

The work of Christian Peacemaking

Lesson 2: Blessed Franz Jägerstätter

Think – Puzzle – Explore: Read this quotation and answer the questions below:



If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality.

(Archbishop Desmond Tutu)

Think – what does this make you think?

Puzzle – what questions or puzzles do you have?

Explore – what topics does it make you want to explore?

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Fight or not fight? - Teacher's Script

Label one side of the room 'Fight' and the opposite side 'Don't Fight'. The young people are then asked to make each decision as if they are the main character in this story. They can change their minds after each additional part of the story is told. Regularly ask students to share the reason for their decision.

1. Your country has just become involved in a global conflict, a world war, and you have been called up to fight in the army. Do you fight or not fight...?
2. The government has introduced conscription, making it a legal requirement to fight if called up...
3. You are a married man with three young children...
4. You are the principal breadwinner of the family and as such your family rely on you to provide for them...
5. You are Austrian and this is 1943 so the army you have been called up to serve in is Hitler's army...
6. Under Hitler the punishment for refusing to fight is that you will be beheaded...
7. You are a Catholic Christian and as such you are convinced that you cannot faithfully follow Jesus and fight in Hitler's unjust war...
8. You go to your priest for advice and he tells you that it is your duty to fight for your country...
9. You go to consult the local bishop and he agrees with the priest. He also tells you that it is not your place to judge whether the war is just. It is your role to obey those who have authority over you...
10. You go to talk with your mother. She tells you that you must fight as it is your duty to look after your wife and her grandchildren...
11. Finally it is decision day and you have one last conversation with your wife before finally making your mind up. She tells you that she supports you unflinchingly. She knows the decision is an impossible one but you must follow your conscience...

Do you fight or do you refuse to fight?

This was the decision that faced Franz Jägerstätter, an Austrian peasant farmer, in 1943. We will look at his story in more detail.