

In this diagram, you can find a summary of the most important concepts from this module.



4.5 GLOSSARY

Holy war

When talking about the idea of a 'holy war', it means that the use of violence for certain religious purposes is accepted. This concept is often seen as the opposite of (radical) pacifism.

Pacifism

Pacifism is an attitude of non-violence that rejects all forms of violence and war. The main goal in this vision is peace, which can only be achieved by peaceful means and an attitude of non-violence.

Just war

The just war theory is a theory that defines certain conditions (depending on context, time and place) for entering into armed conflict and for justifying the use of violence. These conditions are meant to avoid war and violence as much as possible.

Just peace

Violence should not only be postponed. We must also build a just society where violence and oppression are absent. Moreover, during conflicts, one should not only think about resolving the conflict itself, but also about its consequences, so that a lasting peace is possible. This is the concept of just peace.

Righteous/Unrighteous

Righteous(ness) means 'the right, honest thing'. Being 'just' means being honest and trustworthy. Unrighteous(ness) is just the opposite: something that is unfair or incorrect. An example of this is poverty: it is an injustice that certain children in the world have to go hungry, while other children have enough, or even more than enough.



Photo: Annie Spratt | Unsplash

4.6 TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO

INT LIVING ROOM

We see 3 friends in Sarah's living room: Sarah, Ahmed and Michael. Sarah and Ahmed are playing a ('violent') video game (PlayStation), Michael seems bored.

*Sarah: I got ya! Take this, you ***.*

Ahmed: What? What? No! No! No! Not again! Why do you always win this level? I want revenge!

Sarah: Are you sure, you want to lose again?

Ahmed: Watch me!

Michael: Are you guys really doing this level again? Ugh... This game is so stupid.

Sarah: That's only just because you can't win, loser!

Michael: No, really. I really don't get what you like about this game. Why is it fun to kill as many enemies as possible? There's no real goal in this game. It's just shooting and killing.

Ahmed: Come on, it's just a fun game to play together!

Michael: Yeah sure, killing people is funny. What if someone starts thinking it is normal to kill people like in this video game?

Sarah: What? Don't start talking about video games being bad, or video games causing violence. You sound like my dad.

Michael: Well, maybe he's right.

Sarah: Well, maybe you are just upset about these video games because you are a Christian, and because Jesus always feels so good about himself and solves everything without violence.

Michael: And what's wrong with that? I find it inspiring to see that Jesus always resisted violence and Christians are pacifists.

Ahmed: Christianity and pacifism? Is this a joke? There are plenty of examples of violence in the history of Christianity, did you forget about the Crusades.

Michael looks confused. He doesn't know how to react on these examples from Ahmed.

Michael: Eum well, yes you're right but.. Now I'm confused, but I really think that Jesus and the Church nowadays want peace in all circumstances.

Sarah: Well, let's see. Let me look this up!

Sarah changes the screen from the game to a search bar and starts searching

Sarah: Here you see they even made a game about it! (reads description) Did Christians did find a way to justify war? Based on the theory crafted by Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas, two famous theologians from the past. Let me download it!

An intro starts to play

Voice in game: History has been forged by violence and war. 2 Theologians took on the challenge to create a theory... A theory that would change the way we view our own history... A theory on how Christians could justify the last resort of using violence and war. A theory that would last for centuries...

Michael: No, really? Let me see! What kind of conditions can justify violence?

Sarah: let's find out!

Voice in game: Decide over the faith of the perpetrators and judge if the use of (their) violence was just. Decide over the faith of the perpetrators. Will they go to heaven or will they burn in hell?

1. JUST CAUSE: (an icon of lady justice appears)

War and violence can only be used as a response to injustice. For example, when a country defends itself. Or when a country is defending another country that is being unlawfully attacked."

2. RIGHT INTENTION: (an icon of a face with a halo appears)

War must be aimed at an ethical goal and ultimately at restoring peace. One cannot go to war to achieve another goal, for example, economic interests."

3. LAST RESORT: (an icon with a list appears all lines have been crossed except the last one)

Violence and war should be avoided as much as possible. Only when all options to achieve peace have been exhausted, one can start a war."

4. PROBABILITY OF SUCCESS: (an icon with 3 stars appears)

"There must be a reasonable chance of success in going to war. People should not suffer and die needlessly."

5. *PROPORTIONALITY*: “The means used for violence must be in proportion to the end that the war seeks to achieve.”
6. *COMPETENT AUTHORITY* “And finally, war must be declared by a lawful authority. Only leaders of a recognized political community and with the political requirements of that community, can declare war.”

Sarah: Before now, I never heard of this ‘just war theory’ and those 6 conditions to go to war...

Michael (looks confused): No, me neither. I’m not sure what to think about this ‘theory’. Why did they make such a theory to go to war? I thought Christians always wanted to behave in a non-violent manner.

Ahmed: Hmm, I hadn’t heard of that theory either. But maybe we should find out more about it?

Sarah: look there is a VR experience!

We see the kids putting on VR glasses

Suddenly, in front of them a hologram (cardinal/pope-like person) appears.

Hologram: Hello friends! I can tell you more about the just war theory! If you guys are curious, that is. (hesitates) but I think that is the only reason people visit me here..... (sighs a bit sadly)

Michael: Well yes, we were wondering: How is it possible that there is a ‘just war theory’ in the the first place? I thought Christians would always be against the use of violence? Why invent a theory to justify violence when you proclaim pacifism?

Sarah: This means Christians within certain rules are allowed to use violence and to start a war? So....Christianity legitimizes violence?

Hologram: Not so fast, young lady. You don’t have to jump to conclusions right away. You’ve already learned about the 6 conditions to justify a war! This theory—or we can call it a tradition—is an ethical framework originated by Catholic theologians like Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas, and has been adapted and reformulated over time according to context, time and place.

Michael: So, how can we understand this just war theory?

Hologram: The ‘just war theory’ was not invented to allow violence, or to legitimize violence. It is the other way around!

Sarah: I don’t get that at all...

Hologram: For example, one condition states that war must be a last resort. In this way, the theory of just war aims to encourage authorities to first look for other alternatives in order to achieve peace

Michael: Like diplomacy?

Hologram: exactly: Also, you have to look if your intentions are good: war should not be started to enrich yourself. And you have to ask the question: should I use so much violence, is this in proportion and really necessary to stop injustice?

Sarah: Ah, so if I understand correctly, the use of violence should always be a last resort in conflicts between different countries, religions, people... Thus, this theory is invented to postpone the use of violence for as long as possible and to look for other solutions first?

Hologram (smiles, winks): Now you get it. That’s my teaching.

INT LIVING ROOM

We see Sarah, Ahmed and Michael again, playing videogames.

Ahmed: What really??? Again? How can you beat me EVERY TIME?

Sarah: Haha, I’m invincible, the ultimate video game master!

Michael (smiles): Well, let me try to beat you?!

Sarah (smiles): Are you sure? But, will you only kill me as a last resort (Sarah winks)?

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