

DER CHRISTLICHE SOLDAT AM  
BEGINN DES DRITTEN  
JAHRTAUSEND

THE CHRISTIAN SOLDIER AT  
THE BEGINNING OF THE  
THIRD MILLENIUM

## **IMPRESSUM**

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ARBEITSGEMEINSCHAFT DER EVANGELISCHEN SOLDATEN  
IM BUNDESHEER (AGES)

WORKING GROUP OF PROTESTANT SOLDIERS  
IN THE AUSTRIAN ARMY (AGES)

## **DER CHRISTLICHE SOLDAT AM BEGINN DES DRITTEN JAHRTAUSEND**

SELBSTVERSTÄNDNIS,  
SELBSTDARSTELLUNG UND AKZEPTANZ

ERKLÄRUNG DER ARBEITSGEMEINSCHAFT  
EVANGELISCHER SOLDATEN  
IM BUNDESHEER (AGES)  
VOM 11. APRIL 2002

## **THE CHRISTIAN SOLDIER AT THE BEGINNING OF THE THIRD MILLENNIUM**

SELF-PERCEPTION,  
SELF-PRESENTATION AND ACCEPTANCE

DECLARATION OF THE WORKING GROUP  
OF PROTESTANT SOLDIERS IN THE  
AUSTRIAN ARMY (AGES)  
DATED 11. APRIL 2002

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Working Group of  
Protestant Soldiers in the Austrian Army  
(AGES)

## **FOREWORD**

**to the Declaration of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft  
Evangelischer Soldaten in Österreich (AGES)  
[Working Group of Protestant Soldiers in Austria]  
dated 11 April 2002**

Soldiers face a wide multitude of tasks in many areas, interconnected with other spheres. These tasks go well beyond what was considered to be strictly “military” only a few years ago.

New tasks also pose new questions, present new challenges, and bring about new responsibilities. This calls for answers and not a new ethical approach for soldiers, even if ethical considerations are the basis of any decision to be made.

The Arbeitsgemeinschaft Evangelischer Soldaten (AGES) herewith presents a strategic paper that defines the basic position of Christian soldiers of protestant denomination. The paper reflects the current state of a discussion on an ecumenical basis, which has already yielded a statement of the Roman Catholic Apostolat Militaire International (AMI).

With the paper at hand, AGES intends to give guidance, both with respect to theological considerations and with respect to practical necessities. The idea is to focus on our position about the employment of soldiers in a Christian context, and to provide an ethical basis for the self-understanding of Christian soldiers.

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# **THE CHRISTIAN SOLDIER AT THE BEGINNING OF THE THIRD MILLENIUM**

**Self-perception, Self-presentation and Acceptance**

**Declaration of the  
Arbeitsgemeinschaft Evangelischer  
Soldaten in Österreich (AGES)  
[Working Group of Protestant Soldiers in Austria]  
dated 11 April 2002**

## **Preface**

The General Assembly of the Apostolat Militaire International (AMI) issued a declaration entitled "The Catholic Soldier at the Beginning of the Third Millennium" in Rome on 15 November 2000. By doing so, AMI addressed a matter that is of eminent importance, also for the Austrian Armed Forces. In the same year, a revised second edition of the publication „De Officio. Zu den ethischen Herausforderungen des Offiziersberufes“, [“De Officio. On the Ethical Challenges of the Avocation of an Officer”], edited by Peter H. Blaschke, was released. Moreover, the new publication of the [Austrian] Büro für Wehrpolitik [Bureau for Defence Policy], entitled „Österreich und die neuen Bedrohungen“ [“Austria and the New Threats”],

which summarises the subject with respect to Austria, was released in 2001.

It is quite natural that such comprehensive considerations in the field of defence ethics cannot be limited to one denomination – they must be open, because in many countries there are contacts with other denominations on an ecumenical basis. The validity of the statements undoubtedly has an interdenominational aspect and a reference to humanitarian ideas.

