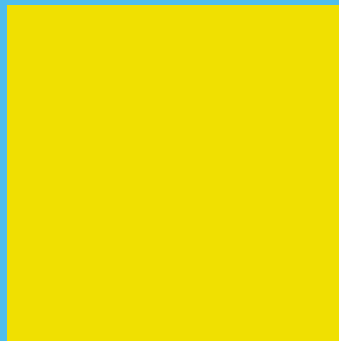


4



WHEN ENCOUNTER BECOMES CONFLICT:
JUST WAR AND JUST PEACE

MODULE FOUR

JUST WAR AND JUST PEACE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 STRUCTURE OF THE TEACHER'S BOOK

This teacher's book is a didactic package which elaborates on the following theme: 'when encounter becomes conflict: just war and just peace'. It has been developed for a 12- to 18-year-old age group and offers the teacher or supervisor of a learning group the opportunity to develop this theme at the level of their class group.

In this teacher's book, the teacher can work around various topics that fit in with the overarching theme of 'encounter with the other: dealing with diversity'. By means of impulses and didactic suggestions, it is possible to approach this theme from different perspectives. Impulses are elements that the teacher can bring into the classroom to start the conversation. This book contains a diversity of impulses with different levels of difficulty. These impulses aim to contribute to the learning process and exist in different forms. It is not the intention to use all impulses. The teacher can select the most appropriate impulses based on (the initial situation in) his learning group. The didactic suggestions are concrete proposals to get to work with the impulses and focus on philosophical reflection and communication. This allows the teacher to approach the different impulses in a varied way that suits their learning group.

This teacher's book makes a distinction between 'basic material' and 'deepening'. The basic subject matter is standard in the student's book and takes one hour to complete. In addition, the teacher has the choice to deepen the students' knowledge by means of the extra chapters with accompanying impulses and didactic suggestions, which are provided in this teacher's book.

The different chapters:

- In the first chapter, the just war theory is presented and explained. The students are introduced to the history, content, meaning and perspective of this theory today (in the Catholic Church). This chapter is part of the basic teaching material for the students.
- The second chapter is a deepening chapter. In this chapter, based on a few Bible passages, we examine whether the image of Jesus as a radical pacifist is correct. Where did Jesus stand with regard to non-violence?
- The third chapter shows some important developments with regard to the righteous thinking of war throughout the 20th and 21st century and briefly highlights how the Catholic Church has positioned itself from the 20th century until today concerning the just war theory. This chapter is a deepening chapter.
- The fourth and final chapter, which is also part of the deepening subject matter, focuses on a new paradigm: 'a just peace'.

Finally, this teacher's book contains a glossary in which all difficult terms are explained concisely and at the level of the pupil. This is followed by a bibliography per chapter of this didactic collection.

4.1.2 CONTENTS OF THE TEACHER'S BOOK

This didactic package deals with the theme 'when encounter becomes conflict: just war and just peace'. This textbook is based on the 'just war theory'. The students are introduced to the history, content, meaning and perspective of this theory today (in the Catholic Church). It offers the opportunity to reflect together with the learning group on encounter, conflict, war and peace.

The starting point of this didactic package is a video clip enacting a potential real-world scenario from the daily life of the pupils. This visual fragment is a general introduction to the theme of 'just war and just peace' for the learning group, providing the teacher a basis upon which to develop the theme through one or more of the impulses and didactic suggestions prepared in this teacher's book.

4.2 JUST WAR AND JUST PEACE: VIDEO CLIP

4.2.1 SCENARIO

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.

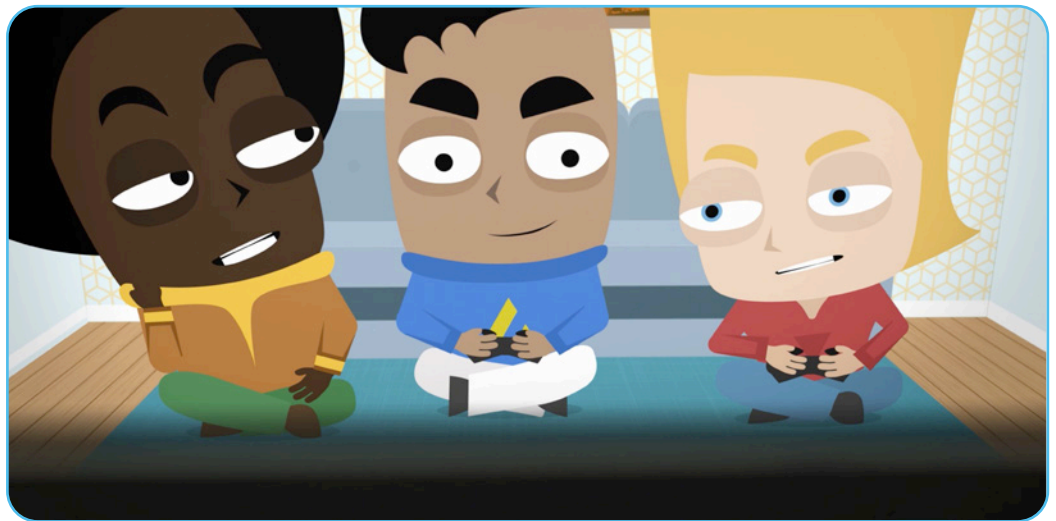


Figure 4.1
The Video Clip

After viewing the video clip, the teacher can start working with one or more of the impulses from this didactic package, following the level of his/her own learning group.

4.2.2 QUIZ: CORRECT ANSWERS

Several questions are introduced in the video clip and focus on the outcome and the concluding message of the story. Through these questions, the students will be stimulated to reflect on the content and meaning of the just war theory. After watching the video clip, these questions can also be a starting point for a class discussion.

After the group of friends have discovered the theory of the just war and the six associated conditions, the pupils are asked a question about each condition in order to become acquainted with the correct meaning of each of these conditions. More information about these conditions can be found in the next chapter (*The just war theory*).

Question 1a: The just war theory talks about 6 conditions to legitimize the use of violence, like 'just cause'. What does this mean?

- Violence can only be used to fight injustice.
- There are several causes for which violence can be used: to fight injustice, to expand national territory or to be one step ahead of the enemy.

Firstly, war requires a just cause. 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.

Question 1b: The just war theory talks about 6 conditions to legitimize the use of violence, like 'right intention'. What does this mean?

- When human rights are violated, it is legitimate to intervene by force.
- It is legitimate to invade another country to secure the natural resources needed to save one's own economy.

The intentions behind the war must be right. It 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.

Question 1c: The just war theory talks about 6 conditions to legitimize the use of violence, like 'last resort'. What does this mean?

