

**GREETING WORDS TO THE MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL MILITARY MINISTRY
WHO HAVE MADE A PILGRIMAGE TO SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA
TO CELEBRATE THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF ITS FOUNDATION (1965-2015)**

Miguel ALONSO BAQUER

Dear friends, dear colleagues, dear brothers and sisters in all of a secular, lay and essentially preaching and militant ministry.

I greet you:

On behalf of those who, here at Santiago de Compostela, accepted in the course of a pilgrimage a common task to the service of evangelization in the bosom of the Armed Forces half a century ago, I greet you. I was one of them, as an Infantry Captain, married with children and already a Staff College Graduate.

I called you friends because Jesus of Nazareth did not call his disciples serfs, but friends. He had come to this earth, universe or world to eradicate enmity. That's to say, for peace.

I am calling you colleagues because our profession as Army, Air Forces and Navy soldiers makes us one. Our services and sacrifices for the common good of our political communities lead our Christian vocation and our dedication to the military profession.

I consider you as brothers and sisters, not because we were born brothers and sisters, but for the grace of having been adopted as children to the same Father. Our love starts as filial love and culminates in fraternal love. Our prayer goes to Our Father who gives us this day our daily bread and wine at Eucharist.

What I am doing in your presence is a homage to memories -to the memory- of the last fifty years. Memory is always and only the foundation of hope. Not only of earthly hope, but also of supernatural hope that remains enshrined in between a Creed and a Blessing following the seven petitions in the Our Father.

Because what we ask when praying, making pilgrimage and taking the communion is for our hope to grow, sheltered by our catholic faith and in the horizon of Christian charity. The International Military Ministry is about believing, hoping and loving.

The A.M.I. was born during a pilgrimage. Yet it was not born by spontaneous generation but within the frame of certain habits, memories and associations.

What is remembered are holy sites where ranks and senior soldiers reunite on prominent occasions -Jerusalem Holy Land, the Holy See at Rome, Sanctuaries of Lourdes, Fátima or Pilar-.

Announcements of the Holy Years of St. James were not indifferent to those who, before and after the great wars of the 20th century, offered religious assistance to privates, soldiers and their families and promoted the Third Orders, Sodalities of Our Lady and Catholic Action. The A.M.I.'s Statutes that I myself as the General Secretary presented at the Vatican, and every Conference held at the Assemblies have an only purpose. It is the purpose or goal of this last Pilgrimage of seculars and priests: that of answering the calling with a dedication not solitary, not private, but in company; the company of catholicity in public life.

Be welcome to Compostela.