



**Austrian Catholic Military Chaplaincy**  
Military Vicar-General Msgr. Dr. Franz Fahrner

# Pastoral Care in the Austrian Military

Msgr. Dr. Franz Fahrner  
Military Vicar General



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# Pastoral Care in the Austrian Army

Catholic

Protestant

In planning:  
Orthodox, Islamic (?)



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# I. The organisation of the Austrian Catholic Military Chaplaincy



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# History

- **1956:** First military chaplains in the new „Bundesheer“





## History

- **1960:** New structure:  
„**Military Vicariate**“ (Cath.)  
and „**Evangelical Military Pastoral Office**“
  - Military Vicar = one of the Austrian bishops
    - Franz Cardinal König (1959-69)
    - Franz Zak (1969-86)
  - Military Pro-vicar  
= Catholic chief chaplain





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## History

- **1986: New structure - Military Ordinariate**  
(according to *Spirituali militum curae*)

– Military Bishop Alfred Kostelecky (1986-94)



– Military Bishop Christian Werner (since 1994)





## Basic documents

- **Basic Law on the General Rights of Citizens, 1867**  
Art. 14 and 15: freedom of religion, freedom of religious activity
- **Codex iuris canonici, 1983**
- Apostolic Constitution „**Spirituali militum curae**“  
1986
- **Statutes** of the Military ordinariate of the Republic of Austria, 1989
- **Concordat, 1933, Article 9**



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# The Military Bishop

- **Mag. Christian Werner** (1994-)
- Titular bishop of Wiener Neustadt
- Bishop's cathedral in Wiener Neustadt







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# The Military Vicariate General

