



Monseigneur André-Jozef LÉONARD
Aartsbisschop van Mechelen-Brussel

Dear Members of 2012 AMI Conference,

Warm welcome!

It is a great pleasure for me as Catholic Military Bishop of the Belgian Defence to welcome all the delegates to this Annual General Assembly of the Apostolat Militaire International ("AMI").

It is an honour for me and the whole military diocese that this conference is taking place in Belgium, near Antwerp.

The main topic of the AMI Conference 2012 is a "Powerful past, powerful present, challenging future". The attention and considerations around the choice of this topic gives us the opportunity to remind us of the importance and the need of a duty of remembrance, for all nations, and especially for Belgium in the light of the global commemoration of WWI, which will take place in our country between 2014 and 2018.

Today, a general historical consensus recognizes that the inheritance and results of the "Great War" are not limited to the disastrous outcome for the millions of civil and military victims. The inheritance and results of WWI also established a number of major and radical changes in the political and social landscape. The "Great War" with its violence generated a worldwide collateral damage in the minds of each individual. The end of the war and the 'Traité de Versailles' didn't establish the peace which everybody hoped for. In fact, it was the foundation of a general frustration between the different nations, which culminated in the outbreak of WW2.

At this very moment, several armed forces, which are mainly deployed in humanitarian and peace keeping operations with the NATO and the EU, attempt to establish peace in areas which are torn by war and violence. However, for the military, those engagements demand a permanent reflection around "war and peace", "remembrance and awakening", "dead and sacrifice" and "duty".

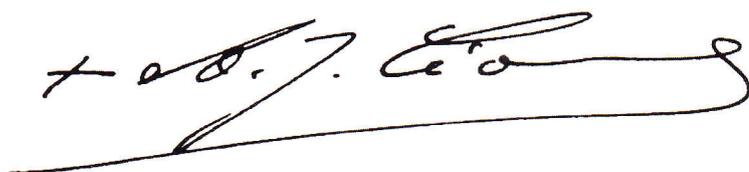
Each Christian soldier is able to learn out of his personal experience with Christ and his faith. Faith shall in this case be a powerful support in his confrontation with the reality of violence and war. Commemoration in a Christian inspiration shall be the groundwork of a righteousness and ethical engagement. Remembrance and commemoration could be in this Christian acceptance a real "peace maker".

The Declaration of AMI General Assembly of Berlin in October 2010 with his topic "The Christian Soldier in the Service of Just Peace" could remain the guideline for further reflections around the deployment of Christian soldiers in every day operations.

May this international conference be the paragon of vision and cooperation, of reflection and meaning to life, finding its inspiration in the Biblical tradition and the faith in Jesus Christ, who gave his life for all of us, so that the love of God may flourish in our hearts and in our world.

With my best wishes and God's blessings,

+ A-J Léonard, Military Bishop of Belgium.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A-J Léonard". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.