- When diplomacy takes too much time and energy for a country to solve a conflict, it is legitimate to go to war immediately.
- Violence should be avoided, it can only be used when all peaceful alternatives have been attempted and exhausted.

War should always be a last resort. 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.

Question 1d: The just war theory talks about 6 conditions to legitimize the use of violence, like 'probability of success'. What does this mean?

- One can only go to war when there is a reasonable chance of success.
- Even if it seems impossible to fight this injustice, one must go to war to fight evil with all means.

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

Question 1e: The just war theory talks about 6 conditions to legitimize the use of violence, like 'proportionality'. What does this mean?

- The means used must be in reasonable relation to the aggressor's violence, and must never go beyond what is necessary to achieve victory.
- When human rights have been violated, any form of violence is legitimated for the fight this injustice.

The means used must be in proportion to the end that the war seeks to achieve.

Question 1f: The just war theory talks about 6 conditions to legitimize the use of violence, like 'competent authority'. What does this mean?

- War can only be declared by lawful authorities entrusted with the responsibility of protecting the common good of society.
- If a group of people is attacked, it is possible for anyone to legitimately declare war.

War must be lawfully declared by a lawful authority. Only leaders of a recognized political community and with the political requirements of that community, can declare war.

At the end of the video clip, the meaning of the just war theory becomes clear. The students are asked the following question about this:

Question 2: What is the purpose of the 'just war theory' in the Catholic tradition?

- It's a theory that condemns any use of force and violence.
- The use of violence and declaring war to spread and protect the Catholic faith is justified by this theory.
- This theory does not intend to legitimize 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.

The just war theory war defines certain conditions for entering an armed conflict and for justifying the use of violence, to postpone the use of violence for as long as possible and to look for other peaceful solutions first. It is invented to avoid the use of violence and war.

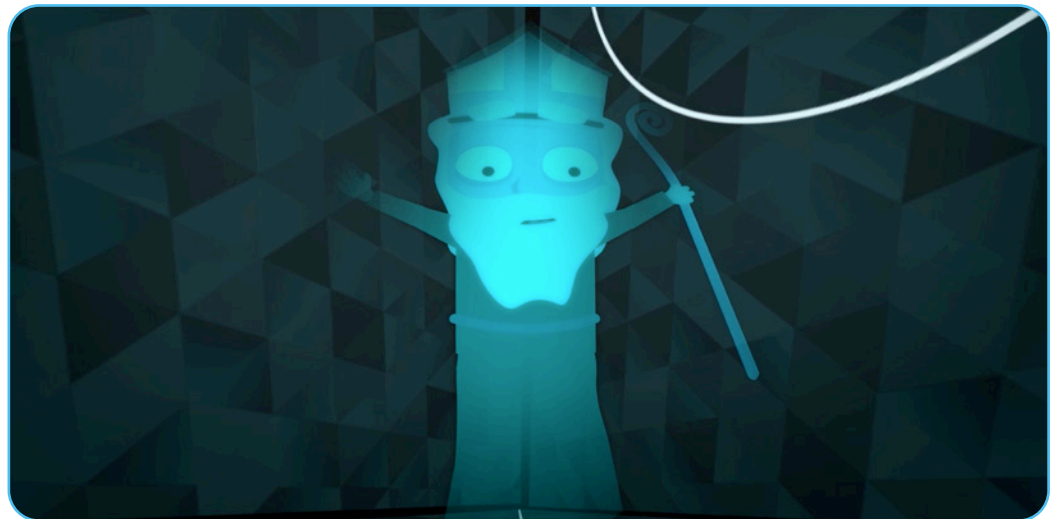


Figure 4.2
The Video Clip

4.3 THE JUST WAR THEORY

4.3.1 INTRODUCTION

The just war theory needs to be framed in the broader context of the debate on the (legitimate) use of violence. The debate on 'war and peace' is universal. It makes us reflect on the limits of what is permissible and also has a long history of reflection in the Catholic tradition.

There are different positions one can take concerning violence. In this module, we will discuss three major currents in the history of the Catholic Church: the attitude of radical pacifism, the idea of "holy war" and prudential pacifism. On the one hand, there is a **radical pacifism** in which war is never tolerated; on the other hand, there is the idea of a **'holy war'** in which the use of violence for certain purposes is accepted. On the other hand, there is also prudential pacifism, an intermediate position in which the use of violence is possible based on certain conditions. How this intermediate position is defined, differs according to context, place and time. A well-known intermediate position amid radical pacifism and an idea of 'holy war' is the **just war theory**. In this way, the just war theory is often presented as a middle ground between the position of radical pacifism and the tradition of holy war.



Figure 4.3

4.3.2 RADICAL PACIFISM AND THE HOLY WAR TRADITION

Pacifism is an attitude that rejects armed violence as a means of resolving conflicts (between states).

In the Catholic tradition, **radical pacifism** originated from the inspiration of Jesus Christ. The radicality of Jesus and the Gospel, the choice for a peaceful, pacifistic lifestyle, led to a clear attitude at the birth of the First Church. Based on the 'Gospel of Peace', including the Sermon on the Mount, any use of violence was refused. Political power building was rejected by the first Christians. For example, it was forbidden to participate in military service, and even police and judicial tasks were rejected because they refused in principle to participate in the death penalty, torture and corporal punishment.

Nevertheless, this position of radical pacifism raises several questions:

- Especially the Old Testament, but also the New Testament has several passages in which violence and war seem to be glorified in the name of God. In the Old Testament, for example, the conquest of the Promised Land in the name of God is considered legitimate. Also, other wars in the name of God seem to be glorified in the Old Testament, with their warriors made into heroes (Joshua, David, Judith, Esther). In the New Testament, the military metaphors of Paul are remarkable. The frequent use of these metaphors indicates that this was more than a literary genre. How should a Christian believer interpret these passages in relation to the position of radical pacifism?
- Radical pacifism can, even today, provoke the following reservations among Christian and Catholic believers: is the attitude of radical pacifism desirable in any situation? Should one 'let oneself be beaten' as a Christian? Should any form of violence be allowed, should injustice not be combated? Should a country remain passive and inactive when it is (unjustly) attacked?

The first Christians thus aspired to a radical pacifist attitude, following the example of Jesus Christ. However, the radical pacifism of Jesus must be put into perspective; in the Bible, there are some passages in which Jesus did not always embody this radical pacifist attitude, for example, the story of the 'Cleaning of the Temple' (see the next chapter in this module).

A radical pacifist attitude in the daily life of the first Christian communities was not always easy or evident. Some Christians left the army after their conversion to Christianity, yet some converts remained at their posts as soldiers. Different opinions were formed among church leaders about

this as early as the first centuries of Christianity. On the one hand, the use of violence went against radical pacifism; on the other hand, in the first centuries of Christianity, the army was used to persecute Christians. Or one was accused of idolatry because the army could demand sacrifice to the emperor.