Considering this comprehensive ecumenical responsibility, particularly in the field of defence ethics, the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Evangelischer Soldaten (AGES) [Working Group of Protestant Soldiers in Austria] takes over large parts of the AMI text at hand, but considers it in view of the Protestant conviction, particularly the contributions in “De Officio”.

The paper concerned cannot be a final one, it is rather serves to define a position in an ongoing process. There are numerous items that call for more detail, and any change of the situation and improved insight must result in a re-evaluation of the matter.

The need to determine our own position in an ecumenical setting is a pressing one in this area, since the subject covers questions about the self-perception and the ethical norms of soldiers in a radically different situation. The main task of a Christian outlook can only be the repeated call to uphold human dignity in the armed forces, i.e. in our very own sphere of life.

During the last decade, the tasks of soldiers have radically changed. The end of a bipolar confrontation, the globalisation of practically all spheres of life, and the concomitant risks, dangers and threats again and again



pose new challenges. Wars among states have become the exception, whereas civil war with all its horrible facets comes into the fore.

In the past, many countries had to defend their borders, their homesteads, their families, their children, and their faith. Nowadays, threats have radically changed: homesteads fall victim to agrobusiness, and all too many sociologists and politicians think that the family is an outdated model in society, particularly in western countries where the number of children is decreasing. The conviction of faith with its ethical effects on ethical matters has become less and less a factor of self-perception, whereas elsewhere religion is being instrumentalised for political purposes in a fundamentalist sense.

The purpose of the paper at hand is to establish a position that meets the requirements of the present time for Protestant Christians, and to contribute towards a Protestant peace ethic. The decisive factor in any situation, and that might be a very challenging one, that soldiers must face, is a clear and well-developed conscience, in conjunction with profound technical expertise. The use of one's own conscience as a system of reference is one of the most important outcomes of the process of reformation, and a factor that permeates western philosophy. This is the basis for the handling of difficult questions, be they of a technical or a personal nature. Thus, a higher level in the hierarchy brings about a higher level of responsibility.

# 1. Peace on Earth to all People

## Why do we serve?

### 1.1 Peace on Earth to all people in whom God delights!<sup>1</sup>

The reality of daily uncertainties and confrontations is in many places linked with the yearning for peace. Putting off this prospect to the coming of the Lord at the end of times cannot be a serious Christian answer for today's problems. What we need is to make peace among ourselves, too.

The realisation of this wish will be possible to the extent in which mankind succeeds in providing our interconnected present world, shaped as it is by the dynamics of globalisation, with soul, meaning and direction towards this goal. What must be communicated is the original vocation of mankind to a status in which the dignity and rights of the individual are of prime value, regardless of rank, race and religion, and in which all people are viewed as a single family. Christian soldiers, as well as many others, support this goal by

- serving the security of their home country and the international community,
- opposing violence, and
- assisting fellow man in solidarity in any distress and danger, thus making a substantial contribution to peace in the world.

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<sup>1</sup> (Luke. 2, 14)

The guiding principle of this vocation, which also has an undeniable reference to the Sermon on the Mount, can be found in Vatican II *Gaudium et Spes* (GS), which says, “He who serves his country as a soldier is to consider himself as a servant of the security and freedom of the peoples. In performing his task properly, he really contributes to the stabilisation of peace.”

## **1.2 The soldier in his obligation**

The question of the ethical dimension of the role of soldiers causes extremely uneasy feelings in many people. We as believing soldiers find the fundamental guidance for our ethical conduct in the teaching of Jesus Christ and in the preaching of the Church: The imperative that “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”(cf. Mark 12, 28-31; Matthew. 22, 35-40; Luke. 10, 25-28), obliges us to respect and protect human beings in their dignity. It is also the duty of soldiers to put this imperative into practice in all its dimensions. Nobody lives alone for himself. In an age of globalisation, this also applies to peoples, countries and continents. This means that the area of responsibility of each community and polity, and therefore also of its citizens and soldiers, has been expanded considerably. Transnational and even international responsibility has grown in a hitherto unknown degree. The task of securing the common well-being now transcends borders and calls for thinking and action along the lines of solidarity in a larger, world-wide context.

