

Just War Theory, Moral Injury, and the War in Ukraine

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“Peace be with you.” I often begin my lectures and presentations to Catholics about war, peace, and ethics with this greeting. Jesus greeted his disciples saying it, “*Shalom aleikem*.”¹ Saint Paul, too, repeatedly wrote it at the beginning of his epistles, though the apostle added the word “grace” into the customary “peace” greeting.² These words are also said more than once during the Mass: “Peace be with you” is followed by the response “And with your spirit.” Indeed, that word “peace” surfaces throughout the liturgy: in the petitions, the *Gloria*, the Communion Rite and eucharistic prayers, the passing of the peace, the *Agnus Dei*, and the benediction. If, as the *Dogmatic Constitution of the Church (Lumen Gentium)* claims, “The Eucharist is ‘the source and summit of the Christian life’”³ – forming, informing, and transforming who we are and how we live, individually and communally – then, so too is the peace that we receive and share during the Mass our starting point and our aim. Of course, the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* explicitly makes this connection: “In particular, the Eucharistic celebration, ‘the source and summit of the Christian life,’ is a limitless wellspring for all authentic Christian commitment to peace.”⁴ Such peace, as the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et spes)* notes, “is not merely the absence of war” but, rather, is “based on justice and love” and “must be built up ceaselessly.”⁵ It is what Pope Francis, in *Fratelli Tutti*, calls a “true peace,” a “real and lasting peace,” and a “genuine and lasting peace.”⁶ Hence, the pope appeals to the “the dream of working together for justice and peace” and a “new world...where justice and peace are resplendent.”⁷ The Church, he says, should “give birth” to this just peace in the world.⁸

¹ For example, Luke 24:35; John 20:19, 21, 26.

² For example, Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; Philippians 1:2; Colossians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:2; Philemon 1:3.

³ Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution of the Church (Lumen Gentium)*, §11, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html; see also *Catechism*, §1324, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P3X.HTM.

⁴ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2004), §519. Moreover, the next-to-last footnote (#1102), which is by far the longest in that chapter, highlights the emphasis on peace that runs throughout the Mass. Similarly, the United States Catholic Bishops have taught, “The Mass in particular is a unique means of seeking God’s help to create the conditions essential for true peace in ourselves and in the world” (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response* [Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1983], §295). One of my teachers, Stanley Hauerwas, similarly claimed, “Reflection on the eucharist is...a ‘natural’ place to consider...the ethics of war” (*In Good Company: The Church as Polis* [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995], 162).

⁵ Second Vatican Council, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et spes)*, §77-78, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html. See also the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §2304, http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p3s2c2a5.htm.

⁶ Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, §4, 229, 127, 217, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html.

⁷ *Ibid.*, §30, 278.

⁸ *Ibid.*, §278.

Just Peace, Just War, and *Jus Post Bellum*

Accordingly, in recent years, Catholic theologians and ethicists have suggested a “just peace” or “integral peace” approach to the ethics of war and peace.⁹ Over the centuries, there were two main perspectives: pacifism (nonviolence) and just war. While just war theory was prominent through most of the Catholic moral tradition, nonviolence has become more prevalent in the decades since the Second Vatican Council. Indeed, in April 2016, a group of peacemakers, led by Pax Christi International and hosted by the Pontifical Council on Justice and Peace, issued an “Appeal to the Catholic Church to Re-Commit to the Centrality of Gospel Nonviolence.”¹⁰ This statement implored the Church to no longer teach or use just war theory and instead to shift to, centralize, and commit itself to nonviolence and just peace. For his part, Pope Francis, too, has emphasized nonviolence and has expressed skepticism about just war, even though he continues to recognize what the *Catechism* refers to as “legitimate defense.”¹¹ I will not devote further attention here to the ongoing debate amongst theological ethicists about the place of just war or nonviolence in current Church teaching as it is developing, or to the question of which side in the present war between Russia and Ukraine is just or unjust.¹² Regardless of one’s position on these questions, *for all* Catholics a genuine and lasting peace – a just peace – should be our fundamental orientation, guiding direction, and overarching goal. Indeed, even from a just war perspective, the *jus ad bellum* criterion of right intent entails seeking a just peace. As Louis V. Iasiello, Rear Admiral in the Chaplain Corps of the US Navy, once put it, “the ultimate goal of all just conflicts [is] the establishment of a just and lasting peace.”¹³ Hence, in recent years, also, theologians, philosophers, and ethicists have added a third category of principles and practices to just war theory; in addition to *jus ad bellum* (criteria that must be satisfied to justify going to war) and *jus in bello* (criteria that must be satisfied for the conduct during war to be considered just), there is now, also, *jus post bellum*, or post-war justice, with principles and