With the growth of Christianity and the ever-closer bond between Church and State, especially after the Emperor Constantine the Great and the edict of Milan in 313, violence gained more and more religious legitimacy. Tolerance towards Christians who, for example, served in the army became ever greater. After Emperor Theodosius proclaimed Christianity the official state religion of the Roman Empire in 392, it became almost impossible for Christians to distance themselves from politics and related conflicts.

In the name of the defense of the Christian state (with the barbarians attacking the borders of the Roman Empire) and the expansion of Christianity, a divine battle and war was accepted by church leaders. A service to the emperor and the empire was no longer contrary to the service to God. In short, the holy war tradition found its way into Christianity in the early Middle Ages and prepared the way for the crusades between 1096 and 1271. From this perspective, the use of violence for certain (religious) purposes is accepted.

4.3.3 JUST WAR: DEVELOPMENT AND CONTENT

The use of violence in the name of God thus came more and more to the fore within Christianity. In this way, the idea and acceptance of a just war arose in the Middle Ages. An important theologian in this debate was **Augustine of Hippo (354-430)**. In a context of a growing Christianity that should protect and even extend its borders, he outlined the first lines of 'a just war thinking'. If a war did not comply with the following principles, written down by Augustine, one was, according to him, led by hatred and warmongering and waged an unjust war:

- ⇒ A war could only be justified if it was absolutely inevitable and no other means could be found to keep the peace.
- ⇒ A country that refused to retribute something that had come into its possession unlawfully could justly declare war.
- ⇒ Whoever declared war had to behave like a magistrate who passes judgment and punishes the guilty.



Figure 4.4
Oldest image of
Augustine, Rome, 6th
century
Image: Wikimedia
Commons: [https://
commons.wikimedia.
org/wiki/File:Augustine_
Lateran.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Augustine_Lateran.jpg)

Another important figure in the development of the concept of ‘just war’ was the theologian **Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)**, who lived at the time of the Crusades. Based on the principles of Augustine, Thomas Aquinas wrote some theological conclusions in his best-known work ‘Summa Theologica’ (1265).

- ⇒ A war had to be declared by the person in the country concerned who had the highest authority.
- ⇒ The person to whom the war was declared had to have earned it.
- ⇒ The war had to be declared based on a pure intention: let good prevail over evil.

Thomas Aquinas thus stated that the use of violence was not incompatible with the Gospel and the requirement of charity. He described the conditions for entering into conflict and the use of violence (‘ius ad bellum’) as well as the conditions for the use of violence itself, the behavior during war (‘ius in bello’).



Figure 4.5
Thomas Aquinas;
altarpiece by Carlo Crivelli
Image: Wikimedia
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Crivelli_007.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Carlo_Crivelli_007.jpg)

Throughout history, these principles were **further elaborated and developed by various commentators, theologians and philosophers** (such as Francisco de Vitoria, Franciscus Suárez, Hugo de Groot, etc.). The doctrine of the just war had a lasting and important impact on the development of Roman Catholic perspectives on peace, even up now. Philosophers also dissociated the just war theory throughout history from the Christian faith, laying the foundations for international humanitarian law developed in the 19th and 20th centuries.

This brief overview of the history and the development of the just war theory makes it clear that there is no 'one existing just war theory'. The idea of just war must be understood as a tradition through time in which, depending on the context, answers have been given concerning the use of violence and war. Discussions about the conditions of 'a just war' occur in all times.

In general, the following conditions are set today for starting an armed conflict within the just war theory ('*ius ad bellum*')¹:

1. Just cause: Going to war must be based on moral grounds, not purely for self-interest. There must be an extraordinarily compelling reason to go to war, a 'just cause'. For example, in the case of genocide or the extermination of a people by its own state or another state.

2. Right intention: the intention of going to war is very important to ensure that it is a just cause. The intention to go to war must be good, it must be aimed at an ethical goal and ultimately at restoring peace. Is the righteous cause one speaks of in order to go to war the real goal? Is the righteous cause not abused to achieve another goal (e.g. economic interests or dominant geopolitical positions)?

3. Last resort: violence and war should be avoided as much as possible. Only when all alternatives and other peaceful attempts to achieve peace have been exhausted, can one proceed to war. First, all non-military means must be exhausted (diplomatic consultations, political pressure, economic sanctions, etc.). However, it must also be considered to what extent, for example, a prolonged economic sanction affects an innocent population. However, it remains important that a war can only be a completely exceptional and last resort.

4. Probability of success: the chance of success must be real, it is unauthorized to send soldiers on a mission for an unattainable goal. A short, powerful and limited military intervention, as war is often announced, all too often escalates into a prolonged armed conflict.

5. Proportionality: the evil consequences of war must not be greater than the evil to be fought by the war. In doing so, one must look at the loss of human life, material destruction, financial costs and non-material drawbacks, both in the short and long term.

6. Competent authority: military action must be based on a legitimate authority, in particular the political authority which, in a society, is responsible for the common good. War can only be declared by a recognized government. In our day and age, the United Nations Security Council is also an important competent body to ensure respect for international law. The competent authority must formally declare war.

¹ More information? R. BURGGRAEVE, J. DE TAVERNIER & L. VANDEWEYER (ed.), *Van rechtvaardige oorlog naar rechtvaardige vrede: katholieken tussen militarisme en pacifisme in historisch-theologisch perspectief*, Leuven, Universitaire pers Leuven, 1993, p. 268-271.

4.3.4 JUST WAR: MEANING

As already discussed, the history of Christian philosophy on war and peace shows, depending on historical circumstances, a back and forth movement between radical pacifism, holy war, and the just war theory.

The tension between just war and pacifism, two traditions with Jewish and Christian roots, is characteristic throughout time. However, both attitudes are essentially close to each other. Both pacifism and the just war theory have as their point of departure **the avoidance of violence based on a moral duty**. The difference between the two positions revolves around the fact that pacifism interprets this duty as absolute, and that defenders of just war, on the other hand, regard violence under certain conditions as permissible. For example, as stated before, it is not permissible to start a war when there are other means left to solve a problem. The theory of just war explicitly refers to this, so that one never uses unnecessary force or starts military intervention.

