

## Notes Presentation Secretary General 2013

Excellencies, generals, ladies and gentlemen, dear Friends of AMI,

Thank you Mr. President. You already told a lot about our common activities, so my dear friends, you will hear some topics twice.

Dia 2

As AMI Secretary General it is my pleasure to welcome you again at this year's AMI General Assembly and Conference here in Celje, in the beautiful country Slovenia. In the booklet with the program and the order of Holy Mass you will find more information about our host land.

As you all know the AMI Secretary General is responsible for showing the General Assembly what has happened since our last gathering in Belgium. You already know my favorite slogan "A picture paints a thousand words".

I tell you every year, so I choose a lot of pictures of all my experiences of last year

So please don't expect a great essay here today. More a overview and information on developments, activities, subjects discussed and concerning the future of the military Apostolate in our Armed Forces.

Dia 3:

In my summary of the Conference in Belgium I already thanked our hosts. You all received a copy of it, thanks to our second Vice president Markus Stromberger, who send it to you and of course it is also present at our website.

But I would express once again my gratitude to our Belgium friends, present here today, for their shown exemplary hospitality and their

excellent organization of the conference 2012. It is a pity Annie that you did not bring your husband Paul to Slovenia, because he as well did a tremendous job last year.

Dia 4:

Our annual General Assembly last year in Belgium was very successful thanks to our Belgium hosts. I said it before. This picture made on our way to the Flemish Parliament and very well orchestrate by our American Father Pwalikowski you all received as a Christmas card.

Not only did I send it to you but also to several for AMI important stakeholders.

Dia 5, 6, 7 and 8:

Military Bishop Christian Werner of Austria establishes the Institute for Religion and Peace in 1997, in order to promote the scientific discussion of current security-political changes in light of the Christian social science.

Chancellor of the Austrian Military Ordinariate is Episcopal Vicar Msgr. Dr. Werner Freistetter, well known within AMI.

According to the wish of several Ordinaries, the Conference of the Institute for Religion and Peace is every year in October, the setting for a meeting of European Catholic Military Bishops and Chaplains.

Last year the conference was devoted to the theme "Is it our responsibility to protect others?"

"Legal and ethical questions of Responsibility to Protect".

The first day we went to Eckartsau Castle. This castle is the center of a large park in the east of lower Austria.

Dia 6 en dia 7:

It is an ancient hunting lodge which became famous, because it was the last domicile from Karl I in Austria, who was the last Austrian Emperor and last king of Hungary. Karl I stayed there at the end of the First World War together with his wife Zita until he left Austria on March 23<sup>rd</sup> 1919.

A little bit of Austrian - Hungarian history this morning.

Dia 8:

After the internal expert talks and the Celebration of the Holy Mass in the castle chapel of Eckartsau we went back to Vienna for the Conference dinner.

There was also gathered the AMI President and Vice president and Father Lapin, who is giving us a speech tomorrow. Bishop Spencer of the USA sitting next to Father Lapin.

Dia 9

January 10 2013 the AMI Presidency started their working sessions in Cologne, Germany.

Dia 10

LtCol Andreas Preuss from Germany and CLC Mia Devriese from Belgium had volunteered to take over responsibilities as the new AMI-auditors.

During the meeting of the AMI Executive Council in Cologne they made the

cash audit for the financial affairs of AMI during the year 2012, together with our AMI - treasurer Adjutant ret. Herman Vriesema . Later this week we will get a full report of Herman and the auditors about the financial situation of AMI.

The AMI Executive Council used time in Cologne and later on in Rome for intensive talks on the preparation of the next AMI General Assembly in Slovenia and on the statutes of AMI to revise them as suggested by the Pontifical Council of the Laity.

The decision was made on the theme of the next AMI Conference:

**"New understanding/explanation of Vaticanum II."**

- Analyses of Gaudium et Spes by Mgr. Werner Freistetter as an introduction on the theme of 2013.
- How to understand Gaudium et Spes 50 years after Vaticanum II.
- The Year of Faith and the 50th Birthday of Pacem in Terris.
- Worth fighting for our values, questions of Just Peace

Dia 11 and 12

The AMI Executive Council consisting of AMI- President Norbert Sinn, his wife Ida, AMI- Vice-President and Liaison Officer Michael Jedlička , the auditors-team and the new President of the Austrian association of Catholic soldiers Brigadier Martin Jawurek and my self were invited to join the Holy Mass on the occasion of the World Day of Peace the 10<sup>th</sup> of January in the Cathedral of Cologne.

It was a wonderful and touching experience to celebrate Holy Mass with the main celebrant Archbishop Joachim Cardinal Meisner and the 1500 German and International soldiers.

