

## Notes Presentation Secretary General 2015

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

Our President already told a few of our common activities, so I cannot avoid that you hear some topics twice this morning.

Dia 2

Of course, as AMI Secretary General it is my pleasure to also welcome you for the first time or again at this year's AMI General Assembly and Conference here in Santiago de Compostela, in Spain, the same place as were we where founded exactly 65 years ago.

As you already know I always choose a lot of pictures of all my experiences of last year to show the General Assembly what has happened since our last gathering in Slovakia in September last year.

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

Dia 3:

I would express once again my gratitude to our Slovakian friends, for their shown exemplary hospitality and their excellent organization of the conference 2014. Especially Bishop Rabek and father Luboslav Farkas and Mgr. Peter Dzihak and their team who did a tremendous job last year.

Dia 4:

At the end of our General Assembly in Slovakia, Austria was elected unanimously by open ballot for the AMI Presidency and the Netherlands were elected unanimously by open ballot for the AMI Secretariat General.

Major General Norbert Sinn of Austria will be President of AMI again, for the following three years. Sadly we had to say goodbye to Colonel Michael Jedlicka. But we are very happy to welcome his successor, Vice President Colonel Friedrich Aflenzer. The other Vice president is of course well known within AMI, Staff Master Sergeant Markus Stromberger.

Unfortunately Colonel Michael Jedlicka will not join us this year, although he did a tremendous job to put together our jubilee book. His wife Katja had a terrible accident last week. She fell off her horse and injured her back very severe, so she has to stay in hospital. That is the reason Michel cancelled his presence here in Spain. We are very grateful for the excellent way he did his job. The result you will see tomorrow.

The team of the Netherlands consists of the Secretary General Nelleke Swinkels van de Vorst, Vice Secretary General Col (ret) Jan van Lieverloo and the Treasurer Adjudant ret. Herman Vriesema.

Dia 5:

Our annual General Assembly last year in Slovakia was very successful thanks to our hosts. I said it before. You all received our group picture as a Christmas card. Not only did I send it to you but also to several for AMI important stakeholders.

Dia 6:

AMI-President Sinn and Vice-President Michael Jedlicka visited last years enquête in Vienna, organized by the Austrian Institute for Peace and Religion of the Austrian Military diocese. MajGen Sinn addressed the audience of the enquête and informed them about goals and work of AMI. Unfortunately I could not go to Vienna at the time while visiting at that time

my youngest daughter who lives in Shanghai, China.

#### Dia 7: Rome

This time, the AMI-Presidium travelled to Rome and to the Vatican for several reasons:

We had the pleasure to take part in the General Audience, held by our Holy Father, Pope Francis, on November 12 and our president got the opportunity to speak to the Holy Father and explain our work. While speaking to him the president handed over some papers about AMI, especially the results of our last conference. And, as every time, it was an exceptional spiritual experience to see him and listen to him.

#### Dia 8 Rome

The second reason was a meeting with *Padre* Guilio Cerchietti, responsible for the coordination of the military ordinariates. We discussed not only the results of the conference in Slovakia, which he assisted, but also the possibilities to get more and new nations on board of our organization. During our discussion he mentioned the coincidence that just before the military pilgrimage to Lourdes in 2015 a conference of military ordinariates will be held in Paris. He stated that it would be an excellent idea to invite AMI to this conference and to enable some delegates to contribute to the items to be discussed.

The third reason was the introduction of AMI to the Pontifical Council for Culture. Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi and Bishop H. E. Msgr. Carlos Moreira Azevedo were extremely interested in the topics discussed. We decided to stay in contact and AMI will support the work of the Council of Culture as much as possible.

## Dia 9 Rome

The fourth reason and even more important was the invitation of the Italian Military Bishop, Archbishop Santo Marciànò to visit not only the Ordinariate, but discuss the possibilities of a better cooperation between lay people and the Military Ordinariate of Italy in the future. We were happy to hear from the Italian Military Vicar General, Mons. Angelo Frigerio that Italy will send a representative to our next year's conference, and that there shall be found new possibilities of cooperation of the Lay with AMI. We cordially welcome from Italy Ltntn Davide di Giorgio.