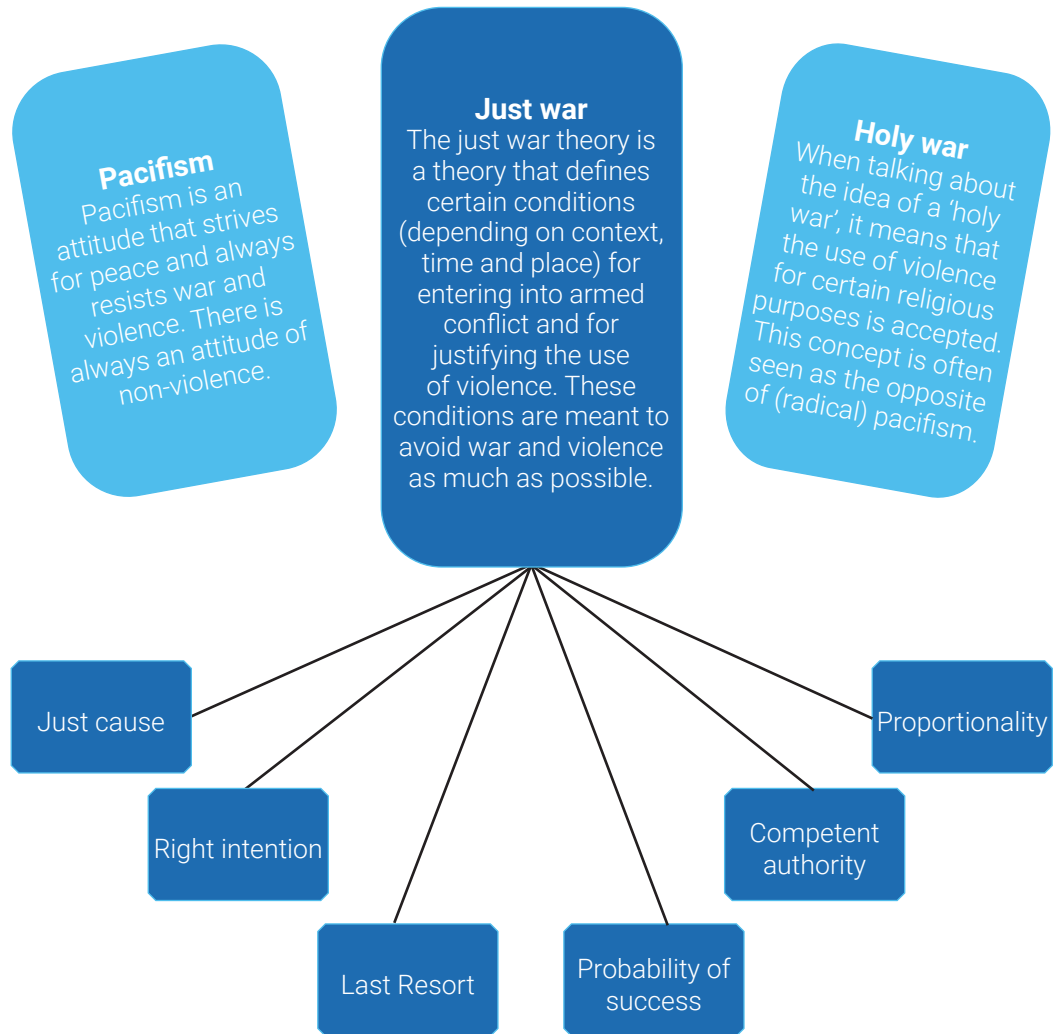
The tradition of just war starts from the radicality of the Gospel and a non-violent charity, and is not a relativization or abolition of this radicality of the Gospel. **The theory provides an overview of criteria for determining in concrete circumstances whether the use of violence and war is justifiable. In other words, it is about a 'justifiable' war instead of a 'just war'.**

War, military intervention and violence must continue to be disturbing thoughts, but also countering all kinds of injustice and oppression is part of evangelical radicalism. **Christians should not only prevent violence and war as much as possible, but they should also stand up for the rights, freedoms and welfare of victims of aggression and injustice** (see further, 'just peace'). Each time from the inspiration to resolve conflicts non-violently and justly. It is thus a **theory to prevent and contain war and violence as much as possible**.

Roger Burggraeve, professor of Ethics (KU Leuven), has studied the concrete meaning of the tradition of just war, and from which perspective this theory should be understood. The Church and ethicists, like Roger Burggraeve, do not see just war as a way of legitimizing or justifying war, but as a theory aimed at *"introducing a certain caution that tries to put off as much as possible the fatal intervention of violence. It is thus a theory that on the one hand wants to postpone violence and war for as long as possible, but on the other hand, it becomes a reality, where people become real victims of intolerable evil."*²

² More information: R. BURGGRAEVE, *De christelijk geïnspireerde vredesethiek in het spanningsveld tussen pacifisme en rechtvaardige oorlog van 1963 tot heden*, in R. BURGGRAEVE, J. DE TAVERNIER & L. VANDEWEYER (ed.), *Van rechtvaardige oorlog naar rechtvaardige vrede: katholieken tussen militarisme en pacifisme in historisch-theologisch perspectief*, Leuven, Universitaire pers Leuven, 1993, p. 253-274.

Summary: In the diagram below, you will find a summary of the most important concepts and terms used in this chapter.



4.3.5 DIDACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

- While looking at the video clip, the students are introduced to the six conditions and the meaning of the just war theory based on a few quiz questions. These quiz questions can be discussed in the classroom after watching the video clip.
- The students are introduced to the concepts of '(in)justice', 'pacifism' and 'holy war'. Can they explain these concepts in their own words and what do they think of these visions?
- The students read the theory about the six conditions for entering a war ('ius ad bellum'). Next, the students solve the following questions:
 - Do the students agree with these conditions, which conditions do they think are important? Which conditions do they disagree with, or find unnecessary? Are these conditions 'enough' for them, or would they make some additions themselves?
- Based on a multiple-choice question, the students reflect on the meaning of the just war theory.
 - 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.
- The students choose one proposition and argue why they agree or disagree with this proposition. Possible propositions:
 - *"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."*

DEEPENING

Bible fragment

The students read the following excerpt from the Bible (Luke 6:27-31) and discuss the following questions.

"[27] But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, [28] bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. [29] If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them.

[30] Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. [31] Do to others as you would have them do to you."

NRSV, Luke 6:27-31.

- Indicate in the text those verses that you do not understand.
- What strikes you in these words of Jesus?
- What do you find feasible or not?
- Does this text, according to you, give guidelines for coming to peace?
- What would you leave out in this text?
- What would you like to add to these words of Jesus?
- Which words of Jesus inspire you to work for peace? Look for some tips yourself.

What's in the news?

The students themselves go in search of current forms of violence and warfare. This can be violence from afar: for example, the war in the Middle East, terrorism, terrorist attacks, violent manifestations in countries, and so on. They can also look for violence from nearby: forms of vandalism, bullying, senseless violence, animal abuse, and so on. Are these forms of violence as bad as warfare? Can you compare this with each other?