Dia 13

Following the service it was an honor for the AMI-members to take part at the reception, hosted by the German community of Catholic soldiers (GKS) and we had a nice talk with the German Defense Minister Dr. Thomas de Maizière.

I made him a compliment on the new film on Youtube to say thank you to all Defense personnel in Missions abroad and to their relatives.

([http://youtu.be/bpM\\_ttcHN-M](http://youtu.be/bpM_ttcHN-M)) I found it really touching!

Dia 14

Our president general Sinn has been invited to attend a conference of the Military Ministries International (MMI).

According to the motto "Travelling together- are we really all in Jesus Christ?" the so called "2013 MMI Supporters' Weekend" was held at Windmill Farm, Oxfordshire on 2 and 3 March 2013. The supporter's weekend is helping Christians in the military to make a difference throughout many of the world's trouble spots.

Anthea Fillingham was so kind to pick Michael and me up at Heathrow Airport and invited us for dinner.

We had the opportunity to catch up with her, talking about Mark, her late husband and the sweet memories on the time that they could come together to AMI. In 2007 in Switzerland they were with us for the last time.

We were deeply impressed about the excellent organization of this meeting, about the warm hospitality and especially about the strong and assured Christian faith of our MMI sisters and brothers in Jesus Christ.

A little bit jealous too, because of the very good singers amongst them.

Today we heard our Slovenian friends and they sing also beautiful!  
Major General Sinn thoroughly acquainted the participants with AMI and the International Catholic lay apostolate. The discussion that followed was very fruitful and full of mutual understanding.

#### Information about MMI:

MMI exists to see the kingdom of God established and growing in the armed forces of the world. MMI seeks to achieve its mission through facilitating conferences, seminars, retreats, symposiums, training events and the like at local, national, regional and international level throughout the regions MMI operates in: Africa, Europe South Asia and The Middle East. MMI supports these activities and builds and maintains relationships with individual Christians through correspondence and communication and by regular visits to Christians in the armed forces in these regions. By serving Christians and chaplaincies in the military worldwide MMI is helping many of today's military Christians be a force for good at an international level. That is why the motto is "Building Disciples - Shaping Nations". A disciple of Jesus Christ amongst nations armed forces can shape that nation for Christ (further information about MMI: <http://www.m-m-i.org.uk/>).

Dia 15

In the weekend of March 7 till 9 the AMI Executive Council went to Rome for, among other things, a working visit to the Vatican.

On the agenda were the following topics:

- Meeting to prepare the AMI annual general assembly in Slovenia. We discussed the topics and tried to arrange the speakers for our conference here. A fruitful afternoon in rainy Rome at that time. (Dia

15)

- The next morning at first we had a meeting at the Council of the Central Office for Pastoral Coordination of Military Ordinariates, at the Congregation of Bishops, near the Vatican.

The Congregation for Bishops (Latin: "congregatio per episcopis") is a central authority in the Roman Catholic Church and responsible for all matters relating to bishops. The intermediary Mons Werner Freistetter, has contributed to have an enlightening conversation with Padre Giulio Cerchietti.

AMI seeks to establish contacts with other countries by cooperating with other military lay organizations working in the cause of peace and supporting the work of the Catholic chaplaincy in their armed forces. (Dia 16)

- Our last meeting on that Saturday was in the Vatican Secretariat of State, in the Section for Relations with States (also known as the Second Section).

The Secretary of State (Latin "secretariatus status") is the oldest dicastery in the Roman Curia, the government of the Roman Catholic Church. It is headed by the Cardinal Secretary of State and performs all the political and diplomatic functions of Vatican City and the Holy See. Pope Frances appointed just last week a new Secretary of State, the Italian Arch bishop (soon will be a cardinal) Pietro Parolin.

The Secretariat is divided into two sections, the Section for General Affairs and the Section for Relations with the States, known as the First Section and Second Section, respectively.

The Vatican is very interested in the activities of AMI and welcomes an international military presence of the Catholic lay apostolate. The AMI team had a very fruitful conversation with Dotoressa Fermina Alvarez Alonso.

(Dia 17 and 18)

As every year we went after our meeting with Fermina to the little private balcony where we could make some pictures and had a beautiful view over St Peters Square. This time Radio and Television Stations and lots of people were in Rome for the Conclave that started Tuesday after we were there. Fermina told us that the personnel of the State Secretariat always wait on the little balcony as a new pope is elected. You have an excellent view there to see the new pope.

For that evening we had a dinner invitation of the Austrian military attaché in Italy, Brigadier Wolfgang Bäck. He and his Mongolian wife cooked a lovely Italian Dinner for us but first we had to overlook the Eternal City with a glass of Champaign. (Dia 19)

Dia 20

From April 5 to 6, 2013 a preparatory meeting for this year's AMI-conference took place in Celje/Slovenia. We talked about the program, the facilities and all kind of organizational affairs. Milan, Jan and I had the opportunity to visit Ljubljana, Sunday afternoon. Milan is an excellent guide!

