

The spoken word shall prevail!
vesting period: Monday, 21 June 2021, 3:00 p.m.

Most Reverend Bishop Dr. Franz-Josef Overbeck
Catholic Military Bishop for the German Bundeswehr

**Greeting due to the introduction of the 1st Jewish Military Rabbi Zsolt Balla -
Monday, 21 June 2021, 15:00 - Synagogue, Keilstr. 4, 04105 Leipzig**

Madam Minister of Defence Mrs Kramp-Karrenbauer,
Dear President Dr. Schuster,
Dear Federal Military Rabbi Mr Balla,
Dear members of the synagogue community,
Dear soldiers,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I.

"Peace is the effect of righteousness" (Is 32:17), writes the prophet Isaiah. More precisely, he says: "The effect of righteousness will be peace, and its result will be quiet and security forever" (Is 32:17).

This biblical phrase reminds us of our tradition, rooted in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and it sums up the mission for which we in Military Pastoral Care Service take responsibility. It is about a service for peace in a world that is repeatedly threatened by violence. The constant reminder that a state of peace is the result of justice is also our motivation. This is why we are committed to the spiritual well-being of the soldiers and their families, but also to their everyday lives as part of the Armed Forces. This is why - also in ethic lessons of 'Lebenskundlicher Unterricht' - it is about peace, where justice prevails and where we strive for justice.

II.

The first institutionalised Jewish Military Rabbinate - at that time known as 'Field Rabbinate' – was installed during the First World War. Now, 65 years after the reintroduction of a Military Pastoral Care Service, we have, once again and finally, arrived at the point we as Church have long been working for with openness and confidence in ecumenical solidarity, namely to support the introduction of a Jewish Military Pastoral Care Service in the German Bundeswehr.

III.

This is an important sign of Christians and Jews standing together. This solidarity marks the importance a public religion can have in the Federal Republic of Germany and also in the soldiers' service. At the same time, we are sending a supportive and confident signal that, for us as churches, antisemitism has no place in our society.

Honoured Federal Military Rabbi Mr Balla: As representatives of pastoral work in the Bundeswehr, we are people of trust and of prayer who can always say with Psalm 23: "The Lord is my shepherd, there is I shall lack... I will fear no evil; for you are at my side, your rod and your staff comfort me " (Ps. 23:1.6).

In the name of the Catholic Military Pastoral Care Service, but also of the entire Catholic Church in Germany, I wish you, every blessing, good luck and much strength in building up the Jewish Military Rabbinate. May God, who is peace, protect you and help us to make this peace true and real through justice. In this spirit, dear Mr. Federal Military Rabbi, to you and to all of us: Shalom - Pax - Peace!