⁹ Lisa Sowle Cahill, “Just War, Pacifism, Just Peace, and Peacebuilding,” *Theological Studies* 80, no. 1 (March 2019): 169-185; Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Blessed Are the Peacemakers: Pacifism, Just War, and Peacebuilding* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2019); Eli Sasaran McCarthy, *Becoming Nonviolent Peacemakers: A Virtue Ethic for Catholic Social Teaching and U.S. Policy* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012); and Maryann Cusimano Love, *Just Peace in Practice* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019); Maryann Cusimano Love, “What Kind of Peace Do We Seek? Emerging Norms of Peacebuilding in Key Political Institutions,” in *Peacebuilding: Catholic Theology, Ethics, and Praxis*, eds. Robert J. Schreiter, R. Scott Appleby, and Gerard F. Powers (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 56-57; Gerard Powers, “Toward an Integral Catholic Peacebuilding,” *The Journal of Social Encounters* 1, no. 1 (2017): 1-13; Tobias Winright, “Your ‘just peace’ reading list,” *National Catholic Reporter* (December 21, 2016): <https://www.ncronline.org/books/2022/10/your-just-peace-reading-list>; Tobias Winright, “Peace on Earth, Peace with Earth: *Laudato Si’* and Integral Peacebuilding,” in *All Creation Is Connected: Voices in Response to Pope Francis’s Encyclical on Ecology*, ed. Daniel R. DiLeo (Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2018), 195-211; Tobias Winright, “A Just Mining Framework for the Ethics of Extraction of Natural Resources and Integral Peace,” in *Catholic Peacebuilding and Mining: Integral Peace, Development, and Ecology*, eds. Gerard F. Powers and Caesar A. Monteverchio (London: Routledge, 2022), 95-116. Pope Pius XII mentioned “integral peace” in his 1942 Christmas Message, “The Internal Order of States and People,” <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius12/p12ch42.htm>.

¹⁰ “Appeal to the Catholic Church to Re-Commit to the Centrality of Gospel Nonviolence,” April 2016, available at Catholic Nonviolence Initiative, a Project of Pax Christi International, <https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/appeal-to-the-catholic-church/>.

¹¹ See Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, §258; Pope Francis, “Nonviolence: a style of politics for peace,” December 8, 2016, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20161208_messaggio-1-giornata-mondiale-pace-2017.html; Philip Pulella, “Pope says supplying weapons to Ukraine is morally acceptable for self defence,” *Reuters*, 16 September 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/pope-says-supplying-weapons-ukraine-is-morally-acceptable-self-defence-2022-09-15/>; *Catechism*, §2307-2317.

¹² For my assessment, see Tobias Winright, “Ukraine and the Ethics of War: The Possibility of a Just War,” *Commonweal* 150, no. 5 (May 2023): 24-28.

¹³ Louis V. Iasiello, “*Jus Post Bellum*: The Moral Responsibilities of Victors in War,” *Naval War College Review* 57, nos. 3/4 (Summer/Autumn 2004): 33.

practices to establish and sustain a just and lasting peace.¹⁴ And that just and lasting peace is rightly intended for *all* who are involved and affected, including enemies. As Saint Augustine instructed, “Therefore, even in waging war, cherish the spirit of a peacemaker, that, by conquering those whom you attack, you may lead them back to the advantages of peace.”¹⁵ Augustine also held that the just warrior must possess a spirit of mournfulness.¹⁶ Thus, the U.S. Catholic bishops note that “the possibility of taking even one human life is a prospect we should consider in fear and trembling,”¹⁷ and that “even the most justifiable defensive war” is to be regarded “only as a sad necessity.”¹⁸

