

Sottosegretario Rossi

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Let me first of all thank His Eminence Santo Marciànò for inviting me to attend this 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference of the International Military Apostolate. I would also like to greet all of you personally and on behalf of the Minister of Defence, which I am representing here today.

There are some values that go beyond all ideologies, values that we can only agree with, because they originate from common sense, free from any cultural or ideological superstructure.

Values such as freedom, justice, solidarity and, in a more general sense, respect for human life, will never lose their topicality and universality. That is exactly why they must be the focus of the deeds and thoughts of each and all of us, and especially of the political action.

Saint John Paul II, in his apostolic exhortation *Christifideles laici*, affirms that politics is “*the multiple and varied economic, legislative, administrative and cultural action aimed at promoting the common good in a systematic and institutional way*”.

Politics is therefore, first and foremost, a *service for the common good*, which entails commitment, assumption of responsibility, the personal choice to refrain from pursuing privilege of any kind, and the will to “walk” day by day with the men and women of goodwill along the hard but enthralling path to the common good, ready to find new avenues for action.

A “service” that has renewed its assumption of responsibility toward the collectivity, taking into account the ever-changing social, economic, demographic and historical conditions that characterize our country and the global environment in which we live.

Politics, in the highest sense, means working in the present with our eyes turned toward the future while keeping in mind the lessons of the past. Therefore, in light of the challenges that politics must face not only in our country, but also in the “global village” of which we are an integral part, aware of our responsibilities, one must try to decide how to match the Christian values that I have mentioned with the every-day life of a society that is now far from being Christian in its entirety.

Security, stability and peace are most needed in today's world, including Europe, which, until a few years ago, was our "happy place", seemingly far away from the periphery of the world devastated by wars and violence.

In the last few years we have learned, at our expenses that such "peripheries" have become part of our world and lives, and the tragedies they are going through are getting so much closer.

We have learnt that peace and justice among peoples and nations are, unfortunately, far from being given for granted: we must work, or even fight, to safeguard them.

We are well aware of the challenges that loom upon our security: in the first place, terrorism, whose growth and intensity have achieved levels never experienced in the past.

In this regard, Italy has a clear vision and a similarly clear behaviour: countries that have assumed their responsibilities within the international community have a duty to intervene in crisis situations to re-establish peace and law-and-order.

They must do that on the basis of international law, while respecting the sensitivities and rightful expectations of local populations.

"A civilization is lost or won by those who fight to protect it and decide whether it is worth it, on the basis of the gratitude offered to soldiers by those whom they have been saved", according to the statement of Victor Davies Hanson, the great military historian.

Well, I was really pleased to receive the praise for the fairness and the "ethical behaviour" of our military in a number of international fora. This makes their intervention even more effective, and I think we should all be proud of it.

Today, the whole world needs security, stability and peace.

We should again find, deep in our minds, that sense of collectivity that so reassuring, at the highest level. We should also give a new interpretation, when necessary to the deepest values of our humanity.

It is, however, as much necessary to re-build, at the political level, a new cohesion among the members of the international community, first of all within the framework of the European Union, seen as a bulwark of democracy, freedom and justice.

Calls to peace must not remain unanswered; International Organizations, Europe and all other brethren countries must take, with a sense of realism and responsibility, the necessary decisions in the political and military sectors, in order to ensure peace and mend the blatant and continued absence of justice that characterizes a number of situations, thus contributing to re-establishing legality.

I believe that we can and must act in this direction, if necessary, also by making recourse to the use of force.

The lessons that we have learned in a hard and painful way during the last hundred years - stormed by two World Wars- but also, more recently, in our peacekeeping operations in far-away, hostile areas, tell us that whenever no other option exists, we cannot abstain from a "*legitimate, minimum and proportional*" use of force to prevent indiscriminate violence by those who are stronger against the weaker ones.

Legitimate, meaning not only the formal legitimacy of the authority exercised by the national government, but also the "moral" legitimacy that originates from a consensus as universal and shared as possible.

Minimum, that is, limited in time and space, and exclusively in connection with situations that cannot be prevented or tackled alternatively.

Proportional, that is, paying continued attention to collateral and unnecessary damages of all kinds, to the possible use of non-lethal equipment and systems, to the need to avoid spiralization and promote negotiation,

"Those who exercise their profession in the ranks of the Army see themselves as being at the service of the security and freedom of their people; if they serve their duty correctly, they actually concur to peace stability", Saint John-Paul II affirms in his encyclical *Gaudium et Spes*

I believe this is the only way in which we can make room for implementing and testifying to the Christian values in our military life, staying true to the "gift of the self" while serving in the military.

Christian history is full of wonderful examples of sanctity, which have bloomed in the military. We must preserve them and disseminate them, in order for them to become a reference and a model for those who are living their lives in the military today.

Will we ever achieve such a high point in human progress that even the use of legitimate force will no longer be necessary in our communities? I believe no one is able to answer this question.

We are however sure to belong in a country that rejects war as an instrument of aggression and that will never take up arms against other peoples to affirm its own pretensions. At the same time, we will continue to commit ourselves to affirm the fundamental values of peace and freedom.

What we can and we must do, is to again trust the nobility and greatness of the human spirit for its ability to find the truth, and let that trust guide us in our patient work of politics and diplomacy, according to the Christian dictum: “Fides – Caritas – Spes”.

Thank you for your attention.