Dia 21

Our address database is pretty up to date. Nevertheless, I will ask you again, like every year, please let us know if anything is changing concerning your address, e-mail or phone number.

And as every year I will kindly ask you one of these days to look seriously at

our list of delegates and put your name and address on it if it isn't already there. You don't want to miss our annual Christmas card and more important the summary of this year's conference.

You can still join us on our Facebook page, please do!

Our new website is worthwhile to visit as well once in a while.

Dia 22

Mgr. Freistetter and his co-worker Nadja Rossmann visited a conference in Amsterdam. We had a lovely dinner together in a typically Dutch Restaurant, named Haesje Claes with typically Dutch food, thanks to Frank Marcus who gave us the address.

Dia 23 and 24

More than 10.500 soldiers, coming from 39 nations, assisted the 55th International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes from the 22nd till the 26th of May.

It was a meeting of young and elder soldiers and also many injured or handicapped military persons came for prayers at the cave of St.

Bernadette; many friends of AMI worldwide were present and used the time for prayer, friend - and comradeship and renewing old relationships. AMI used the opportunity to get into contact again with our partners from Africa, America, Asia and Europe.

The Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes has developed as an annual meeting place for our "AMI-FAMILY". Friday Evening is already a tradition and we have met several of them in the hotel La Solitude. Simple to enjoy each

other's company and have a few drinks together. You are already invited to come to Lourdes and La Solitude next year!

Saturday afternoon the president informed about aims and work of AMI for strengthening Christian values in the Armed Forces during a symposium, organized by the military bishop of France, His Excellency Luc Ravel.

AMI follows the endeavor to find new members and friends during this pilgrimage.

Dia 24

Last year his Royal Highness Prince Albert of Monaco was present in Lourdes, this year it was his charming sister Princess Caroline who was at the reception of Mgr. Ravel. I gave her our AMI flyer and we had a short, very friendly conversation.

Dia 25, 26 and 27

Almost fifty years ago AMI was founded in Santiago di Compostela in northwestern Spain. Therefore AMI has the intention to go back to the roots, by organizing the 2015 conference in Santiago in Spain.

The weekend of June 22-24, 2013 brought the first preparatory meeting for the 50th anniversary of AMI with the Arzobispado Castrense. President Sinn and his wife and me and my husband were invited to come over to talk about our goals and plans for the 2015 AMI Jubilee Conference.

In fact we met old friends, and during our meetings with H.E. Monsignore Juan del Rio Martin, Ordinario Militar de Espana, the Minister of Defense, H.E. Don Pedro Morenés y Alvarez de Eulate we received quite a lot of understanding, friendship and the strong will to support our idea.

Dia 28

Beside our talks with many responsible people at the Ministry of Defense we were invited to assist the holy mess in one of the garrisons churches and had, together with Don Lorenzo a holy mess on Monday noon.

Beside of that we drank health to the King of Spain, Juan Carlos of whom it is the name day on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June

Further talks will be necessary in the upcoming year and we thank Don Lorenzo for being such an excellent host and translator during our weekend in Madrid.

Dia 29 and dia 30

During my holiday in Austria in July I travelled from Carinthia to the Wine District of Austria to General Sinn's house in Dürnkrut. We had supper together and talked about the final arrangements we had to make for the upcoming conference. On Sunday we enjoyed the birthday party of our friend and vice-president Michael. There was a lovely cultural program and of course our Birthday boy sang himself, together with his brother. I did it my way. If you were in Manila, 2 years ago you heard him already once. He only invited 350 people and also bright sunshine up to almost 40 degrees Celsius. You can imagine a beer tastes very good at that time!

Dia 31

My dear Friends,

This was a list of activities of your Secretary General during the last year.

I have to say I enjoyed every minute of it.

I feel very blessed with so many friends all over the world and of course during these days, gathered here in Celje.

I want to thank you all for your given confidence and the warm friendship I receive of all of you.

The only negative thing I have to mention is my constant struggle against weight, because of all the nice dinners and drinks, but the good news is I will survive.

My gratitude goes most certainly to the Vicar General of Slovenia Joze Plut Thanks to him and to the cooperation with chaplain Milan Pregelj, our Point of Contact over here, so we can have our annual conference in their beautiful country.

Of course I want to thank our hosts from Slovenia for their shown exemplary hospitality and their excellent organization of our conference here in Celje.

Dia 32

One more thing I want to show you. Exactly 35 years ago, today, I was getting married and I want to thank my husband Maarten for giving me the opportunity to do the things I really want to do, even if that means, we are not together on this special day.

Let's have a wonderful Conference! Thank you very much for your attention!