



Final Results of the General Assembly and Annual Conference of Apostolat Militaire International in Santiago de Compostela, September 6-11, 2015

In September 2015 in Santiago de Compostela, AMI has been celebrating its 50th Anniversary, AMI understands itself as a response to the Second Vatican Council, 50 years ago, Vatican II.

Over the years, AMI has been inspired by the Council's view on the role of the Church in the Modern world, its ecumenism and its effort to renew interreligious dialogues as formulated in *Unitatis Redintegratio* for ecumenism and *Nostra Aetate* for interreligious dialogue, especially with Judaism and Islam.

To AMI it is especially important that the Council has given a very inspiring and fruitful framework for issues of war and peace too, and it has provided a moral basis for the military professionals in *Gaudium and Spes* no 79. Under quite different circumstances that occurred since 1965, the Council enabled the Catholic soldier to understand his role in and contribution to world history. AMI is very grateful to the Church for providing this spiritual and moral guidance.

Unfortunately, war still has not ended. In stead, the use of force has transformed itself and new challenges have developed. AMI regrets that in many cases, violence is being legitimized by religious arguments. Many questions have arisen about the development of Just war Theory into the concept of a Just Peace and further developments going on at present.

As during its start, AMI hopes that the Church will continue to provide her guidance, especially with regard to relations between Catholic faith and the military profession, in an open ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.

Result of the working groups

With the help of lectures on the history of the Camino (Way) of Santiago, inter-religious dialogue, and the present condition of the world and the needs of military members in it, the Apostolate Military International gathered again in Santiago de Compostela 50 years after it was originally conceived here in 1965 to reexamine its mission and goals. From our beginning, AMI has been a group of Military pilgrims from different countries traveling through life in what Vatican II reminds us is only one world and one human community.

Like pilgrims on the Camino of Santiago, Catholic military exhibit faith when they choose to begin the pilgrimage, live in hope as they travel each day, and display charity in their encounters with each other as fellow pilgrims through life. Each day they express faith by their offering of that day back to God; each hour they live in hope as they go through intermediate goals (parallel to military milestones); and every moment they are called upon to treat others with true charity. This can be particularly difficult when Catholic military are asked to live honorably, following their consciences and still obeying orders about areas that are beyond traditional military tasks--such as processing large movements of peoples, or attacks from within one's allies or from virtual space.

With its newly acquired status both as a Vatican recognized lay organization and a NGO, AMI has a special ability to be a forum for exchange of "best practices" among member military organizations and be able to share those same experiences as a template or a stimulus for each nation's finding their own pilgrim way through life's challenges. This could include anything from promoting inter-religious dialogue within the military, to developing methods of encountering the media, or confronting terrorist challenges to living virtuously: ways of protecting one's population without degenerating into revenge.

With the new status AMI could also more easily be a resource to other Vatican organizations or other NGOs who only have the chance to observe the military from outside. With the change from conscripted military service in so many nations to voluntary service, fewer and fewer civilians and social leaders will have had the chance

to understand the military from within. AMI could help re-introduce military values to any civilian leaders making decisions that affect them intensely.

A parallel concern is fostering virtue in our youngest military members. These millennials live at a faster pace, and more digitally connected yet more personally disconnected and lonely today. They live with the surface relationships yet deep vulnerability of the virtual world, where trivial questions are constantly discussed and one wrong statement or picture can “go viral” and drastically affect one’s future. Yet in that same digital world real issues rarely have the chance to be examined with a compassionate friend who understands their military struggles.

Because our young military long for welcome and acceptance, especially as they change unit assignments, they need good example from other young Catholic military as well as their leaders to continue their own pilgrimage through life. To engage in the inevitable inter-religious dialogue in their units, especially when deployed, they need good instructions in their faith—but packaged in ways that are electronically attractive yet challenging in bite-sized pieces: much as each day’s journey along the Camino of Santiago is an achievable goal. As some nations have already developed such digital materials and adult catechetical methods to accompany their use, AMI can be a useful vehicle to exchange such materials and the most usable methods of employing them.

Young military also long for good worship experiences, whether or not they attend at every opportunity. Exchanges of techniques from AMI members can help these young military feel part of those worship services (mass and the various sacraments) in ways that are encouraging rather than intimidating: if they sing when marching or in taverns they can be encouraged to sing in church with challenges between army units there. Finally, young military need to express their charity in vivid ways that give them “bragging rights” as having fed the hungry, encouraged orphans or other youngsters, built shelter for the homeless, etc. Such actions not only help those in need but polish the image of God in each of our young military and let that goodness shine as thoroughly as the stars which showed a Galician hermit where to find the body of St. James. Again, AMI can be not only the vehicle for exchanging ideas for developing such opportunities but can also offer assistance by intervening with senior authorities to support these initiatives by our young military.

With the help of the grace of God and the intercession of St. James, the first apostle to lay down his life for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, may we all follow the pilgrimages we each are called to, together with our fellow military pilgrims, and arrive one day at the fullness of the Kingdom of God.

Goals of AMI 2015 - 2020

At first:

- AMI wants to make a start with the NGO activities and we will need consent of the members
- Organizing lobby for themes:
 - Freedom of religion for all military people
 - Freedom of consciences, both are human rights
 - Future of Just war in Roman Catholic social teaching on war and peace (Laudato Si), and the consequences for military personal
 - Interreligious dialog of war and peace and military practices
 - To promote spirituality of military personnel and veterans

Second:

Organizing an educational line for the same themes as above:

- AMI will be facilitating and intermediary between educational centers of member countries.
- On request organizing education about the themes in member countries.

Third:

To install a board of advise:

- Cooperation with institutes such as:
 - Institute for Religion and Peace in Vienna
 - Korn Academy Germany
 - Tilburg University

Goal is organizing a seminar in cooperation with the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.

Fourth:

Making young military personnel interested to take part on the AMI Conferences by:

- Organizing international working groups in the different countries.
- Countries are responsible for finding young people and are invited to organize that. AMI should support this with effort and money if necessary.

The activities mentioned above costs a lot of effort and money. This cannot be done by the Presidency alone, so we need cooperation on a bigger level, within the AMI family. AMI needs to make instruments for this purpose (like flyers, information, communication and educational material) and AMI will support (financial) and facilitate all activities.