### **1.3 Armed forces as instruments of power**

Armed forces are a country's instrument of power, symbol of sovereignty and tool of politics. The question has always been if and when force, and thus armed forces, may be employed. The answer to this question from a religious-ethical perspective stems from the centuries-old tradition of a just war - *bellum iustum* - that has been developed mainly by the Catholic church, and which has been laid down in chapter 16 "About the police (state order) and the worldly regiment" of the Confessio Augustana.

Nowadays, Protestant peace ethics goes beyond these original attempts by promoting the teaching of just peace.

### **1.4 The teaching of two realms**

Since the days of the reformation, the Lutheran church has been developing the above teaching, according to which God reigns the world in a two-fold way:

On the one hand, God reigns over the individual, addresses his conscience by challenging it through commandments, and comforts it through His forgiveness. God commands man to love his neighbour, up to and including his enemy.

On the other hand, God reigns the world through these very individuals and calls upon them to take over responsibility in society and its institutions like the state. According to Luther, this includes all means needed to sustain and maintain order in our

temporal lives: Marriage and family, property, the economy, profession, etc. If a Christian, be he a subject or a ruler, wishes to take care of justice, security and peace, he cannot translate radical love directly into political power politics. But charity as defined in the Sermon on the Mount remains the final yardstick for Luther, also with respect to political action.

According to Luther, both church and state have a direct relationship with God. In no way should matters be simplified by equating the church as a human institution with the “Kingdom of Christ”, and the state with its economy, the legal system and politics with the “Kingdom on Earth”, thereby negating our responsibility before God. This is why Luther preferred to speak of two “Regimes” of God, which oblige every human being in two ways.

This what the church should remind people of, without assuming governance over the state. The state is the most pronounced manifestation of the difference between a temporal regime and the Kingdom of Christ. A state is governed by law, and rests on power and strength. It is the purpose of the state to protect and defend its citizens with all means, including the use of military force.

In addition to the Kingdom of Christ, we need a temporal regime. Luther argues that this is the case because God wants to preserve His creation. As to the need for a state, Luther argues, is not only based on the power of evil in the world. In his view, temporal authorities are also obliged to take great care of and foster their subjects. The real need for a

temporal regime, however, is the fact that there is evil in the world.

In his view, the task of a temporal regime is to hold evil in the world at bay, and to serve humanity by maintaining worldly justice. The instruments of temporal authorities, to which Luther refers in an allusion to Romans 13, are law, power, force and coercion. There are no other ways to handle extreme situations.

The two realms or regimes cannot be separated from each other. This is exactly why Christians as “subjects of both realms”, for God’s and their fellow men’s sake, are obliged to prove themselves in the worldly realm. Any fears of contact with “dirty politics”, or even a theology promoting the abstention from any worldly matters are totally alien to such a view of the world.

## **1.5 New dangers and risks**

The dangers and risks for mankind in the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium have become more diverse. The classical war among nations is becoming ever less likely in the light of growing mutual interdependencies that result from globalisation. On the other hand, other threats like internal processes of decay and extreme political and religious positions, both results of the unequal distribution of wealth, i.e. the exponentially growing discrepancy between population growth and the availability of resources, as well as leaps in technology. This resulted in a marked increase of low-intensity conflicts at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,

triggered by weak or even non-existent state authorities and by irreconcilable internal social differences, like ethnic and/or religious and social tensions. Such conflicts generally bring about violations of human dignity and human rights. The greatest danger in such conflicts is the possibility of escalation. The risk of conflict escalation can be proven in numerous historical examples. Therefore, such conflicts must be contained or pacified as quickly as possible to prevent their spreading and larger military confrontations. As a result of technological progress and the range of modern weapons, the geographical distance to future conflicts becomes less and less important. Threats may originate far away, arms and weapons of mass destruction are being amassed in the world. The capabilities of cyberwar to paralyse military and civilian information, control and supply systems are steadily growing.