The Wounds of War and Moral Injury

Of course, in all wars – both just and unjust ones – there is the absence of a just peace. Combatants wound others, and they are wounded; they kill others, and they are killed. Civilians, too, suffer injuries and death. As the U.S. Catholic bishops have observed, “war, by definition, involves violence, destruction, suffering, and death.”¹⁹ To be sure, the devastation, dismemberment, displacement, and death from what Pope Francis calls “a third world war fought piecemeal” in places such as Syria, Myanmar, and “everywhere in Africa,” are a far cry from the true, real, and genuine peace that the pope enjoins.²⁰ The same is true for the present war between Russia and Ukraine. During the last year and a half, approximately half a million Russian and Ukrainian military personnel have been killed or wounded. Civilians, too, have perished, have been injured, and have suffered. As one observer put it, “the wounds of this war will last a lifetime.”²¹

Not only are there physical wounds, so too there are psychological, emotional, social and spiritual wounds from the trauma of the war. Reports are also beginning to surface concerning a phenomenon called “moral injury” among Russian and Ukrainian military personnel, as well as among civilians.²² As Iryna Dryhush, who works at the Caritas office in the city of Ternopil laments, “One day the war will stop..., but it will never stop in our souls. The lives that have been taken cannot be returned, the broken bodies cannot be restored, and the broken souls are very difficult to heal.”²³ This phenomenon is not new; indeed, many U.S.

¹⁴ Mark J. Allman and Tobias L. Winright, *After the Smoke Clears: The Just War Tradition and Post War Justice* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010); Brian Orend; Patterson.

¹⁵ Augustine, Letter 189, trans. J. G. Cunningham, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 1st series, ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo, NY: The Christian Literature Company, 1887).

¹⁶ Augustine, *City of God*, book 19, chapter 12.

¹⁷ National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Challenge of Peace*, §80.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, §83.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, §92.

²⁰ Francesca Merlo, “Pope: Much can be done to stop Third World War fought piecemeal,” *Vatican News*, 19 December 2022, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2022-12/pope-francis-interview-canale-5-italian-television.html>. Pope Francis has used a variation of the phrase on numerous occasions since 2014, “Pope Francis warns on ‘piecemeal World War III’,” *BBC News*, 13 September 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29190890>.

²¹ John Berger, “Healing the wounds of war: From art therapy to prayer,” *Aleteia*, August 26, 2023, <https://aleteia.org/2023/08/26/healing-the-wounds-of-war-from-art-therapy-to-prayer/>.

²² Elise Lemire, “Russian Soldiers’ Calls Home Echo Moral Injury Testimony of Vietnam Vets,” *History News Network*, November 6, 2022, <https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/184347>; Bill Roller, “Russian Soldiers Will Also Suffer Moral Injury,” *Tikkun*, December 2, 2022, <https://www.tikkun.org/russian-soldiers-will-also-suffer-moral-injury/>; Larysa Zasiiekina, Tamara Duchyminska, Antonia Bifulco, and Giacomo Bignardi, “War trauma impacts in Ukrainian combat and civilian populations: Moral injury and associated mental health symptoms,” *Military Psychology* (July 24, 2023): <https://doi.org/10.1080/08995605.2023.2235256>.

²³ Burger, “Healing the wounds of war.”

combat veterans from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq similarly have said they experienced “a bruise on the soul.”²⁴

Moral Injury and Moral Injury

“Moral injury” is a term first coined by psychologist Jonathan Shay as part of his work with Vietnam veterans.²⁵ It gained greater attention during the U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, especially as four times more veterans have died from suicide than from combat. While a recent study in Ukraine shows a strong correlation between moral injury and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), they are not the same.²⁶ According to Shay, “moral injury is present when 1) there has been a betrayal of what’s right [in the combatant’s eyes] 2) by someone who holds legitimate authority 3) in a high-stakes situation.”²⁷ Brett Litz and colleagues have provided a more recent and widely accepted definition of moral injury as “the lasting psychological, biological, spiritual, behavioral, and social impact of perpetrating, failing to prevent, or bearing witness to acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations.”²⁸ Bringing together both of these definitions, theologian Andrew Sloane notes that we can distinguish between “moral injury – other” and “moral injury – self.”²⁹ With “moral injury – self,” the combatant’s own actions or inactions potentially lead to his or her experience of moral injury. As for “moral injury – other,” another’s actions or orders result in combatants witnessing or perpetrating actions “that deeply conflict with their internalized moral framework.”³⁰ In both types of moral injury, though, the distress experienced, writes Sloane, “must disrupt the sufferer’s ability to function in relationships and in the world and, indeed, their own sense of self, in order to count as an instance of moral *injury*.”³¹ Drawing on the work of Brian S. Powers, Sloane observes that “war can require extreme actions that violate the very basis of moral identity.”³² The trauma from extreme physical violence, whether inflicted upon others or experience by the combatant, can lead to military moral injury.³³ Sloane moreover observes – again drawing on Powers, who offers an Augustinian account of the pervasiveness of sin – military culture, structures, and institutions tend to coarsen a soldier’s moral character and agency, “their moral self, without absolving them of all responsibility for the evils they might have committed or witnessed.”³⁴ Thus, moral injury does not occur only among