The material found is discussed: who is the victim? Where does the situation take place? What is the origin of the violence? In what way can the conflict be solved, or in what way are they trying to solve the conflict? Are other (peaceful) solutions possible? Is it about a 'just war' (to be determined based on the six criteria)? How difficult/easy is it to determine this? What do the pupils think is 'just'?

War and peace?

The following questions can be discussed in a class discussion. The students argue their answer.

- Do you help peace by picking up a gun?
- What is war? What is peace?
- Is peace self-evident? Is war self-evident?
- Does peace mean that everyone can do whatever they want?
- If one has more weapons than the other, are they also stronger?
- If you promise not to use your weapons, should you get rid of them?
- Do you always have to provide protection, even when there is peace?
- Is good and evil the same for everyone?
- Is bullying a kind of warfare?



Figure 4.6
Image: © Priscilla du
Preez | Unsplash

4.4 JESUS: A RADICAL PACIFIST?

This teacher's book makes a distinction between 'basic material' and material for 'deepening' student understanding. This chapter can be used as 'deepening' by the teacher and is not part of the basic package.

Pacifism is an attitude that rejects armed violence as a means of resolving conflicts (between states). An example of absolute non-violence and an attitude of radical pacifism is, according to many Christians, the figure of Jesus Christ. Both in the past and today, the figure of Jesus is often identified with the idea of a radical pacifist attitude. Nevertheless, we can also ask ourselves some questions about this idea of Jesus as a radical pacifist. For example, numerous passages in the Bible show that this idea of Jesus as a radical pacifist is not correct and in which Jesus seems to call for violence.

In this chapter, we look at some passages from the Bible: on the one hand passages in which Jesus calls for non-violence, and on the other hand some passages in which Jesus does not seem to stand for radical non-violence. How did Jesus view non-violence? Was his attitude always radically pacifistic? Was he never angry? How should the passages of the Bible in which he seems to proclaim violence be read, interpreted and understood? How can we understand these contradictory passages of the Bible?

4.4.1 REWARD EVIL WITH EVIL?

Throughout the New Testament, there are several passages in which Jesus proclaims non-violence. Probably the most famous passage is the following fragment from the Sermon on the Mount according to the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 5:38-42):

"[38] You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'

[39] But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; [40] and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; [41] and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. [42] Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you."

In this Bible fragment, the message of non-violence is clearly emphasized. The idea that Jesus puts forward here is a high ideal. Should this text be interpreted literally? No, a symbolic interpretation is important here, as always when interpreting Bible texts. The non-violence of Jesus assumes an **active non-violence** that always recognizes the dignity of all those involved in a conflict. With active non-violence, the focus is not on the enemy, but on the fight against injustice and this in the light of a constructive solution. In line with Jesus' action, the Catholic Church also strives for peace. Many Christians increasingly advocate a just peace. More information can be found in the next chapter.

Another well-known fragment in which Jesus proclaims non-violence can also be found in the Sermon on the Mount according to the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 5:43-45). The emphasis here is on charity. Jesus desires his followers to be a neighbor to people in need concretely and realistically. The idea of active non-violence can also be found in these Bible verses. After all, active non-violence proclaims an attitude of respect towards the enemy, the adversary: ***"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"***. To such an extent that it could even eventually, as a result of a change of conscience, become an ally. After all, evil can only be overcome by good:

"[43] You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

[44] But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

[45] so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous."

Source: NRSV, Matthew 5:43-45.

4.4.2 NOT PEACE, BUT THE SWORD?

The message of the New Testament sounds liberating and evocative to many. Yet in the New Testament, and by extension in the Bible as a whole, several unruly statements can be found that seem to illuminate a message of violence. These passages should not be overlooked. After all, a selective reading of the Bible does injustice to the message of the Christian tradition and can also lead to biblical fundamentalism. How can the Bible passages, in which Jesus seems to proclaim violence, be read, interpreted and understood?

Matthew 26:52 states: *“Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.”*³ Nevertheless, both in the Gospel according to Matthew and in the Gospel according to Luke, we can find a seemingly reversed message. At first sight, Jesus seems to be proclaiming a violent message.⁴

[34] Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

[35] For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law,

[36] a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.

(Matthew, 10:34-36)

[51] Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division.

[52] From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three.

[53] They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

(Luke 12:51-53)

³ NRSV, *Matthew 26:52*, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+5&version=NIV> (access 18.06.2020).

⁴ NRSV, *Luke 12:51-53*, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+12&version=NRSV> (access 18.06.2020).

For many, the above verses are not consistent with the image they have of Jesus. They therefore raise many questions: did Jesus not support peace after all? Did Jesus really call for the use of the sword, and thus for weapons and warfare? Are such passages proof that religion can be dangerous? Don't they lead to radicalization and fundamentalism? How should such passages be interpreted?

As a reader, it is important to look beyond a literal reading and interpretation. After all, a symbolic reading of the story shows that this is not an actual call to armed violence. Taking these Bible fragments out of context and interpreting them in isolation makes it seem at first sight that Jesus was proclaiming a violent message. However, a literal interpretation does not do justice to the symbolic content of the story. The context in which the story takes place shows that Jesus, through imagery, refers to the possible difficulties that Jesus' followers might face if they were the first Christians to stand up for their faith. It is more an imagery that refers to the possible difficulties that Jesus' first followers might encounter. Indeed, the first Christians faced incomprehension and persecution. Jesus' words were therefore rather a sad warning to prepare his followers for the spiritual battle that awaited them, both within and outside the circle of family and friends, and within society (at that time).



Figure 4.7
Image: © Sixteen Miles
Out | Unsplash

4.4.3 A VIOLENT TEMPLE CLEANSING?

One of the most famous examples where Jesus seems to be behaving violently is the 'temple cleansing' that all four Gospels talk about. In the four Gospels, we can read how Jesus expels vendors and money changers from the Temple of Jerusalem. The four versions of the Temple Purification each have their own accents. However, the version of temple cleansing according to the Gospel of John differs from the versions from the other three Gospels.

The four Gospels describe the hard-handed performance of Jesus in the Temple. Jesus lived and preached in a context in which the Temple of Jerusalem was the heart of Judaism. All pious Jews came here to pray and sacrifice. The Temple stood in the middle of a square that was also called 'the court of the Gentiles' because this place was also accessible to non-Jews. In the time of Jesus, this square was occupied by merchants and moneychangers. In the above Bible passages, we read that Jesus protested against the course of events on the square at that time. For him, this was a sign of greed and a great lack of respect for religious (Jewish) worship. He characterized the Temple as an important and especially holy place of contact between man and God. Also, Jesus made it clear to bystanders that he is the Messiah and that the Kingdom of God is near. Jesus' performance in the court of the Temple is also a symbol of the universality of God's message which is no longer connected only to the Temple of Jerusalem. After all, the evangelical stories of temple cleansing contain references to several Old Testament verses (Malachi, Isaiah 56:7 and Psalm 69:10) which indicate that God's message is addressed to all people on earth.

