

# The Theory of a Just War

## A Traditional Ethical Value Gone Bankrupt

### PART I

From Gospel times, the Church has prized the spirit of non-violence based on the teaching and example of Jesus, the Prince of Peace. This is one of the reasons why the earliest Christians did not take part in military service. There was even a strong tendency in early Christianity towards pacifism.



The Fathers of the Church (especially St. Ambrose and St. Augustine), emphasized the primacy of self-sacrificing love, going so far as to state that Christians as individuals had no right to self-defense. Christians, however, were allowed to take part in communal defense if the war was considered just.

The theory of the just war, beginning with St. Augustine and developed more elaborately by subsequent Catholic theologians (especially Aquinas and Francis Suarez), required that these conditions be met:

1) The war must be declared only as a last resort by a lawful authority; 2) The just cause of the war was to be ratified by

using just means, and in light of reasonable expectation of success; 3) The military action must not produce a greater evil than the one it sought to correct.

Even if one accepts the just war ethic (and one has to see this theological rationale against the limited circumstances of the 4th century of Augustine and then again against Medieval situations of the 13th century of Aquinas), there are two very basic considerations that must be examined, if this ethic can be normative for a person of our times.

First, the person who is trying to form his conscience on the matter must judge whether or not the end achieved by a particular war is proportionate, in any degree, to the devastation wrought by that war. This is not an optional criterion; that is to say, one is not free to include or exclude this factor in the making of his judgment. It is an integral part of the criteria on which a just war can be waged.

Second, one needs to ask the serious question: Is the cause just? Are just means being used? Is there reasonable expectation of success? And the just means has to do with types of weaponry: obliterating bombing techniques, indiscriminate killing of non-combatants, devastation of environment with residual effects carrying over into prolonged

periods of time, massive relocations of peoples, genocide or disturbance of biogenic factors among the people under assault, etc.

There are some serious students of the problem who believe that just war in our contemporary technological world is impossible. They marshal evidence in their behalf not just in terms of the ultimate weapons of our times (the technological factor), but also in terms of actual military strategy (the technical factor) which has come to be accepted as standard procedure in either declared and/or guerrilla warfare. These same students cite the statement of Pope John in *Pacem in Terris*:

"Therefore, in the age of ours which prides itself on its atomic power, it is irrational to believe that war is still an apt means of vindicating violated rights."

Vatican II took a stance against total warfare, when it declared:

"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 condemnation." (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. which merits firm and unequivocal 80).

— to be continued —

### Guest Columnist

## The Bread of Life and Unity

By Father Edwin R. Wedow

One of the most baffling problems I have found in our Faith is the increasing numbers of people receiving the Bread of Life without changing the profile and mores of our society. Therefore, may I share some thoughts with you about the Bread of Life and unity which I recently read in a booklet entitled: "In The Spirit", published by the W. H. Sadlier Co.



The Son of God came to us to gather scattered children of God into unity by teaching us to love and by enabling us to love. Because He loved us, Jesus made us the loved ones of God. As such, we are truly lovable, capable of being loved. Thus, community is created by love and nourished by love. The Holy Eucharist is both a sign of Christ's love and a source of love in the Church — and the sign and source of the unity of the Church as well.

Christians celebrate the mystery of the Lord's Supper "in the breaking of the bread."

Father Wedow is pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas Church, Leicester; St. Lucy's Church, Retsof; St. Raphael's Church, Piffard.

Obviously this involves a meal, yet it is not primarily a meal but a prayer of thanks and praise, an act of worship which takes the shape of a meal to symbolize the union between God and man and, as we have recently experienced at Thanksgiving time, meals are more than nourishment. At the great moments of life — Baptism, First Communion, Confirmation, birthdays, weddings, Christmas — the family dinner and exchange of gifts are outward indications of our joy in being together and sharing life. So the Eucharist is a joyous celebration of what God has already for us in Christ: a sign of the unity we already possess through Him and with Him and in Him.

At Mass God's people gather together to renew their covenant with Him. As we listen to His Word with faith and respond to this Word with love, we make it clear that we share God's life as His children. Christ, in union with His people, glorifies God by this

visible sign of unity with Him and with one another. As brothers and sisters in Christ we thankfully recall God our Father's many acts of love for us. We then express our family unity and oneness in this holy Meal.

In the Eucharist, the risen Christ, our High Priest, continues to pray for unity and to give Himself to the Father in His great act of love to overcome sin and its disintegrating effects. The Eucharistic banquet is a foretaste of the heavenly banquet which Jesus assures us, we will share with Him: "My Father conferred a Kingdom on me: you will eat and drink at my table" (Lk. 22:30).

It is with joy and hope and courage that in the Eucharistic liturgy we proclaim the meaning and power and effects of the Lord's death "until He comes." Christ continues to worship the Father in heaven. The earthly liturgy of the Church is attuned to the heavenly liturgy as unceasingly we pray: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts . . ."

It is at the Liturgy of the Eucharist that we celebrate the central truth, the reality of our Faith: "Christ has died — Christ is Risen — Christ will come again."

### Editorial

## 1972 and a Church on the Move

The start of the new year seems a propitious time to reflect on what is perhaps the newest and most striking characteristic of the Church — its mobility.

It is evidenced not only in changes in liturgy but in structure, world stance, and attitude.

Only a little over four years ago the first English translation of the Roman Canon was introduced in the United States. And it was just three years ago, Jan. 1, 1969, that the first of the new translations of the International Committee on English in the Liturgy was introduced in this country.

Since then, special liturgies for such holidays as Thanksgiving, and for such events as funerals have been incorporated.

On the world stage, the Church, under the leadership of the traveler Pope, has been increasingly forceful in efforts to make a rapprochement with unfriendly nations.

An archbishop has visited Moscow and has talked with Polish representatives at the Vatican. Other papal representatives have visited Czechoslovakia and met with government officials.

President Tito of Yugoslavia visited the Vatican, the first head of a Communist state to do so, and Cardinal Josef Mindszenty left Hungary, thereby paving the way for more amicable relations between Rome and that country.

And, of course, the big question now is "what about Peking?" Obviously maneu-

vering is taking place on both sides. The sudden appearance of a cross on a Catholic Church in Peking is symbolic of Communist China's desire to make some sort of move to harmony.

History, of course, shows that honesty is not one of the characteristics of totalitarian governments so the Church should move cautiously in such directions. But move it must. A Greek philosopher said, "A ship is safe in harbor but that's not what ships are built for."

So, too, the Church may be safe from criticism by not taking bold steps. But then again that's not what the Church was built for. And this Catholic Church of the late 20th Century is becoming in deed as well as theory the Pilgrim Church.