

## Notes Presentation Secretary General 2016

Dia 2

Excellencies, generals, vice-admiral, 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 afternoon.

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 Vught, in my home country, The Netherlands.

It is approximately a 20 minutes drive by car to my home.

So you can call it almost a home match.

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 Spain 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

February 10<sup>th</sup> of this year we received the incredible news that our AMI Friend Henk Nicolaije passed away in his sleep. Just one and a half year before, Henk lost his wife Monica.

I was completely upset when his son told me the news on the phone and could not believe that such a young and vivid man as Henk could die so unexpected and suddenly.

He was so enthusiastic about organizing this year's conference together with me.

His good friend Gerard Dijkers wrote an In Memoriam. I don't know if you saw it on our website but I want to read it to you.

"High waves ...

For Henk high waves were not an obstacle, but just another challenge.

With his naval background he also knew the risks involved in high seas.

With his optimism, his view on the future and the dedication to his family, he surpassed the high waves that in the recent years crossed his voyage.

Within a few years, planned as quality time after the naval travels, Henk lost his wife Monica and his mother, but found the strength to live on in the birth of his granddaughter and the future well being of the children.

Contrary to the planned pilgrimage to Lourdes together with Monica, he visited the sanctuaries on his own, on the way back home after the AMI conference in Spain, last year.

However, he did not leave without a rosary for granddaughter Emma.

Retirement, for Henk, was not a period to do nothing; he gave lots of his spare time to others, be it in, his local community, or fellow members of ACOM.

He accepted the challenge to be the organizer of the AMI 2016 conference.

Till that final wave of February 10...

It appeared suddenly in his sleep, thus ending a life voyage that seemed unfinished. Thinking of Henk, we lost a great friend.

We are convinced that it has been God's decision to bring Monica and Henk together and to give them the opportunity in heaven, to continue the quality time they deserved.

Henk, rest in God's peace.

Dia 4

I would express once again my gratitude to our Spanish friends, for their shown exemplary hospitality and their excellent organization of the conference 2015 in Santiago de Compostela.

Major Bonelli you were one of the floating powers behind the organization of the conference and I was so glad with you as my point of contact.

Not at least because of the fact that you could communicate in English!

“Gaudium et Spes and the Declaration Nostra Aetate, 50 years of AMI and the need for interreligious dialogue”.

Under this overall theme the Apostolate Militaire International celebrated its 50th General Assembly in Santiago de Compostela, Spain.

The invitation of the military archbishop of Spain, Msgr. Juan del Río Martín was responded by delegations from 15 nations, coming from four continents, to make a pilgrimage to the place on the stars field where the Apostle James has his final resting place.

With great joy we had learned that his Majesty King Felipe VI, adopted the honorary presidency on the conference.

With the help of lectures on the history of the “Camino” of Santiago, inter-religious dialogue, and the present condition of the world and the needs of military members in it, the Apostolat Militaire International gathered again in Santiago de Compostela, 50 years after it was originally conceived here in 1965, to re-examine its mission and goals.

From our beginning, AMI has been a, so to say, group of Military pilgrims from different countries traveling through life in, what Vatican II reminds us, is only one world and one human community.

For preparation of the conference topics were with lecturers of the University of Tilburg in the Netherlands Prof. Dr. Marcel Poorthuis, and Prof. Dr. Fred van Iersel, the University of Salamanca Prof. Dr. Francisco

Javier del Real Buide and the University of Granada, Dr. D. Jose Luis Sánchez Nogáles, available.

Moreover, officers from Spain, Germany and Austria performed on the subject.

The Spanish Armed Forces made it possible to become familiar with the goals, tasks and missions, but even provided us a deep insight-look to spirituality and Catholicism within the Armed Forces.

And we were grateful having the opportunity to listen to the lectures of Admiral Javier Pery Paredes as personal representative of the Minister, and Admiral Teodoro E. López Calderón, from the Spanish Command for operations.

Another colloquium took place concerning the most dangerous situation and negative development in the Ukraine and its influence on security in the north eastern part of Europe.

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 is able to share those same experiences, as a template or a stimulus, for each nation, finding their own pilgrim way through life’s challenges.

This could include anything from promoting inter-religious dialogue within the military, developing methods of encountering the media, or confronting terrorist challenges to living virtuously: ways of protecting one’s population without degenerating into revenge.

Dia 5:

During the conference, AMI also presented to the public the book:

**“The Christian Soldier in the Service of Just Peace - AMI anniversary**

## **publication 1965-2015”**

This publication is, not only at a retrospective and a synopsis of the past fifty years, but of course also an overview in the present and future of AMI by the President of AMI, Major General Mag. Norbert Sinn.

Professor Fred van Iersel from Tilburg University explained this with a lecture on the following topic:

“The Catholic Soldiers’ moral experience in the midst of the paradoxes of the use of force”.

The printing of the book was supported by the Federal Ministry of Defense and Sports in Austria and ACOM, the Christian Union of military personnel in the Netherlands.

Colonel Michael Jedlička from Austria took, thankfully, the editorship.

The photos on the 50-year history have been compiled by Lieutenant Colonel Andreas Preuss, of the German Federal Armed Forces.

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. We are convinced that the way of AMI is a right one. In this sense and with overwhelming impressions AMI left Spain with the anticipation of the next conference.

Dia 6:

At the end of our Pontifical Closing Ceremony we could experience the swinging of the Botafumeiro (“censer” in Galician).