²⁴ David Wood, “The Grunts: Damned If They Kill, Damned If They Don’t,” *The Huffington Post*, March 18, 2014, <http://projects.huffingtonpost.com/moral-injury/the-grunts>.

²⁵ Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (New York: Scribner, 1995). See also Nancy Sherman, *Afterwar: Healing the Moral Wounds of Our Soldiers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

²⁶ Zasiakina, et al., “War trauma impacts in Ukrainian combat and civilian populations.”

²⁷ Jonathan Shay, “Casualties,” *Daedalus* 140, no. 3 (2011): 183.

²⁸ Brett T. Litz, et al., “Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans: A Preliminary Model and Intervention Strategy,” *Clinical Psychology Review* 29, no. 8 (2009): 697, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2009.07.003>.

²⁹ Andrew Sloane, “Harms, Wrongs, and Medical Moral Injury,” *Studies in Christian Ethics* 36, no. 3 (2023): 554. Sloane notes that this distinction is found in Atsushi Shibaoka, “No Place to Stand: Bidirectional Readings of Biblical Narratives through the Lens of Moral Injury” (PhD diss., University of Divinity, 2022), chapter three.

³⁰ Sloane, “Harms, Wrongs, and Medical Moral Injury,” 554.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 556. See Brian S. Powers, “Moral Injury and Original Sin: The Applicability of Augustinian Moral Psychology in Light of Combat Trauma,” *Theology Today* 73, no. 4 (2017): 325-337; Brian S. Powers, *Full Darkness: Original Sin, Moral Injury, and Wartime Violence* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019).

³³ Although our focus here is on military moral injury, this phenomenon is being studied among healthcare workers, police officers, and more. I agree with Sloane, though, that while there are “sufficient parallels” there are also some “crucial disanalogies,” for instance, between the experiences of combat veterans and healthcare workers. See Sloane, “Harms, Wrongs, and Medical Moral Injury,” 558.

³⁴ Sloane, “Harms, Wrongs, and Medical Moral Injury,” 559.

combatants who feel like they have done or participated in something wrong, but it also occurs among soldiers who have done things they regard as morally justified.

For instance, when U.S. Army infantryman Alex Horton saw two men running across a street towards other American soldiers, Horton believed they were a threat; thus, he fired his weapon, shooting one of the men, who then stumbled and fell, out of sight, behind a building. Horton was not certain whether the man was truly a threat; nor did he know whether the man died. Later, upon reflecting on his action, Horton believed the man was probably a civilian rather than an insurgent. In Horton's judgment, "That's not how good people act. But I did it, because I had to."³⁵ What he did was morally justified, but he did not regard it as morally "good." Yet, as Richard B. Miller notes, there remains a "moral residue" that adheres to even morally right decisions.³⁶ Of course, had Horton knowingly and intentionally killed an innocent civilian, that would not be morally justified and nor would it be good at all; rather, it would be murder. There is obviously a difference, although both may result in the experience of moral injury.