*"Jesus, by his act, ends the temple's reason for existence. And this is apparent from his answer to the question for a sign: "Break down this temple and in three days I will resurrect it". That temple is Jesus himself. No longer will a stone building serve as a meeting place between God and man, but Jesus himself becomes the meeting place between his Father and the believer. Jesus' resurrection made this possible: that is the conclusion of the disciples who remember Jesus' words after his death and resurrection. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross was the only necessary sacrifice. Further sacrifices are no longer necessary. Only pray in spirit and truth as children of one Father: that is what the Christians must do."*⁵

- New Testamentary and Norbertine Filip Noël

⁵ Translation of a Dutch quote: "Jezus beëindigt door zijn daad in feite de bestaansreden van de tempel. En dat blijkt uit zijn antwoord op de vraag naar een teken: 'Breek deze tempel af en in drie dagen zal ik hem doen herrijzen'. Die tempel is Jezus zelf. Niet langer zal een stenen gebouw dienstdoen als ontmoetingsplaats tussen God en mens, maar Jezus zelf wordt de ontmoetingsplaats tussen zijn Vader en de gelovige. Jezus' verrijzenis heeft dit mogelijk gemaakt: dat is de conclusie van de leerlingen die zich Jezus' woorden herinneren na diens dood en verrijzenis. Jezus' offer op het kruis is het enige noodzakelijke offer geweest. Verdere offers zijn niet langer nodig. Alleen bidden in geest en waarheid als kinderen van één Vader: dat moeten de christenen doen."

Jesus Cleanses the Temple - Matthew 21:12-17

[12] Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who were buying and selling in the temple and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. [13] He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer'; but you are making it a den of robbers."

[14] The blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he cured them. [15] But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the amazing things that he did, and heard[d] the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they became angry [16] and said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read, 'Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise for yourself?'"

[17] He left them, went out of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there.

Jesus Cleanses the Temple - Mark 11:15-19

[15] Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves; [16] and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. [17] He was teaching and saying, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers."

[18] And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching.

[19] And when evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.

Jesus Cleanses the Temple - Luke 19:45-48

[45] Then he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling things there; [46] and he said, "It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer'; but you have made it a den of robbers."

[47] Every day he was teaching in the temple. The chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people kept looking for a way to kill him; [48] but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were spellbound by what they heard.

Jesus Cleanses the Temple - John 2:13-22

[13] The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. [14] In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. [15] Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. [16] He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" [17] His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

[18] The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" [19] Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." [20] The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" [21] But he was speaking of the temple of his body. [22] After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

4.4.4 DIDACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

Reward evil with evil? Bible interpretation

The students search individually or in pairs for the meaning of the two fragments from the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:38-42 and Mt 5:43-45). For this assignment, they may use the internet. They must learn to look beyond a literal reading of the story. Through the questions below they look for the core message of the story:

- In the Bible verses, Jesus speaks of *“an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”*. What does this mean? What does he think of this principle? Does he want you to take revenge on others just like that?
- In the Bible text, it is also written: *“if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also”*. What would Jesus mean by this? Does he mean this literally? Do you really have to show your other cheek to someone who hits you? Does this mean that Christians should never defend themselves against a violent attack?
- *“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you”*. What does this mean? What do you think of this? Do you think this is a viable ideal?

The students reflect on the following propositions.

- *“Violence can only be stopped by violence.”*
- *“If somebody hits me, I have to strike back, or I am a coward.”*
- *“If someone hits me, I do not hit back, or I will stoop to the level of the other.”*
- *“Loving your enemy is not feasible.”*

Not peace, but the sword? Bible interpretation

The Bible verses Matthew 10:34-36 and Luke 12:51-53 are read in class. Then the students are given time to formulate individually some reflections on the Bible fragments. They indicate in the Bible fragments the things they do not understand and the things that strike into them. Next, they write down some questions they would like to ask Jesus based on these verses. These questions are discussed in class. In this way, the students reflect together on the symbolic interpretation of the story.

A violent temple cleansing? Bible interpretation

Numerous stories from the Bible have been a source of inspiration for many artists for centuries. The students search for works of art based on temple cleansing as described in the four Gospels. They individually answer the following questions:

- On which of the four Gospels is this work of art about temple cleansing based?
- Summarize the story based on the artwork. What is depicted in the painting? Which characters are depicted in the painting?
- What similarities and differences do you see between the Bible story and the painting?

A violent temple cleansing? Writing assignment

The students write a newspaper article about what happened during the temple cleansing. In this newspaper article, they summarize the event. They implement a short interview with Jesus. Also, they let a few bystanders speak: what is their reaction to this event?

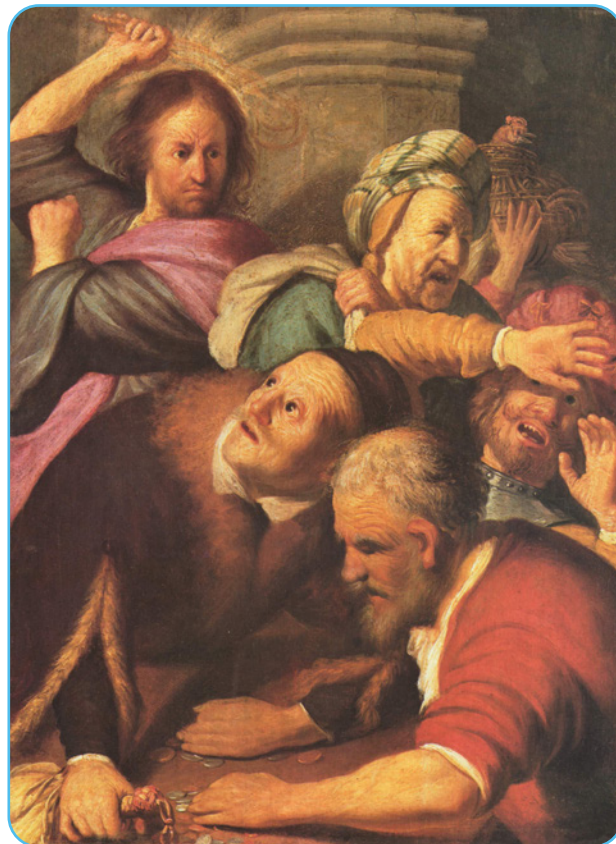


Figure 4.8
Rembrandt van Rijn
– 'Christ driving the
money-changers from
the Temple'
Image: Wikimedia
Commons: [https://
commons.wikimedia.
org/wiki/File:Rembrandt_
Christ_Driving_the_
Money_Changers_from_
the_Temple.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rembrandt_Christ_Driving_the_Money_Changers_from_the_Temple.jpg)

4.5 THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE JUST WAR THEORY

This teacher's book makes a distinction between 'basic material' and material for 'deepening' student understanding. This chapter can be used as 'deepening' by the teacher and is not part of the basic package.

