Your excellencies Mr. Ministers, Rector Magnificus, Professor Hahn, Professor Bircks, Members and Guests of the Society.

It is a great honour and an extremely high distinction to be elected president of the European Society of Cardiovascular Surgery. I feel very grateful to you for that promotion the more so that I have been elected to that high post by the cardiovascular surgeons of Europe. Born and educated in the eastern part of our continent, I feel like other surgeons from that region strong ties and firm links with the spirit and culture of Europe. I feel strongly so and with this solemn opening address I want to pay tribute to the effort and success of European vascular surgeons for whom I have such a great admiration and who have contributed so much to the development of modern surgery (Fig. 1).

I have been always told that the Europeans, since the time of Descartes, have always excelled in their passion for analysis. Before doing anything that was really important, deciding something really valuable, discovering new rules, ideas or devising new constructions the European is used at first to divide every problem into separate parts. These parts are then developed, forming the basis for reevaluation of old ideas, new constructions or new concepts.

Following these I tried to divide into parts the modern vascular surgery looking for its most basic components. It was not easy but after many doubts and hesitations I came to the conclusion that contemporary vascular surgery is based on ten principal, crucial discoveries, statements or principles which might be considered as milestones. They are: 1) arterial suture, 2) sympathectomy, 3) heparin, 4) vascular grafts, 5) thromboendarterectomy, 6) synthetic grafts, 7) arteriography, 8) embolectomy catheter, 9) venous surgery, and 10) lymphography.

I gathered these milestones presenting them in form of symbols which might be understandable even to those who know nothing about our history and culture. Setting these symbols in the form of a message I tried to imitate those who launched in 1971 the Explorer providing it with well-known symbols which might be understandable to thinking beings (Fig. 2). Maybe somebody in Space would like to become a vascular surgeon.

Let me discuss these points more precisely (Fig. 1).

The Arterial Suture

With bad suture material and frequent infections the arterial sutures and arterial anastomoses of early times were usually bad. It comes from the nineteenth century writings that there were three principal things which surgeons of these times feared in respect to arterial suture: early thrombosis, a foreign body in form of a thread in the lumen of the artery and haemorrhage which was supposed to originate from the holes that were left by the suturing needle. Lambert, a surgeon at...
Fig. 1. Founders of the European Cardiovascular Society: R. Leriche, E. Malan, J. Cid Dos Santos, G. Arnulf, R. Fontaine, A. Mortorelli, J. Kinmonth