The danger of terrorist threat, from the threat of using weapons of mass destruction to the poisoning of water, and of organised crime is continually growing. A relatively clear and straightforward, predominantly military, threat scenario has been supplanted by a set of mutually dependent risks, which may have political, economic, military, social, cultural-religious, technological (information and communications technology) or economic dimensions.

All these factors expand the tasks of armed forces way beyond purely military national defence.

## **1.6 The changed mission of soldiers**

The mission of soldiers has dramatically changed. They still are defenders of freedom, justice and peace, but they not only need to be able to fight, so that they may not have to fight. These days, they also must be able to help individuals and peoples in peril, to rebuild states and to cut those down to size who endanger peace. Experiences gained in Kosovo have shown how manifold the tasks of soldiers are, because they also include elements of police work. In this connection, the strengthening of Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) must also be mentioned.

## **1.7 A wider range of tasks in an international setting**

These tasks of promoting peace and securing stability on an international level call for the ability to co-operate, and establish interoperability among soldiers from different nations and cultural backgrounds, and also with law enforcement agencies and civilian institutions to rebuild crisis areas. Depending on the function and sphere of responsibility of the individual, he must have knowledge of and sensibility for the ethnic, cultural, social, environmental and religious conditions in a possible area of operations.



## **1.8 The Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a central issue**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the UN General Assembly, dated 10 December 1948, the relevant passages of the Charter of the United Nations, and the Geneva conventions, are the foundations of political activities. In recent decades, churches, too, have stressed human dignity and innate human rights.

Again and again, churches stressed the universal applicability of the above documents for all people in all cultures as an indispensable precondition for justice and peace. This translates into very concrete tasks to be performed in our lives, in our countries, and in the world at large. The origin of this respect is the love of every human being, to which we all are obliged.

The ban of the use of force in the Charter of the United Nations, signed in 1945 further corroborates this idea, since the Charter of the United Nations foresees only two cases for the legitimate use of force among nations:

- Authorised by the Security Council, invoking Articles 39 and 42 in Chapter 8, and
- by acting in self-defence on an individual or collective basis under Article 51, with restrictions as stipulated.

## **1.9 Human rights are neither undisputed, nor can they be enforced**

Our current philosophy of and attitude towards legal matters is based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was made by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948, only a few months after the first UN peacekeeping mission. Nevertheless, the morally binding character of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has not resulted in the establishment of governments with a democratic constitution in all of the about 200 UN member states. The idea that every human is a being with the same dignity has not yet been accepted universally. Even in multinational peace forces, farreaching differences can be noted.

## **1.10 A new basis for military tasks**

Tasks to be performed for the benefit of the international community will be a decisive element of soldiering in the future. Co-operation and peace support measures in the spirit of solidarity, also to foster political and social stability in an extended area of security concern, gain in importance. This does not exclude the application of military force on a sensible and justifiable level, if it fits into an overall political strategy to uphold or restore peace and human rights. The use of military force in such a context, however, that goes beyond the immediate defence against a current military aggression can only be justified in an ethical way, if it is used as a

last resort to lead to comprehensive and lasting peace arrangements.

### **1.11 Si vis pacem, para pacem**

For many centuries, national security was based on Vegetius' saying "Si vis pacem, para bellum" (If you want peace, prepare for war). Today, the conclusion of more than two thousand years of military history must be "Si vis pacem, para pacem" (If you want peace, prepare for peace)!

Of course, this first and foremost is an appeal to responsible politicians to pursue their respective political goals without the threat or use of military force and in line with the ideals set forth in the Charter of the United Nations. Dag Hammarskjöld, a former Secretary General of the United Nations, who is held in high esteem, said that peacekeeping was not a task for soldiers, but only soldiers could do it.

