

For the Greater Good  
YHH426

### For the Greater Good

Despite the fact that in the Bible God demanded that we follow the Ten Commandments, the fifth of which is to never kill, it also says, "There is a time for everything... a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace" (Ecclesiastes 3:8). Although it sounds contradictory, killing and violence -- in the Bible -- can be justifiable under certain circumstances: in self-defense, when defending others, and when defending one's beliefs. If I had to choose between risking the lives of my crewmen and myself in order to respect a shipmate's moral decision, or convincing this shipman that killing is acceptable during wartime, I would definitely pick the latter. This dilemma does not entail prioritizing either faith or patriotism; in this specific case, since my crew is in a "time for war" and fighting for what we believe in, the Fifth commandment does not apply to us; according to the apostolic tradition the Fifth commandment is about not becoming murderers -- soldiers are simply doing their job.

Although the Catholic Church stresses the importance of preserving life, no matter the stage of life or how wicked the life is, it also has a policy known as the just war doctrine. Typically, Christians should promote peace and leave violence as a last resort, but the just war doctrine acknowledges that violence *is* a resort and that Christians must not be afraid to fight when it is called for. Paragraph 2309 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church emphasizes this doctrine through five main points: the strict conditions must call for war, the damage of the aggressor must be grave, other means to avoid the war are impractical and ineffective, there must

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be serious prospects of success, and the use of arms must not produce graver evil than the enemy itself. This doctrine and many segments of the Bible, like Ecclesiastes 3:8, support the fact that there will be times when one must fight. If ancient Christians never fought for what they believed in -- even through non-violence -- Christian life today may not have existed.

Though it is a mortal sin, the Church recognizes a difference between murder and killing in the line of duty. Actually, instead of condemning it, the Church has often praised the courage soldiers have -- it is a Cardinal virtue after all. During the crusades, for example, the Church promised eternal paradise and martyrdom to those who fought in the war. Similarly, the Catholic Church has canonized many saints who have participated in violent wars -- the most famous of which is Joan of Arc. She fought gruesome battles during the Hundred Year's War, and is still praised for her loyalty to France. Though she killed in the name of her country -- a name she died for as well -- no one questions whether she deserves the title of sainthood, and no one should! The list of instances in which Christians have entered or supported wars goes on and on, and proves that killing for a cause has been, not only accepted, but at times glorified by the Church throughout history.

Considering these arguments, I would remind my shipmate how the Church takes a moral stand against evil in the world, and that sometimes it becomes necessary to use violence. If he still failed to see how killing is justifiable under the circumstances, I would point out how he is, as my only missile officer, responsible for the lives of the other crewmen -- that even though he may not be "pulling the trigger", if the others die, it will be because of his inaction and lack of

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willpower. I would take his new religion into consideration, but it would be my duty to remind him that he has an obligation to himself and the fellow crewmen. Sometimes one must sacrifice an individual aspect for the benefit of the greater good; the end does not justify the means, but as this scenario did not provide many alternatives, there is only one just course to follow, one just cause -- to protect the fellow crewmen and to complete the mission.