This is where Sloane finds helpful a distinction made by Marc Cohen about agent regret that is experienced when his or her actions are "not morally blameworthy and not the result of blameworthy neglect...[but do] cause harm, even though not wrongful harm."³⁷ This regret, in Sloane's view, is to be distinguished from agent guilt that should lead to remorse. According to Sloane, therefore, moral injury "may be the result of either harms without wrongs, and so appropriately triggering agent regret, or harms and wrongs, and so appropriately triggering (regret and) remorse."³⁸ Such distinctions, however, are not always identified in the prevalent literature on moral injury, which is mostly clinical and psychological, and focuses "on *injury*, especially in psychological and social terms, rather than the *moral* dimension."³⁹ Because moral injury differs from PTSD, it is not adequately treated by medicine. But, to date, most efforts to address moral injury have been undertaken by psychologists and psychiatrists, as well as other medical professionals. While important, these efforts seem insufficient, as a number of theologians and ethicists are beginning to note. Psychiatrist and theological ethicist Warren Kinghorn writes that moral injury requires "something that modern clinical disciplines structurally cannot provide, something like a moral theology, embodied in specific communities with specific contextually formed practices."⁴⁰

Moral Repair, Penance, and Penitential Practices

This is where the Church can help. His Beatitude Sviatoslav Shevchuk, head and father of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, estimates that "almost 80% of Ukrainians need some help to overcome their traumas – psychological, physical, and others," and His Beatitude adds, "Our task as a Church is to help heal the wounds of our nation."⁴¹ Moral injury, I think, is a trauma or wound that the Church should be most suited to address.

³⁵ Amanda Taub, "Moral Injury – the Quiet Epidemic of Soldiers Haunted by What They Did During Wartime," *Vox*, May 7, 2015, <http://www.vox.com/2015/5/7/8553043/soldiers-moral-injury>.

³⁶ Richard B. Miller, "Augustine, Moral Luck, and the Ethics of Regret and Shame," *Journal of Religion* 100, no. 3 (2020): 372. See Sloane, "Harms, Wrongs, and Medical Moral Injury," 569.

³⁷ Marc A. Cohen, "Apology as Self-Repair," *Ethical Theory & Moral Practice* 21, no. 3 (2018): 586. See Sloane, "Harms, Wrongs, and Medical Moral Injury," 570.

³⁸ Sloane, "Harms, Wrongs, and Medical Moral Injury," 571.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 555.

⁴⁰ Warren Kinghorn, "Combat Trauma and Moral Fragmentation: A Theological Account of Moral Injury," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 32, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2012): 59; Mark A. Wilson, "Moral Grief and Reflective Virtue," in *Virtue and the Moral Life: Theological and Philosophical Perspectives*, eds. William Werpehowski and Kathryn Getek Soltis (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2014), 60.

⁴¹ Burger, "Healing the wounds of war."

Former U.S. Marine Corps officer Philip G. Porter, now a professor of theology, agrees. He writes “that the Church needs to recover a theology of sin and a penitential practice capable of accounting for the trauma of war.”⁴² He believes that combat “ought to elicit introspection and compunction, and the Church’s penitential practices are, for Catholics, the most suitable expression of that compunction.” Similarly, Admiral and chaplain Iasiello suggests that our listening to their expressions of “humility, regret, and perhaps contrition...may actually ease a warrior’s transition to peacetime existence.”⁴³ Indeed, a retrieval of penitential practices for returning combat veterans is something that my coauthor Mark Allman and I suggested in our book on *jus post bellum* thirteen years ago.

Historically, such care was provided by the Catholic Church for returning warriors. In his 1993 book, *The Moral Treatment of Returning Warriors in Early Medieval and Modern Times*, Bernard J. Verkamp notes that the “Christian community of the first millennium generally assumed that warriors returning from battle would or should be feeling guilty and ashamed for all the wartime killing they had done.”⁴⁴ If warriors violated just war rules, they should feel guilt and remorse, and even if they fought justly, they may still feel regret. Both need reconciliation. So, rituals were put into practice to provide healing and reconciliation for these soldiers. Depending on the bishop or the penitential, variation existed as to the penances imposed, with some stricter than others; nevertheless, all are evidence of an effort to heal and reconcile these soldiers.