The just war theory found its roots in early Christianity and the Christian tradition. Developed over time and under the influence of various theologians, philosophers and other commentators and their own time spirit, we still speak today about the just war theory. As already mentioned, there is not one single just war theory, but rather this theory should be seen as a kind of tradition that has developed over time and is subject to change according to context, time and place.

The tension between waging war to fight injustice, and a non-violent, pacifist attitude is of all times, which can also be found in the recent history of the Catholic Church. In what follows, we will discuss some significant developments throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, and briefly highlight how the Catholic Church has positioned herself from the 20th century to the present day against the theory of just war.

4.5.1 A NEW PERSPECTIVE?

A significant event in the 20th century that had a great impact on the way we think about war and peace was the use of 'new' weapons and their destructive power, especially the atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These two air raids were carried out by the American Air Force in August 1945 and had dramatic consequences: around 250,000 people died and hundreds of thousands more lost their lives because of radiation sickness and cancer.

The extent of the power of these **modern weapons** was previously unimaginable. For some, this was a sign to no longer justify war and to adopt a radical pacifist attitude. For others, on the other hand, it meant paying more attention than ever before to the conditions for entering into conflict or not entering into violence ('ius ad bellum'), and especially to the conditions of the use of force itself, the behavior during war ('ius in bello'). In any case, the new, modern way of warfare in the 20th century gave a new impulse to the debate about the tradition of just war.

The debate on war and peace, and in particular just war thinking, with modern atomic weapons in the background, was also conducted in the Catholic Church. Pope John XXIII (1958-1963) published the encyclical '**Pacem in Terris**', 'Peace on Earth', on April 11, 1963. This encyclical reflects Pope John XXIII's vision of world peace. In the context of the post-war period and the beginning of the Cold War at that time, the conviction grew in John XXIII that the Church should insist more strongly on peace.

Some important elements of this encyclical⁶:

- Human rights and religious freedom are given an important place in the encyclical. Peace is only possible if the rights and dignity of all human beings are respected.
- Lasting peace is only possible if the following four pillars are guaranteed: truth, justice, love and freedom.
- Pope John XXIII expressed his hope in the United Nations (UN) as an instrument for maintaining and strengthening overall world peace. In addition, Pope John XXIII stressed that peace is not only the work of governments and international institutions, but also needs cooperation between people with respect for human rights.
- This encyclical was addressed to 'all people of goodwill', a first in the ecclesiastical discourse to address non-Catholics as well. Every human being has a longing for peace and an end to conflict. That is why this encyclical is not only a matter for believers, but for everyone (individuals and states).
- The encyclical goes away from the idea of a just war. The destructive power of nuclear weapons showed that violence can never be acceptable. War and violence are never the solution. Church leaders no longer worked on a doctrine of just war but emphasized a doctrine of peace. The emphasis shifted to the prevention of military conflicts. This did not mean, however, that the tradition of just war was completely rejected, the argument of self-defense as a just cause continued to be justified, but there was a more explicit plea to avoid violence and war.
- It was not the first time that a pope published a document on peace, but the impact of this encyclical cannot be underestimated. This is related to the figure of Pope John XXIII, but also to the simple language used in this document. It was a benchmark in ecclesiastical speaking about peace.

"Yet peace is but an empty word, if it does not rest upon that order which Our hope prevailed upon Us to set forth in outline in this encyclical. It is an order that is founded on truth, built up on justice, nurtured and animated by charity, and brought into effect under the auspices of freedom."

– Pacem in Terris, 167

⁶ VATICAN.VA, *Pacem in Terris*, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html (access 15.06.2020).

The content of the **'Catechism of the Catholic Church'**⁷ is in line with thinking about war and peace, such as the encyclical *'Pacem in Terris'*. The theory of just war is also discussed in the Catechism, but there is also a clear disapproval of the use of atomic, chemical and biological weapons:

Paragraph number 2309:

⇒ The strict conditions for legitimate defense by military force require rigorous consideration. The gravity of such a decision makes it subject to rigorous conditions of moral legitimacy. At one and the same time:

- the damage inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or community of nations must be lasting, grave, and certain;
- all other means of putting an end to it must have been shown to be impractical or ineffective;
- there must be serious prospects of success;
- the use of arms must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated. The power of modern means of destruction weighs very heavily in evaluating this condition.

These are the traditional elements enumerated in what is called the 'just war' doctrine.

The evaluation of these conditions for moral legitimacy belongs to the prudential judgment of those who have responsibility for the common good.

Paragraph number 2314:

⇒ *"Every act of war directed to the indiscriminate destruction of whole cities or vast areas with their inhabitants is a crime against God and man, which merits firm and unequivocal condemnation."* A danger of modern warfare is that it provides the opportunity to those who possess modern scientific weapons especially atomic, biological, or chemical weapons - to commit such crimes.

⁷ VATICAN.VA, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p3s2c2a5.htm (access 15.06.2020).

In the (post)modern context, the use of nuclear weapons and the development of all kinds of weapons of destruction have caused the age-old doctrine of just war to be increasingly questioned today. **The framework of just war no longer seems to be sufficient as a contemporary answer to the thinking about war and peace.** Various theologians have also described the tradition of just war as obsolete and are increasingly emphasizing the success of non-violence. The prevention of conflict and the building of a lasting peace is more and more put forward as a moral framework by the Church leaders of the Catholic Church. See also the chapter on 'just peace'.

Since 2010, more and more voices have appeared within the Catholic Church to develop a new moral framework for war and peace. Partly under the influence of the refugee crisis and terrorist attacks, the call for a new encyclical, to Pope Francis, on war and peace is growing: a new encyclical in which the tradition of just war is no longer the starting point?



Figure 4.9
Image: © Free-Photos
Pixabay

4.5.2 DIDACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

Encyclical

The students search for more information about the encyclical '*Pacem in Terris*' and write a paper in which the following questions can be addressed: in what context did this encyclical come about? How was this encyclical received by church leaders and/or the wider audience of believers? Were there supporters and/or opponents of this encyclical? Which passage did you find inspiring? Which passage do you agree or disagree with?

Catechism

What is the Catechism? The students search individually or in a group for more information about the Catechism. What is characteristic of a Catechism? The students explain the Catechism just war theory in their own words the Catechism using the paragraphs in the Catechism.