- Military Vicar General  
Dr. Franz Fahrner



- Msgr. Johann Ellenhuber  
Military Archdean  
Chancellor of the Ordinariate

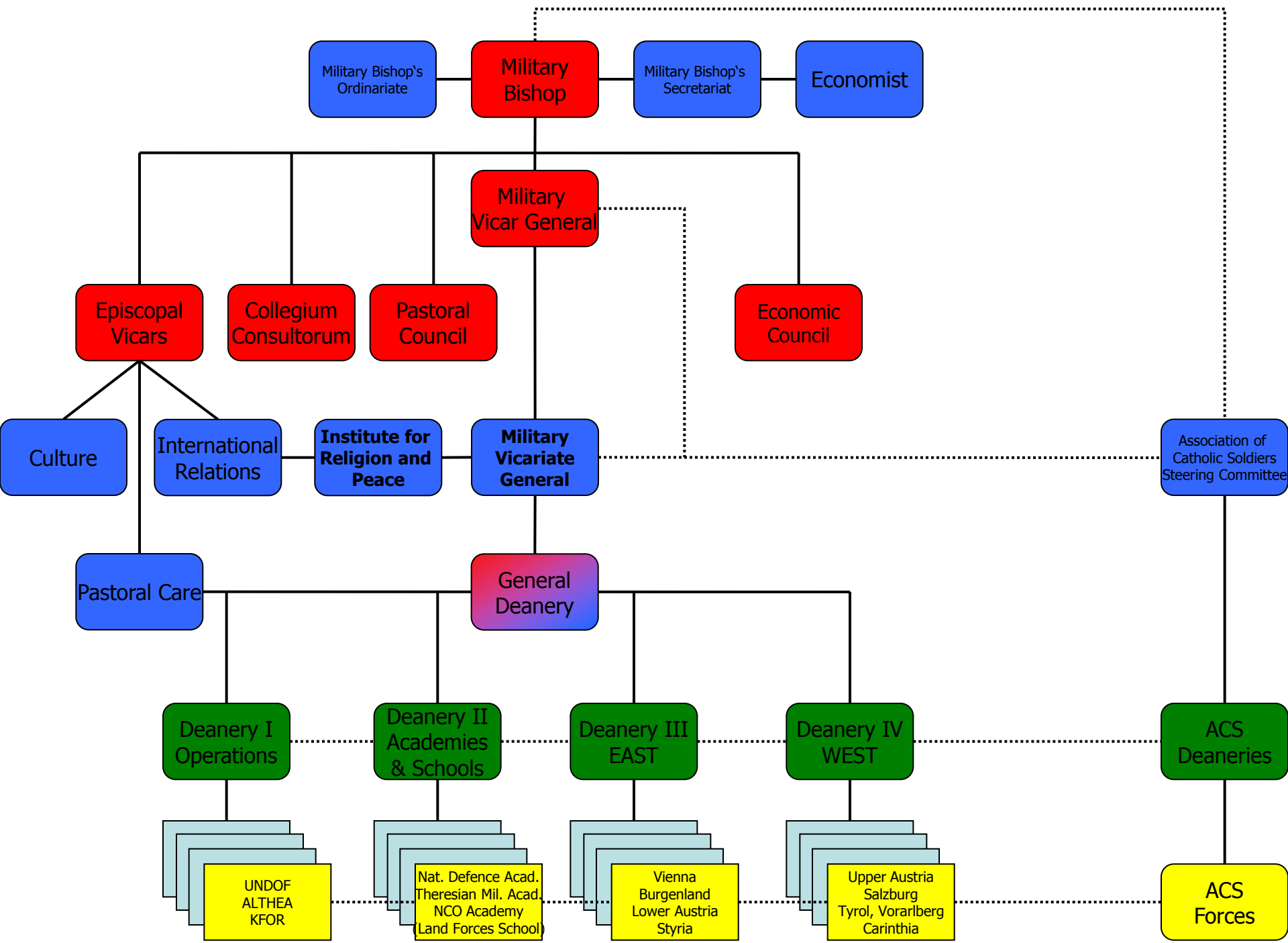




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# The structure of the Austrian Military Chaplaincy

- Renewal as response to new challenges





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## The structure of the Austrian Military Chaplaincy

- One General Deanery
- Four Deaneries





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## II. Basic tasks

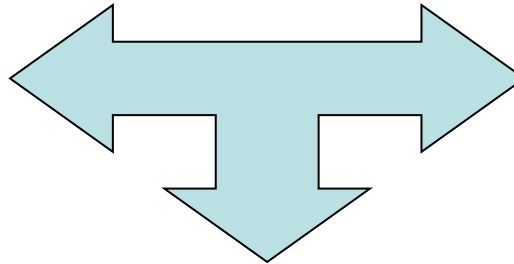
According to the „Pastoral Concept“



# Basic Tasks: Pastoral Care

## Pastoral Care

Preaching the  
gospel



Liturgy -  
Sacraments

Diakonia –  
charity/ social welfare work



## Basic Tasks: Pastoral Care

- **For whom?**
  - Catholic soldiers and other army employees
  - Retired army employees
  - and their families





# Basic Tasks: Pastoral Care

- **Where?**
  - Going with the soldiers wherever they go...







# Basic Tasks: Pastoral Care

- **In particular**

- Preparation and celebration: divine service, sacraments
- Military ceremonies
- Personal conversations
- Help in crisis situations, help for people in need, emergency pastoral care
- Visits: soldiers wherever they are, families, soldiers in hospital or in prison
- Charity projects
- Holiday camps for children
- Especially important: international missions



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## Basic Tasks: Pastoral Care on international missions



Christmas in Kosovo

- 3 military parishes abroad
  - Golan: Parish of the Austrian Battalion of United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF)
    - 380 Austrian soldiers
  - Kosovo: Parish of the Austrian Contingent of KFOR
    - 530 Austrian soldiers
  - Bosnia: Parish of the Austrian Contingent of EUFOR Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina
    - 100 Austrian soldiers
- Military chaplains (of the staff or the reserve force) are up to 6 months on mission abroad



## Basic Tasks: Pastoral Care on international missions

- UNDOF on the Golan Heights
  - 380 Austrian soldiers (out of overall 1,040!)
  - They supervise the ceasefire between Israeli and Syrian forces
  - Casualties: 4 Austrians died in 1974, when their vehicle ran over a land mine
  - Many Austrian military chaplains have been on the Golan Heights since 1974
    - Chaplain Rupertsberger just came back a few weeks ago



Memorial for UNDOF casualties



## Basic Tasks: Pastoral Care on int. missions

- EUFOR Tchad/RCA: A challenge for the Austrian Army and its Military Chaplaincy
  - 200 Austrian soldiers were based in Abéché (March 2008- March 2009)
  - They helped to protect civilians, to facilitate delivery of humanitarian aid and to ensure the safety of UN personnel
  - Chaplains accompanied temporarily the Austrian contingent and visited „Camp Neptun“
- Now: 150 Austrians take part in MINURCAT (UN-Mission in Central African Republic and Tchad)



Easter in Abéché





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# Basic Tasks: Pastoral Care

- **In particular**
  - International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes





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## International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes

- Symbol of reconciliation and mutual understanding since 1953
- One of the major events for the Austrian army and the Catholic Military Chaplaincy
- Austria has taken part since 1960
- Several hundred Austrian soldiers participate in the pilgrimage to Lourdes every year



Lourdes  
1960



...and 2008





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## Basic Tasks: Education

- LKUs (‘Life skills courses’)
- Military ethics courses
- Excursions





## **Basic Tasks: Diakonia – Care of the people in need**

- Social welfare projects
  - for soldiers in need
  - and their families
  - esp. families of soldiers in international missions
  - projects in the context of international missions
    - For soldiers, civil population...





