

## **HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE DEFENSE AND PROMOTION OF THE HUMAN PERSON - Life, Dignity, and Peace -**

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*“Man is the way for the Church”<sup>1</sup>. We open this presentation by paraphrasing the beautiful words of His Holiness, Pope John II<sup>nd</sup> by asserting in our turn that “man is the way for the army as well”. Through which we imply that the authenticity of an institution is given by its being in the service of man. The mission of the Church is that of guiding man to encounter our Lord Christ and to be, thus, saved. In fulfilling this, the Church also relies on a variety of human realities, among which the army holds a significant place. The institution of the army has as its main purpose the defense of the human being, of nations, of peoples, and of the intangible human values: life and dignity on the personal level, and peace on the social level. In our presentation we will focus on life, dignity and peace. In order to render the teachings of the Church on these matters, we will first draw an outline of the soldier, pondering on the light and darkness of our contemporary civilisation.*

### **The Soldier Serving Man and the Church**

**M**any soldiers - throughout history - have distinguished themselves through their spirit of sacrifice that often reached heroism and even martyrdom when their Christian faith was at stake.

In several instances in the pages of the New Testament the figure of the soldier receives special attention. Mathew describes the miracle of healing the servant in the house of a Roman centurion (*Mt* 8:5-13). The

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<sup>1</sup> Pope JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptor Hominis* (14<sup>th</sup> March 1979), 14.