## Dia 10 Rome

The fifth reason, and from our point of view in this very situation the most important one, was our visit to the Pontifical Council for the Laity. After two years of work and internal discussion, as well as discussions with the Vatican, we resembled to receive the Statutes of AMI as an international organization accepted by the Holy See.

It was a solemn moment, when His Eminency, Cardinal Stanislaw Rylko spoke about AMI and its work, and that the Holy See is happy with the work we are doing for Christianity and the Holy Church.

Cardinal Rylko handed us over the official decree. It says:

The Pontifical Council for the Laity decrees:

1. The confirmation of recognition for *Apostolat Militaire International* as a private international association of the faithful, with juridical personality, in conformity with the canonical norms in force and according to canons 298-311 and 321-329 of the Code of Canon Law.

2. The approval of the Statutes, that have been appropriately modified, duly authenticated by this Dicastery and deposited in our archives.

## Dia 11 Rome

The sixth reason was another meeting with the Secretariat of State, which developed in friendship, as all the years before. We reported about our work and our future plans.

At last the AMI Presidium held an internal meeting to discuss the upcoming year and its goals and challenges. We spoke again about the conference of Santiago, the problems we feel to face, our jubilee-book, and what to do to get more nations interested in AMI.

Jan and Nelleke had a meeting with the Dutch Ambassador to the Holy See, His Royal Highness, Prince Jaime de Bourbon de Parme, who cordially invited the whole Presidency for a drink, next time we are in Rome.

Happy about the results of our journey to the Vatican and Rome we left on Friday afternoon, going back home.

## Dia 12: Cologne

On the occasion of a military pilgrimage to Rome in 1975 the German GKS and AMI agrees on celebrating World Day of Peace every year.

In Germany it takes place since 1977. This year's motto was:

“Slaves no more, but brothers and sisters”.

The AMI presidency and the Secretary General took the opportunity to assist the Holy Mess, celebrated by the Archbishop of Cologne, Cardinal Rainer-Maria Woelki, and to discuss together with our comrades from the Austrian Association of Catholic Soldiers questions of the actual situation of Christianity and Catholicism within the Armed Forces in general and, in the frame of AMI.

## Dia 13, 14 en 15: Santiago de Compostela

The first weekend of March, General Sinn, Colonel Fritz Aflenzer, Colonel Jan van Lieverloo and myself travelled to Santiago de Compostela for a

meeting with our Spanish hosts, for the last important preparatory works for this year's conference.

As you all know, this year we organize not only our conference with an interesting theme, but we even celebrate our 50th anniversary. After two days of discussing all essential aspects of our conference, we are convinced, that it will be not only an interesting, but also a solemn conference. We met again Father Rascon, Don Lorenzo and major Eusebio Horno Conde, treasurer of the Spanish organizing committee, as well as Hector Martinez, who did all the translation for us. We assisted solemn Holy Masses in the cathedral, listened to the gospel, saw the swinging of the botafumeiro (very impressive) and we met the Archbishop and the Auxiliary Bishop of Santiago too. Both are happy to have us here in Santiago this autumn! And of course after two day's of hard labor there was time to enjoy the spring sunshine and each other's company over a glass of cava.

And we discovered that Santiago de Compostela itself, with its marvelous and inspiring atmosphere is a beautiful place for all pilgrims and faithful people, looking for inner peace and inner satisfaction.

Dia 16 en 17

MAY 2015 - the 57th INTERNATIONAL MILITARY PILGRIMAGE to LOURDES

“What have you done with your brother?”

In the "Holy Year" 2015, the 57th International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes took place from May 15 till 17.

More than 12.000 soldiers from about fifty countries and from all continents participated in this wonderful, spiritual event.

Also AMI was strongly represented.

The ecclesiastical assistant of AMI, Monsignor Dr. Werner Freistetter, led this time, as the designated new military bishop, the Austrian delegation. It was with great joy AMI delegates could congratulate our ecclesiastical assistant with his new assignment.

Similar to a family celebration, many friends of AMI were welcomed during the pilgrimage.