## 2. Peace Ethics as the Basis for Military Operations

### What is it that we build on?

The contribution of the Rat der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland [Council of the Protestant Church in Germany], entitled „Schritte auf dem Weg des Friedens“ [“Steps on the way to peace”], which was amended in 2001, included the following statements:<sup>2</sup>

- 2.1 To maintain, foster and renew peace is the maxim that any political leader must follow. All political tasks are connected with this commandment to seek peace. Christian ethics aims at peace, not at war.**

This is the foundation for the Protestant peace ethic to develop the doctrine of a “just war”, leading towards “just peace”, which includes a humanitarian obligation. To ban armed conflict as a means of achieving particular political goals, which is the standard in international law, is a deeply ingrained part of Protestant peace ethic.

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<sup>2</sup> Steps on the way to peace. A contribution of the Rat der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland [Council of the Protestant Church in Germany], EKD-Texts 48, 1994 (3<sup>rd</sup> revised edition, 2001). Most of the commentaries quoted have been taken from the contribution by Hermann Barth, entitled “Für eine internationale Friedensordnung unter der Herrschaft des Rechts. Grundzüge des friedensethischen Konsenses in der evangelischen Kirche” [“For an international and lawful peace order. Basics of the consensus in matters of peace ethics in the Protestant church”]; published by Peter H. Blaschke in “De Officio; on the ethical challenges posed by the avocation of officers”, edited by Evangelisches Kirchenamt für die Bundeswehr, on behalf of the Protestant Military Bishop, Leipzig 2000, pp. 354-367.

## **2.2 The biblical-theological keywords for peace ethics are justice and law.**

A Christian peace ethic must be accountable with respect to the biblical-theological categories that are used as guidelines. The Sermon on the Mount alone is not enough to develop a robust peace ethic.

The biblical-theological traditions must be those that govern lives and actions in society in the quest for justice and lawfulness: There can be no peace without justice, and no justice without law.

This is why the law must also be enforced in a conflict. To do this on an international level, economic measures and various forms of embargo may be employed.

When referring to international legal norms, problems will arise, because the current international law (law of armed conflict), that was generally accepted in the past, is not effective in modern conflicts any more.

## **2.3 Peace policy permeates all other political categories.**

Security cannot be defined in military terms alone. It mainly rests on a better distribution of opportunities in life, on the adherence to human rights, the strengthening of the rule of law and of democratic structures, and on the protection of nature to sustain life. Therefore, the analysis and removal of causes of conflict will be very urgent in the long run.

**2.4 Peace is at stake at any time and is broken again and again. To restore and maintain peace, different ways must be pursued, and different means must be employed.**

In a concrete case, one must determine if the continued application of military force through fighting is necessary and promising. The underlying principle is quite clear: To maintain, and, if need be, use military means to keep the peace and enforce the law is not in contradiction to a Christian peace ethic. Certainly, the application of military force alone can not solve conflicts and provide peace, but it may curb the use of illegal force, and point the way towards a peaceful solution. Therefore, a process of deliberation may well lead to the conclusion that the use of military force, notwithstanding its high risks, is the more appropriate means, and therefore justified. By the way, one may become guilty not only by taking action, but also by sins of omission.

The use of military force is a means of last resort. The employment of military force is a last resort. It is a borderline case, and one must make sure that it remains that way. A means of last resort that in fact is superior to political considerations will not be a means of last resort any longer.

**2.5 The time has come to make a serious attempt at establishing and enforcing an international peace order.**

The norms and obligations, upon which a constitutional state is built, and which hold a state together, can and must be generally recognised through international law, and also be applied in conflicts. Doing so, however, entails the danger of exporting the set of western occidental values indiscriminately. Not all of our values may be accepted universally. Finding a widely accepted and practical solution will be a challenge for politicians. The enforcement of legal norms must not be used to pursue power politics.

