

Notes Presentation Secretary General 2014

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 Modra, in the beautiful country Slovakia.

As you all know the AMI Secretary General is responsible for showing the General Assembly what has happened since our last gathering in Slovenia. 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 an overview and information on developments, activities, subjects discussed, concerning the future of the military Apostolate in our Armed Forces.

Dia 3:

I would express once again my gratitude to our Slovenian friends, present here today, for their shown exemplary hospitality and their excellent organization of the conference 2013. Especially Milan Pregelj and his team who did a tremendous job last year.

Dia 4:

Our annual General Assembly last year in Slovenia was very successful thanks to our hosts. I said it before. This picture made before and after our

Closing Holy Mass with our friends from Kenya on it 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:

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 our own Episcopal Vicar Msgr. Dr. Werner Freistetter.

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.

On behalf of the Military Bishop for Austria, H.E. Mag. Christian Werner, I was invited to attend this Conference that started in the Military Academy in Wiener Neustadt, Wednesday October 23.

The theme of the conference was 'Military. Art. Science.' : to enhance a dialogue between Arts, Science and Military in the 'year of faith'.

The official part was held on the 24th of October at the National Defense Academy in Vienna. It was addressed to a larger audience, representatives of the Austrian Army as well as experts and persons interested.

Dia 6:

At the beginning of November 2013 we were shocked by the disaster that hit the Philippines. Typhoon Haiyan created serious problems for the people of the Philippines.

The horror transmitted through our television screens showed the necessity to help the people of the Philippines.

We wrote a letter to all our AMI friends and military ordinariates in the world as well as to our personal relatives and friends, to ask for a donation to help the people of the Philippines rebuild their houses and to get their life's back.

Together we collected an amount of almost € 41.000, -. The money was used for the rebuilding of the houses of the Philippine soldiers. Father Harley will tell you more about it later on this day.

I myself was really touched by the drawing of my friend's son Guus, who collected empty bottles and donated the packaging deposit money for the good cause.

Dia 7: Rome

In the weekend of November 7 till 9 the AMI Executive Council we went again to Rome for a meeting with the Pontifical Counsel for the Laity and to discuss the adjustments of the statutes. We discussed with the Secretary of the Counsel Mgr. Clemens and his co-workers, Dottore Philip Milligan and Monsignore Miguel Delgado the questions raised in our conference last year. As you recall General Kloss on behalf of the German Delegation and Henk Nicolaije on behalf of the Dutch Delegation formulated the questions.

I would like to read to you once more the questions and I will give you the answers as we have got them from the Pontifical Counsel. On Wednesday

we must vote on a final approval of the statutes.

After our visit to the Pontifical Counsel we went to the State Secretariat for our regular talks with Dottoressa Fermina Alvarez Alonso.

Dia 8: Cologne

Our president and his wife Ida joined the Holy Mass in Cologne on the occasion of World Peace Day. Unfortunately I was not able to go there last year.

Dia 9 en 10

The AMI Presidium came together for a meeting with the Slovakian Military Bishop Frantisek Rabek on 28 and 29 march, 2014 in Marianka.

Marianka is a peaceful and beautiful place, situated at the northern slopes of the Small Carpathian Mountains.

It is the residence of Military Bishop Rabek of Slovakia.

Marianka is the oldest place of pilgrimage to St Mary in the Slovak Republic!

Today we are in this beautiful governmental hotel site nearby the Slovakian town of MODRA, just vis-a-vis on the southern slopes of the Carpathian Mountains

With this meeting at the end of March we did put together all necessary arrangements for a successful conference. We spoke about the content and the theme of 2014, the wishes of our hosts, which lecturers we could ask, what speeches to go for and so on.

Bishop Rabek and his team did support us substantially and did excellent work so far to make it possible that we have an interesting conference this week.

Dia 11, 12, 13 and 14: Lourdes

Over 12.000 retired and active duty military personnel, their families and compatriots from 36 nations took part in the annual encounter to pray for peace and the spiritual healing of nations and individuals.

A large number taking part, and given special prominence in the many processions, were those wounded in the line of duty.

The weeklong program provided opportunities for prayer, the sacrament of reconciliation, personal reflection during a Way of the Cross procession, Eucharistic adoration and celebrating Mass.

Participants could take part in candlelight vigils to the grotto where Mary appeared to St. Bernadette in 1858, drink the water flowing from the sanctuaries' spigots and be immersed in the special baths inside chambers near the grotto.

Attending during the larger international military pilgrimage was important for all participants showing and demonstrating that they can come together to truly yearn and pray for peace.

Silent and solemn ceremonies segued into pomp and pageantry as military bands roamed Lourdes all hours of the day and night, belting out national anthems, marching tunes and folk songs. The camaraderie and celebration easily crossed cultural lines as soldiers from different nations asked to have their pictures taken together and traded berets and insignia.

The theme of the international military pilgrimage, "Servant of Christ, Servant of Peace", has really struck a chord with all of the soldiers joining this impressive pilgrimage.

“Peace is a precious, but fragile treasure”, Pope Francis said in a written message read out during the international opening ceremony in the underground Basilica of St. Pius X May 16.

“Soldiers have an irreplaceable role in building peace when they put themselves at the service of the people in guaranteeing order and restoring security”, said the message, written and signed on behalf of the pope by the Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin.

The pope expressed his gratitude for the generous service of so many men and women and reminded them, “serving Christ inevitably leads us to serving peace, since it’s in him that we become brothers and sisters, capable of dialogue and peace”.

The unique international gathering of armed forces from sometimes warring nations at the sacred Marian shrine in southern France started after World War II when French, Russian, British, Belgian and U.S. soldiers celebrated Mass at the Rosary Basilica as part of a prayer for peace.

A German military chaplain and former prisoner of war was invited to attend the pilgrimage in 1947. And as more and more soldiers and countries began participating, the gathering became an official annual event in 1958 - on the 100th year anniversary of the apparitions of Mary to St. Bernadette.

Also many friends of our community, who participated in this pilgrimage, have met in the old tradition of cultivating camaraderie and sharing their experiences in a friendly atmosphere.

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!

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

Dia 15

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 16 en 17

On 3 and 4 July 2014 AMI president and secretary general met the Archbishop of the Spanish Armed Forces, Mons. Juan del Río Martín and the responsables of the Vicariate General of Spain, led by Don Pablo Ramón Panadero Sanchez, for talks concerning the planned conference 2015, which will form the 50th anniversary of AMI.

After two conferences the unanimous result was to hold the conference from September 6 till 11, 2015 in the town, where 1965 AMI was founded:

Santiago de Compostela.

It is great to get so much support by the Spanish Military Archbishop and we are happy to be able to welcome our AMI members and friends next year in Santiago de Compostela.

Further preparations for our jubilee will start after our conference of this year.

Dia 18: Carinthia

As you all know I go often to Carinthia, Austria on holiday. This year I invited our President and his wife to come over to join us for a few days in that lovely part of Austria. We had a beautiful walk in the mountains with friends and the presidency of AMI met informally in Glainach, a village south of Klagenfurt, where vice-president of AMI, WO II Markus Stromberger, organized a youth camp for 180 young people from different countries including Afghanistan. Place of the camp is a minor training area of the Austrian Armed Forces.

Themes of the meeting were again the conferences of 2014 and 2015 as well as the plans for the upcoming years.

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 Modra.

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

My gratitude goes most certainly to Bishop Rabek. Thanks to him and to the cooperation with Father Luboslav Farkas, our Point of Contact over here, we can have our annual conference in their beautiful country.

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

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