

The Moral Challenges of Public Service
By Roselyn Clemente

The fragile cycle of life and death - we see it all around us everyday although many may not be aware of it. This delicate dance goes on often unnoticed in the busy routine of a Seton Hall student, but if you would only pause a moment, just one moment, to consider the trees on campus as the seasons pass, to watch the metamorphosis from icy skeletons of death in the winter to a glorious resurrection in spring...there is life and death around you if you only paused to look. Many will live their lives oblivious for the most part, but in the professional path I have chosen to take once I leave Seton Hall University, a physician and officer in the Air Force, this cycle will not be so easy to ignore.

What do doctors and soldiers have in common? After all, one restores life and the other takes it. Perhaps in no other fields does the moral choice over the value of human life weigh so heavily. In both vocations, I well may one day be called upon to answer the difficult question of "Who should live?" Doctors often face this question in their everyday trade, whether it is in the battlefield, the emergency room, or in the selection of a recipient from an organ donor list. Like shepherds, they must decide which of their charges are worth the time, energy, and expense, and strong enough for survival. The common soldier faces this decision of conscience in his or her battles with the enemy, afterwards living with the knowledge that their bullets and bombs have found their mark, perhaps wondering if the toll of death was worth the price of peace. This responsibility of life and death weighs even more heavily on the shoulders of the officers. After all, it is they who have to decide whom to send to a war from which they may not return.

This unique dichotomy continues to a more personal level of choice in my chosen vocation. These complicated choices could include being assigned to perform medical practices that I don't morally agree with, dealing with the issue of saving enemy soldiers who have taken American lives, or even orders to take another life. Where should the line be drawn? An education at Seton Hall can help answer that question. Of course it is possible to be an adequate doctor or soldier with a degree from any college, but that Seton Hall experience may be the deciding factor that separates just "adequate" from "good" or even "great." What is it about a Seton Hall education that makes a difference? Of course you'll get the knowledge you'll need in preparation for whatever job or profession you have chosen similar to what you would receive in any other institute of learning, but although this may prepare you intellectually and give you the tools for financial success, it is the moral education that you will receive here that makes all the difference. This "little" aspect is often overlooked by other college brochures which promise you a great education and good job following graduation, however they fail to make any mention of the moral and spiritual aspect of any career which is an important factor in every decision made, especially that of a managerial position where you will be responsible for the welfare of the people below you. As the Seton Hall vision statement says, the education you will be given here strives to send each graduate into the world as a servant leader. As for my personal experience, I know I will carry this lesson to wherever my future carries me, whether it is in an emergency room or the battlefield.

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