**2.6 Humanitarian interventions pose difficult questions about the enforcement of legal norms.**

The international community is obliged to contribute towards the applicability and enforcement of human rights, and therefore to provide protection and assistance to victims of repression.

The idea of humanitarian intervention may well become the vehicle for numerous non-humanitarian reasons to intervene, or vice versa, considerations of expediency and other interests may stifle an urgently needed humanitarian intervention. Disenchanted as this may be, one must also realise that there is a very wide gap between the universal validity of human rights and their practical enforceability.

## **2.7 An international peace order ... particularly depends on the development of ways to manage conflicts in the civilian sphere.**

There is a need to develop effective non-military means of conflict management and resolution, because antagonisms cannot be overcome through armed conflict, and unjust structures that cause or aggravate conflicts generally cannot be removed by the use of force, either. Such development is taking place under the protection and with the help of the military. Further efforts in this direction in the framework of civil-military co-operation (CIMIC) are needed and possible. Churches and church-affiliated organisations can play important roles in such efforts.

## **2.8 Many conflicts are based on divisive experiences of alienation and prejudice.**

Therefore, education to respect strangers who have a different way of thinking is of fundamental importance. This only can be achieved in the spirit of diversity in harmony, and through tolerance. The purpose of a dialogue must not be a unified culture or religion, but tolerance that leads to mutual understanding, also of the differences. Even the realisation and highlighting of irreconcilable positions is part of such a dialogue.

To develop this kind of togetherness it will be helpful if the churches, especially the Protestant, translate the motto "unity in diversity" into political and cultural action.



Tolerance is the result of a clear self-consciousness,  
and therefore the basis of any community.

### **3. The Soldier as a Servant of Peace**

#### **What do we stand for?**

#### **3.1 Military service in a democratic state**

When we speak about military service, we speak of soldiers who serve a legitimate political authority in a democratic and free state, observing national and international law. Even the “Theologische Erklärung der Bekenntnissynode von Barmen“ [Barmen declaration], which was drafted in 1934 to highlight the differences with the Third Reich, states in its 5<sup>th</sup> thesis: “The Scriptures tell us that, according to divine instruction, and depending on the measure of human understanding and ability, the state must care for justice and peace by threat of force in the world that has not yet been saved. The church, in its gratitude and respect for God, recognises the benefaction emanating from this instruction“. Christians are obliged to serve society and it would be against the Christian ethic not to shoulder responsibility. Moreover, Christians owe allegiance to society and the polity. Candid criticism and expert opinion can only be voiced by individuals who basically accept the “res publica“. Criticism and advice are the opposite of arrogance and hypocrisy, which apply more stringent criteria to the sins of the world than to one’s own. In today’s political, social and economic development towards globalisation,

responsibility cannot be limited to a single state, but must be shared on a broad basis.

### **3.2 The development of the soldier into a “miles protector“**

Force and the threat of force have always been part of human existence, just as the necessity to protect oneself, one's belongings and resources, and finally one's religion, against the threat of force. The individual's duty to contribute to the community, has always included the tasks of a guardsman and a soldier. With the experiences made, particularly in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there is now a widely accepted consensus in the international community that, under certain circumstances, there is need to intervene in favour of threatened countries or ethnic groups. This development has happened particularly in the framework of the United Nations. The Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Human Rights laid down by this international forum provide the basic political and legal underpinning in the execution of a UN mandate, which entails the possible and perhaps necessary use of force. Similar theological considerations are also part of Protestant ethic.

On this basis, the scope of action of soldiers has constantly expanded since the UN-mandated mission of 1948 (UNTSO). While at first they mainly served as expert observers, performed the disengagement of forces, and had verification duties, the range of tasks in the framework of peace support operations now covers almost any possible form of military

action. This development of the mission of a soldier from national defence to that of a “miles protector” [soldier as a protector] in the spirit of international solidarity poses new ethical challenges for soldiers.