Our Vice President Markus invited the friends of AMI to a typical Carinthia snack, which was gladly accepted. In a comrades-circle the future of AMI, the pilgrimage and many other things were lively discussed.

Of course a key topic was the question, who is able to take over the task of our AMI ecclesiastical assistant in the future. Also the preparations for the next AMI Conference in Santiago de Compostela were discussed. Finally, the time just flew by and all pilgrims and of course our AMI friends agreed that we will meet again at the 58th military pilgrimage from May 20 till 22, 2016.

Dia 18: Activities May and June

Dia 19: Facebook page

Dia 20, 21, 22: June 11, 2015

Ordination of Mgr. Dr. Werner Freistetter as Military Bishop for Austria

On June 11, 2015 the Episcopal Ordination of Bishop's Vicar

Mgr. Dr. Werner Freistetter, same time AMI ecclesiastical assistant since 2005, took place during a solemn ceremony, led by the Apostolic Nuncio for Austria, Archbishop Dr. Peter Zurbriggen and supported by 18 Bishops, a lot of Chaplains and Deacons, as well as a huge number of military people and civil servants of the Austrian Armed Forces.

Among the guests, the Austrian Minister of Defense,

the Governor of Lower Austria, the Chief of Defense Staff and

several guests from Austria and abroad.

Many delegates from AMI-member states assisted the ceremony too.

The ceremony took place in the morning at the Cathedral of Wiener Neustadt.

Afterwards Military Bishop Freistetter celebrated his first Holy mass as a Bishop, followed by a reception and a Te Deum in the St. George's Cathedral of the Theresian Military Academy, which will be, as in the past, the see of the newly ordained Military Bishop.

AMI assisted by presence of the President, both vice presidents, secretary general and vice secretary general.

AMI held an official meeting and used time and place to talk to a lot of good friends.

Dia 23: Carinthia

As you all know I go often to Carinthia, Austria on holiday. This year I invited our President and his wife Ida to come over again to join us for a few days in that lovely part of Austria. Not only our president and his wife were present, also my vice secretary and friend Jan van Lieverloo and his wife Lenie as well as Frank Marcus and his wife Ineke enjoyed our camp on the lakeside. I really was glad the weather was beautiful and no rain at the time.

Of course we worked as well and the themes of our meeting were the conferences of 2015 and 2016 as well as the plans and goals for the upcoming years.

Dia 24: NGO status

As long as I am a member of the AMI family we discussed almost every year about the NGO status of AMI.

Up to now, AMI has operated on the basis of canon law only. The Holy See has requested AMI, I think already 10 years ago, to pursue recognition as an international Catholic NGO. This status requires that AMI enjoy legal status according to civil law. In order to comply with that request, AMI decided to make use of the possibilities of the Dutch legal system, which recognises approved ecclesiastical bodies in civil law.

However in May 2011 the Dutch bishops' conference turned down AMI's request for legal recognition in the Netherlands. It turned out that the (civil) lawyer we had consulted had completely overlooked the difficulties that arise from the status of AMI as an international organisation. This affects AMI's status in canon law. After that conclusion we discussed the topic with the Pontifical Council of the Laity. They informed us that it was necessary to get a new approval of the Pontifical Council of the Laity. A decree pointing out that we are a private organization of the faithful. That decree was given last November.

When we were back in the Netherlands Jan van Lieverloo and I consulted a notary public and asked him what to do. He advised us to found an official association under Dutch law, based on the statutes and the decree. Our statutes have been translated into Dutch language as required by the Dutch Chamber of Commerce. Last Tuesday Jan and I signed the official certificate at the notary's office and according to Dutch law we can finally call ourselves a Catholic Inspired NGO as wished by the Holy See.

Dia 25:

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 Santiago.

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

Of course I want to thank our hosts from Spain for their shown exemplary hospitality and their excellent organization of our conference here in Santiago de Compostela.

Dia 26

I forgot one thing. Maybe you remembered that the 9<sup>th</sup> of September is my wedding day. This year my husband Maarten will join us during the conference in Spain so I suppose we will have a wonderful day next Wednesday. I will close my presentation with a last slide.

Two weeks ago our seventh grandson was born so besides working for AMI I am also a very proud grandmother!

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