Debate

The teacher divides the class into two groups. One group defends the doctrine of just war, the other group argues for a new moral framework in which lasting peace is paramount. Both groups seek arguments for their own point of view and learn to react to what others bring against their points of view during the debate.

Research

The students are given the task of looking for some articles on the current position of the Church, or certain cardinals/theologians, on the tradition of just war today.

Peace movements

The students go in search of contemporary (Christian) peace movements, for example Pax Christi. They compare the position of the Catholic Church with that of the (Christian) peace movements. In what way do these different positions resemble each other and in what way do they differ? Consider motives, arguments and initiatives.

4.6 JUST PEACE

This teacher's book makes a distinction between 'basic material' and material for 'deepening' student understanding. This chapter can be used as 'deepening' by the teacher and is not part of the basic package.

The just war theory places limits on the way war is waged and puts peace first. Throughout the history of Christianity, there have always been proponents and opponents of this theory. Since the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), there has been a growing call from members of the Catholic Church to shift from a 'just war' to a 'just peace'. Indeed, the experiences and consequences of the two World Wars had left a deep impression on peace thinking, both within and outside the Catholic Church. After all, these two World Wars clarified the undeniable importance of a future-oriented peace-building process. This was absent in the aftermath of the First World War. An absence that in this way contributed to the success of the extremist parties of the time, such as Nazism. Other developments of the 20th and 21st centuries, such as the use of nuclear weapons, weapons of destruction and various forms of terror, also heightened criticism of the theory of just war. For many, this doctrine needs to be revised in the light of today's society and the developments just mentioned. Righteous peace is being put forward more and more often. What does this mean, 'just peace'? We will sketch a brief overview below.

4.6.1 JUST PEACE?

Not every peace is good. Even during periods when war seems to be absent, peace is sometimes based on the oppression and exploitation of individuals. For many, peace can only be 'good' if it is just. Ethicist Roger Burggraeve argues that 'justice' and 'peace' should never be separated: *"The Christian tradition has always been sensitive to the tension between peace and justice. Justice and peace must not be separated. Peace can only be a true peace if it is also a righteous reason."*⁸

'Just peace' should be understood as a plea to focus more on a preventive approach to the root causes of armed conflict, on the one hand, and to shed light on the construction of an inclusive and just peace, on the other hand. Just peace is based on the evangelical message of non-violence. Note that just peace does not put forward radical non-violence. After all, the ideal of non-violence should not be misused to help individuals who are suffering from exploitation: *"Only exceptionally may proportional violence be used to remedy injustice. By speaking of just peace rather than just war, we emphasize the criterion of the 'just cause'."*⁹

⁸ Translation of a Dutch quote: *"De christelijke traditie is steeds gevoelig geweest voor de spanning tussen vrede en rechtvaardigheid. [...] Rechtvaardigheid en vrede mogen niet van elkaar gescheiden worden. Vrede kan alleen maar een waarachtige vrede zijn als ze ook een rechtvaardige rede is."* Source: R. BURGGRAEVE, J. DE TAVERNIER & L. VANDEWEYER (ed.), *Van rechtvaardige oorlog naar rechtvaardige vrede: katholieken tussen militarisme en pacifisme in historisch-theologisch perspectief*, Leuven, Universitaire pers Leuven, 1993, p. 253-274.

⁹ Translation of a Dutch quote by Johan De Tavernier: *"Alleen uitzonderlijk mag proportioneel geweld worden gebruikt om onrecht te herstellen. Door eerder te spreken over rechtvaardige vrede dan over rechtvaardige oorlog, benadrukken we het criterium van de 'rechtvaardige zaak'."* Source: S. WAL-RAEVENS, *Dossier Oorlog en Vrede*, in *Tertio*, nr. 1004, 8 May 2019.

In summary: violence should not only be postponed. We must also build a just society where violence and oppression are absent. Moreover, during conflicts, one must 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.

On the initiative of *'the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace'* and *'Pax Christi International'*, an international conference on 'Nonviolence and Just Peace' took place in Rome in April 2016. This conference advocated a shift of the Church from a theory of just war to a theory of just peace. In the final declaration of the conference, the Catholic Church is not only called upon to put just peace at the center, but also to **actively promote** it by, for example, offering support to peace activists who oppose injustice. The final declaration also calls on the Catholic Church to remain resolutely opposed to war and violent conflict. The desire for interfaith dialogue on non-violence is also expressed in this document. Finally, the conference also wanted to contribute to a new encyclical on war and peace. The last encyclical on this subject, *'Pacem in Terris'*, was published in 1963 at the hands of Pope John XXIII.

Pax Christi summarized the results of the 2016 conference as follows:

"At the end of the congress, the participants issued a statement addressed to the Church. In it they state that the Church should not only focus on non-violence and the road to just peace but should also actively promote it. The Church should defend and support peace activists who are non-violent in resisting injustice. Furthermore, the Church should remain unequivocally opposed to war and violent struggle - and weapons of mass destruction such as nuclear weapons - and engage in a dialogue on non-violence within the Church and with people with different philosophies of life. In the final declaration, the signatories also address Pope Francis, asking him to share with the world an encyclical on non-violence and just peace".

– Pax Christi¹⁰

¹⁰ Quote: PAX CHRISTI, *Oproep van de Internationale Vredesbeweging aan de Kerk. Zet de evangelische geweldloosheid centraal*, <https://www.paxchristi.be/nieuws/oproep-van-de-internationale-vredesbeweging-aan-de-kerk-zet-de-evangelische-geweldloosheid> (access 14.05.2020).

4.6.2 DIDACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

- Together with the students, look for the differences between the just war theory and the just peace theory.
- Debate: the class will be divided into three groups. Each group is assigned a theory that looks at war in a certain way: the just war theory, radical pacifism and the just peace theory. The three groups each defend the theory assigned to them and enter into debate with each other. The debate can be conducted based on different questions or propositions. For example, what is the position of the three groups concerning the concept of 'holy war'?
- Forwarding sheet: each student is given a sheet with a statement. Every pupil writes his opinion underneath the statement. After the sheet has been circulated throughout the whole class, a student from the class group summarizes the reactions to the rest of the group. Based on this, a class discussion can be started.
 - o Examples of propositions
 - *"Starting a war is always wrong."*
 - *"The Catholic Church can play an important role in promoting global peace."*
 - *"The just war theory is outdated. It's time for a different approach in the form of just peace."*
 - *"Any peace is good."*



Figure 4.10
Image: © Pixel2013
Pixabay

4.7 GLOSSARY

In this glossary you will find more information and an explanation of certain concepts.

Note: The words marked with an asterisk () are also listed in the basic vocabulary list for pupils.*

* 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

4.8 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 SUCCES: (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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