In a peacekeeping mission, the intention of soldiers changes from combat to peace-making. The soldiers employed are expected to be willing to compromise. They must know that conflicts ought to be settled through negotiation. They must be willing to talk, whenever possible and promising.

### **3.3 Ethical requirements for soldiers**

In his moral integrity, man has been endangered in many ways. Increasing globalisation, and attempts to achieve a balance of international interests in international fora present a stark contrast to the enormous economic, cultural and religious differences among nations and states. Shortages of resources, migration, urgent problems of endangered minorities, and critical developments in some countries and regions will cause violence to flare up time and again.

Even the legitimate use of military forces, and in particular the use of force to avert such dangers is always subject to the complex field of conflict among theological, ethical, legal and humanitarian considerations. This requires a very high level of responsibility on the side of soldiers. Along with these ethical requirements, one always must consider that it is only during the mission that soldiers are confronted with many situations that

simply don't exist in everyday life under conditions of peace. Decisions to be made in a mission by soldiers, and superiors in particular, are largely theoretical ones in peacetime when they would not really have any serious consequences. Exercises and simulation prepare the soldier in his occupational speciality to endure the high mental and physical demands of a mission.

There is also a way of preparing the individual to apply ethic norms in critical situations: To lead daily life on and off duty responsibly and true to one's conscience, which, after all, remains the final authority for personal decisions. However, the building of conscience requires the individual to both have a solid system of values and sufficient experience. The major ethical traditions, like the golden rule from the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 7:12) "Do unto others as you would have done unto yourself" provide a starting point for this approach.

To perform his mission, the soldier should endeavour to acquire those basic characteristics that can help him to make decisions and to take action, so that others can understand and that he can avoid making serious mistakes:

- Wisdom: to make decisions in concrete situations;
- Justice: to respect the dignity, the rights and the legitimate interests of others;
- Strength: the power to stand firmly by value systems and decisions, and also to rectify earlier mistakes; and

- Moderation: the ability to recognise and consider strengths and weaknesses in oneself and in others.

### **3.4 Responsibilities**

The new tasks for the military pose new challenges for military leadership. This is the case for training, and also for human relations during a mission.

Certain tasks will not be possible if neither politicians nor society at large are willing to risk the lives of soldiers.

Therefore, questions of defence ethic are of special relevance for military leaders. As there is always the possibility of making ultimate experiences or of being confronted with matters of basic human existence, questions of military leadership and subordination do also assume a religious dimension.

## **4. On the Path to Peace**

### **What do we expect?**

#### **4.1 The Christian soldier at the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium**

Conscious of his responsibility before God, the Christian soldier serves his country, his fellow citizens and the set of values he shares with them. He is, however, also duty-bound to fulfil his responsibilities arising from international obligations, or in the spirit of solidarity with people whose human dignity and human rights are being violated.

If necessary, he performs his task at the risk of his life. Conscious of his mission, and of the effects of modern weapons systems he respects his adversary's dignity and human rights and seeks to avoid collateral damage and injuries among the civilian population. He obeys lawful orders and respects the laws of his country, standards of international law, and international agreements in line with his conscience. Thus, he should be prepared to follow his conscience and refuse to obey unlawful orders, and take the consequences of such action.

The soldier acts honourably and correctly, loyally and with discipline, sincerely and courageously. This applies in particular when he is on a mission, be it as a member of a national or an international unit. He respects others, their religion, their culture, and their set of values. He acts with restraint whenever his

task or his function calls for a neutral position in political or ideological matters, or toward other religions.

Particularly on international assignments, the soldier is aware of the fact that he is seen as a representative of the Austrian Armed Forces, of the Republic of Austria, and of the international or multinational organisation responsible in the area of operations. Therefore, he avoids any action that might discredit himself, his country or his unit and cast doubt upon the credibility of the mission in the eyes of the population.

