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Dear friends of AMI!

Let me take the opportunity to warmly welcome you to the conference center in Mennorode. We are thankful that the Netherlands offered to be the host of our conference in 2008.

Just for understanding what I want to tell you, let me explain some facts. AMI was founded in Santiago de Compostela (Spain) in 1965. Since that time the AMI general assemblies serve to discuss topical and future-oriented issues.

The Apostolat Militaire International (AMI) is an International Catholic Association which is meant to serve as a mouthpiece and an instrument to translate into action the views of Catholic service members in the Church, in the armed forces and in the public.

The AMI unites organisations and representatives from European, North and South American, African and Asian countries.

For more than 42 years the AMI has performed its self-chosen tasks which are

- to promote international understanding and cooperation - as contribution to the peace throughout the world,
- to jointly take up the social, spiritual, ethical and moral challenges in the military in the light of the Gospel and the teachings of the Church.
- to clarify and explain the moral standards and values of Christian service members and represent them at national and international level,

The whole period of our responsibility as AMI Executive Committee was full of efforts to enhance our worldwide network of the Lay Apostolate of Catholic Soldiers.

In April of this year I received a letter from the Catholic Military Bishop of the forces of the United Kingdom, his Excellency Thomas Matthew BURNS. He wanted to highlight some ideas concerning the current situation and the future of AMI. You are invited to read the content of his letter. There are some remarkable points we should think about it, for example the opinion of Bishop BURNS that

- AMI might have lost sight of the need for which it was originally created or at least the vision of how to reach that goal
- or that AMI members need to be engaged more than just once a year
- or that he is not happy with the length and the content of the conference.....

The AMI ExCom decided to install **“a working group dealing with the ideas of his Excellency Bishop BURNS”**. LtCol Ralf WITTKAMP volunteered to chair this working group. Thank you Ralf. I want to ask the delegations of every nation, represented at this conference, to dispatch a delegate and to contribute to this working group, with the exception of those countries, represented with just one delegate. These delegates can decide to join any working group they want. We prepared a list in our conference office where you can report for being a member of this working group.

But there are also 3 others working groups with the following topics:

1. **“Review of the AMI-declaration of Rome in 2000”**; chaired by our ecclesiastical assistant Mons. FREISTETTER. This working group should work not only during our conference but also to continue the work of the “Permanent Working Group” throughout the year with all necessary issues until the upcoming Annual General Assembly where it should report about it.
2. **“New Overall topic for the next years”**; chaired by chief chaplain Daniel BACHMANN from Switzerland. Just to remember. The AMI Conference and General Assembly has been discussing during the last 3 years under the overall topic

“Strengthening Christian Values within Armed Forces Worldwide”

3. **“Documentation of the history of AMI”**, chaired by WO II Andreas KOPPERS. This working group should work not only during our conference but also to continue the work throughout the next years .It is our goal to publish a publication to document the history of 50 years AMI until 2015.

I want to stress that during our conference all your wishes and requests can be forwarded at any time. We will try our best to meet all your expectations in a professional manner. You can address all administrative and organisational questions to me or to all the other members of the organizing committee, so that we can offer you a suitable solution. You will be informed about agenda of this conference daily in order avoid any communication problems.

With all the best

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