## Further tasks

- Staff activity
- Commander's Advisor on matters of religion and ethics





## Fulfilling this task

- In the military environment
  - Austrian military chaplains are priests and officers!
  - They wear uniform
  - They respect military laws/ orders/ hierarchy
  
- As part of the whole church
  - Catholic faith, spiritual life, Christian morality, church teaching/ law/ hierarchy
  - Cooperation with territorial dioceses/ parishes/ church organisations
  - Ecumenical and interfaith co-operation



# The military chaplain's profile

- Spiritual competence
- Professional competence
- Social competence
- Leadership competence
- Methodical-didactical competence





# Challenges of the future I

- To promote the respect of the person and his/her dignity and social competence in society
- To communicate a religiously founded soldier ethos from a Christian perspective
- To strengthen the families and help them in times of strain and stress
- To participate in international missions and to strengthen international co-operation



## Challenges of the future II

- To attract voluntary workers
- To intensify public relations
- To prepare curricula for all education activities relevant to the military chaplaincy
- To take care of the employees and their reinforcement
- To intensify pastoral care of vocations



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## III. The Institute for Religion and Peace



## **Austrian Catholic Military Chaplaincy**

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- founded 1997
- by the Military Bishop for Austria, Mag. Christian Werner
- Organizational element of the Military Vicariate General
- Official military abbreviation: InstRel&F





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Based in the so-called „House for  
Pastoral Care“:

Fasangartengasse 101/ Obj.7  
1130 Wien (in the district of Hietzing,  
near Schönbrunn Castle)







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- **Director: Msgr. Dr. Werner Freistetter,  
Episcopal Vicar**





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- **Scientific Staff:**
  - Dr. Gerhard Marchl
  - Mag. Diana-Carmen Albu-Lisson
  - Mag. Gerhard Dabringer
  - Mag. Christian Wagnsonner



## Tasks

- Furthering scientific research and debate in the field of military ethics and related subjects
- Education (Material and Courses)
- Documentation (Document database)
- Advice to the Military Bishop
- Co-operation and international contacts



## Example 1

- **Courses in military ethics** on the NCO and Warrant Officer Academy in Enns (Upper Austria)
  - Participation in the curriculum working group
  - Writing course materials and handbook for students
  - Teaching
  - Exams

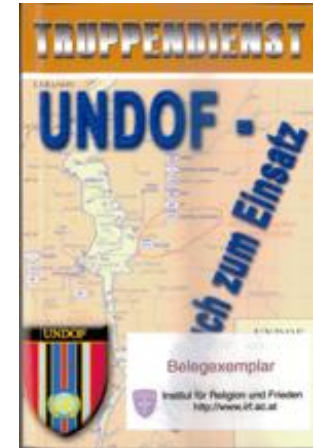




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## Example 2

- **Publications** on several topics concerning military ethics, religion in the military and religions and violence
  - Own publications, yearbook „Ethica“, poster exhibitions, folders
  - Articles in army or church publications
  - Internet: <http://www.irf.ac.at>





## Example 3

- **Full text database**

- Documents of Christian churches on peace and security
- Concentration on documents after 1989, available in English and/or German
- Online and free: <http://www.irf.ac.at>
- Full text search
- German and English user interface
- Containing over 1700 documents!



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## Example 4

- **Conference of the Institute for Religion and Peace**
  - Every year military chaplains from many European countries come together to discuss ethical and pastoral problems
  - Conference 2009: „Never left alone – injury, trauma, death in the field“
    - 29 October 2009, Vienna
  - The main part is open to the public

**Das Institut für Religion und Frieden**  
der Österreichischen Militärseelsorge

lädt zur  
**Enquete**

***Nie allein gelassen.  
Verwundung – Trauma – Tod  
im Einsatz***



Donnerstag, 29. Oktober 2009  
9.00 bis 14.00 Uhr  
Landesverteidigungsakademie  
Sala Terrena, Stiftgasse 2a, 1070 Wien

[www.bundesheer.at](http://www.bundesheer.at)





## Example 5

- **Seminars on occasion of the „International Year of Astronomy 2009“**
  - Ethics in Space (Apr. 09)
  - Astronomy and God? (Sep. 09)
  - Star Trek and Foreign Deployment (Nov. 09)







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**Thank you for your attention!**