The following apothegms are intended to shape the self-perception of the Christian soldier today. They apply to all soldiers, and are of particular importance for superiors on all levels, acting as commanders, trainers and educators:

- **Deeply rooted in faith**

We strive to live our faith in Jesus Christ, believe in His church, and contribute towards the realisation of Christian values.

- **Morally engaged**

In our duty, too, we follow Christian ideals and remember that we are bound by the moral standards that permeate the peace ethic of the church, and which, e.g. are expressed in the synods to support a process for peace, justice and the preservation of the Creation.

- **Politically educated**

We stand up for our democratic state order, are politically interested and take part in social life as self-confident Christians.



- **Professionally skilled**  
We acquire the theoretical knowledge, the practical skills, and the appropriate manners required for our military duty to be convincing.
- **Serving conscientiously**  
We stand by our oath to serve our country in a loyal way, and fulfil our duties conscientiously and to the best of our abilities. We are aware of the responsibility we have accepted with our mission.
- **Committed to peace**  
We have placed ourselves in the service of peace. We safeguard the previously achieved quality of peace and support its shaping and development on a national and international level. We are particularly committed to protecting human dignity and human rights.
- **Striving for co-operation**  
We co-operate with social and political forces that aim at contributing towards a peace order that is based on our set of values, also beyond national borders
- **Open to the ecumenical movement**  
We support ecumenical efforts and strive for a spirit of unity to overcome what separates the denominations and to find new dimensions of common ground.

Over and above this, we respect other religions and strive for dialogue and co-operation with them.

All this must be part of a comprehensive process of development and education.

## **4.2 The role of military chaplaincy**

A military mission is a great challenge for many. The use of weapons is a matter that points at the very limits of human existence.

On top of that, a peacekeeping mission poses many questions of a social nature. There are questions of living together, of comradeship and of the area of operations. Meeting the local people in an area of operations will be an indelible experience for all participants. Soldiers who are confronted with an often bloody and protracted conflict that entails the destruction of livelihoods, expulsion, the mining of large tracts of land, and the wounding and maiming of innocent people are moved by such an experience to a varying degree.

In such a situation of reflection, one needs a point of contact to assist in spiritual matters. This is a challenge for superiors, and a military chaplain can avert much misery in such a situation.

He can help to come to terms with experiences made, and assist in questions of mental growth and one's position in life by offering counsel and company.

High demands are placed on all soldiers when they must make and carry out decisions. This is why military chaplaincy in its entirety will have to make an important contribution towards a soldierly ethic, to be based on a military ethic that can stand the test of the individual's conscience.

#### **4.3 Demands to be placed on politicians, society, the armed forces and the Church**

As soldiers we are ready to serve the cause of peace according to the above apothegms. To do so, it takes a political, legal and ethical framework, which must be maintained or created by joint efforts politicians, the military, the church, and society at large. We need to

- Pursue and develop an active policy of justice and peace, maintain the integrity of the Creation, and efficiently prevent crises to support the quality of life;
- Strive for the further development of international law, considering the conditions and circumstances of humanitarian interventions;
- Adhere to ethical norms in any decision on military missions, which must not infringe on human dignity or human rights, be it with respect to their aims or the means employed;
- Ensure religious liberty in the armed forces, as long as it is in line with the principles of a liberal-democratic social order;
- Ensure freedom of worship and provide assistance to form one's conscience in all questions pertaining to the service of soldiers, by providing pastoral assistance wherever soldiers perform their duties;
- Support international efforts to provide a framework for the co-operation among military chaplains from various nations;

- Make special efforts to provide pastoral service to the family members of the soldiers serving abroad, to maintain the stability of their families;
- In the spirit of solidarity, support military action in the service of peace and make sure it is recognised by all forces in society, the church included; and to
- Give broad support to church representatives within the armed forces by church governing bodies, and to further develop the peace ethic of the church on all levels.