In general, the appropriate penance corresponded with “the kind of war they had been engaged in, the number of their killings, and the intention with which they had been carried out.”⁴⁵ In the fourth century, for example, Saint Basil of Caesarea held that although “homicide in war is not reckoned by our Fathers as homicide,” warriors returning from battle should still be made to “abstain from communion for three years.”⁴⁶ Centuries later, after the Battle of Hastings in 1066, the Synod of Norman bishops imposed a set of penances on *all* soldiers who fought under William the Conqueror: anyone who knowingly killed a man during the battle had to do penance for one year for each person he killed; anyone who wounded a man and did not know whether he died later had to do penance for forty days for each man he struck; anyone who did not know the number of either of these had to do penance for one day each week for the rest of his life; and archers who killed and wounded but, due to distance, did not know how many, had to do penance for three Lents.⁴⁷ For a variety of possible reasons, which Verkamp carefully considers, by the late medieval and Renaissance periods this practice waned amongst Catholics, though a few echoes of it lingered as far as the sixteenth century. In the Orthodox tradition, however, penance is canonically prescribed “for *any* soldier who causes the death of another, even if a particular war is understood or framed as ‘inevitable,’ or even ‘justifiable’ in some qualified, provisional way that would sanction its combatants: it is still the killing of human beings, and that is *bad*.”⁴⁸

⁴² Philip G. Porter, “War and Penance,” *Commonweal* (May 29, 2023): <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/war-penance>.

⁴³ Iasiello, “*Jus Post Bellum*,” 41.

⁴⁴ Bernard J. Verkamp, *The Moral Treatment of Returning Warriors in Early Medieval and Modern Times* (Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 1993), 11. See also, Allman and Winright, *After the Smoke Clears*, 31, 163-165.

⁴⁵ Verkamp, *The Moral Treatment of Returning Warriors in Early Medieval and Modern Times*, 11.

⁴⁶ Basil, *Letters*, 188.XIII.

⁴⁷ Verkamp, *The Moral Treatment of Returning Warriors in Early Medieval and Modern Times*, 17, 21-22.

⁴⁸ Peter C. Bouteneff, “War and Peace: Providence and the Interim,” in *Orthodox Christian Perspectives on War*, eds. Perry T. Hamalis and Valerie A. Karras (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2018), 257. In the same volume, moral injury and penance are addressed in Aristotle Papanikolaou, “The Ascetics of War: The Undoing and Redoing of Virtue,” 13-35.

***Jus Post Bellum*, Penance, a Just Peace, and the Church as a “Field Hospital”**

I think that *jus post bellum* calls for the Church to reinstate penitential practices for Catholic war veterans. Former Marine officer Porter goes even further, calling for the Church to “demand penance” and for the “imposition of penance.” He writes, “To demand penance is not to demonize” but instead to prompt “an examination of conscience.” He may be right, but I would recommend being more invitational to morally wounded veterans. In addition to the sacrament of reconciliation, there are other possible penitential practices that may be helpful, such as pilgrimage, retreats, lament, and performing the spiritual (e.g., admonishing the sinner, counseling the doubtful, forgiving all injuries, etc.) and corporal (e.g., feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, visiting the imprisoned, etc.) works of mercy.⁴⁹

The point is, as theological ethicist James M. Childs, Jr., and Vietnam War veteran and retired Navy chaplain Wollom A. Jensen, write: “Providing safe and sacred space for returning warriors to find healing for their wounds is an obligation of the churches and their congregations.”⁵⁰ Childs and Jensen believe that most soldiers “may not think in abstract terms about just war principles but they do worry about the goodness of the ends of their wars and if these outweigh the destruction they are a part of.”⁵¹ The Church’s teaching and thinking about just war and just peace should not be abstract. The development of *jus post bellum* expectations and practices aims at establishing the right intent of a just and lasting peace for all. As part of that, penance and penitential practices should be retrieved to help heal and reconcile combat veterans who are experiencing moral injury. Indeed, those who have suffered immensely through war are in special need of God’s peace and justice, of reconciliation and restoration. This task seems to me to be part of what it means for the Church, as Pope Francis has said, “to be a field hospital for the wounded.”⁵²

⁴⁹ For more on the works of mercy past and present, see James F. Keenan, S.J., *The Works of Mercy: The Heart of Catholicism*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007). Verkamp, too, makes suggestions about penitential practices to retrieve, including lament (Verkamp, *The Moral Treatment of Returning Warriors in Early Medieval and Modern Times*, 103-112). Lament is also highlighted by Sloane, “Harms, Wrongs, and Medical Moral Injury,” 573-576.

⁵⁰ Wollom A. Jensen and James M. Childs, Jr., *Moral Warriors, Moral Wounds: The Ministry of the Christian Ethic* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016), 101.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 111. See Sherman, *The Untold War*, 45-46.

⁵² <https://www.irishcatholic.com/the-church-is-a-field-hospital-for-the-wounded/>.