It is one of the most famous and popular symbols of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela.

It is a large thurible that hangs by means of a system of pulleys from the

main dome of the Cathedral and swings toward the side naves.

It takes eight men to move it, who are known as “tiraboleiros”.

It weighs 53 kg and measures 1.50 meters; it hangs from a height of 20 meters and can pick up great speed.

The Botafumeiro is used for liturgical reasons, in the same way as a priest would use a censer at the altar.

It operates during the Cathedral's main solemnities during the entrance procession or at the end of the Eucharist.

The purpose of this great censer is to symbolize the true attitude of the believer.

In the same way that the smoke from the incense rises to the top of the temple's naves, so must the prayers of the pilgrims rise to reach the heart of God.

And in the same manner that the aroma of the incense perfumes the entire basilica, so must Christians, with their virtues and the testimony of their lives, impregnate with the good scent of Christ, the society that they live in. Let's have a look once more.

Dia 7

Our annual General Assembly and Annual Conference last year in Spain was very successful thanks to our hosts. I said it before. You all received our group picture, made in front of the Seminary of Santiago as a Christmas card.

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

Dia 8:

From 27 to 28 October 2015 the Presidency gathered in Vienne for the annual Enquête of the Institute for Religion and.

On the agenda was the question:

### **Soldier, warrior, killer**

Military Bishops from Poland and Slovakia and military chaplains from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Croatia, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Slovakia and Austria assisted both days of the conference.

We had the opportunity to assist not only this highly interesting conference, but also to present to the auditory goals and work of the Apostolat Militaire International. Our president did a very good job.

At the end of the conference, in front of almost 80 persons listening, AMI-president thanked again Military Bishop of Austria Werner Freistetter for his hospitality, support and friendship to AMI.

On this occasion the AMI president handed over the AMI jubilee-book to our (former) ecclesiastical advisor Military Bishop Werner Freistetter. AMI used the conference to meet for a working session in the frame of Presidency and General Secretariat.

Under discussion were our upcoming visit and report about our work to the Vatican, the next steps to organize our work as an NGO, and of course our next conference.

Dia 9 en dia 10: Rome

Wednesday and Thursday, November, 11 and 12 AMI-president Norbert Sinn, Jan van Lieverloo and myself travelled to Rome and the Vatican to inform the for AMI most important bodies, about the developments of last

year.

We had meetings at the Council for Justice and Peace, the Council for the Laity and the State Secretariat.

Dia 11: Rome

A quick visit and courtesy call with Padre Cerchietti from the Congregation for Bishops and the Council for Culture were possible.

Dia 12

as well as courtesy call to His Royal Highness Prince Jaime of the Netherlands, Dutch ambassador to the Holy See.

We handed over our AMI jubilee-book and talked about the contents of the conference in Santiago de Compostela. Furthermore our newly gained status as an NGO was on the agenda and the intentions of AMI for the upcoming year. Concerning questions of Armed Forces, AMI can be seen as the expert, to which the Vatican can turn if an expertise is necessary in questions concerning ethics, moral, fighting, living and needs of soldiers. AMI received everywhere great hospitality and some excellent advice concerning our work in the upcoming years.

Dia 13:

Geneva:

### **JANUARY 12, 2015 - Meeting in Geneva**

*Meeting with Archbishop Silvano Tomasi and his first secretary Mons Richard Gyhra*

After reaching our NGO status as was requested by the Holy See we went to Geneva to visit Mons Silvano Tomasi, permanent observer to the Holy See at the United Nations.

It was a warmly welcome. I met Tomasi 5 years ago during the Forum of Catholic Inspired NGO's in Rome together with Michael Jedlicka. I remembered it snowed in Rome then, for the first time in 25 years.

We asked Mgr. Tomasi about the steps we can take as an NGO on an international level within the UN.

There are a few steps we can take:

1. We can formally enter the local Forum in Geneva and get us a point of contact there that can function as a liaison officer. Names mentioned were Alfred Fernandez and Stefano Nobile of Caritas Internationalis. In that way we will be part of the wider movement of Catholic inspired NGO's;

2. ECOSOC Status;

If you have ECOSOC status you have directly access to the UN system.

We can contribute there by exchanging thoughts and expertise about military life;

3. Get in contact with the Red Cross in Geneva;

4. Working together with the Council for Justice and Peace in Rome;

5. Working together with Mons. Janusz Urbanczyk (Poland) at the UN body in Vienna.

The question is? What can we bring in to the Geneva Forum and other international bodies?

- The needs of our Catholic military network, soldiers and their family's;

- How do we create awareness?
- How can we push some decisions that are important for Catholic military?

Mons Tomasi stipulated further that the practical working bodies are all located in Geneva and the political ones in New York. To give an indication there are approximately 33 meetings per day, 7 day's a week.

The permanent observer to the Holy See has a staff of 5 people en 4 interns. They select the key positions where they should be present. Mons Tomasi has the feeling that the popularity of Pope Francis helps in the work they do. But he said: With patience and time even the egg will walk!

Mons Tomasi retired at the end of January and is now working for the Pontifical Counsel for the Laity in Rome.

### **Meeting with mr. Johan Ketelers, chairman of the Forum of Catholic Inspired NGO's**

After lunch we met in the office of International Catholic Migration Commission, mr Johan Ketelers, Secretary general of IMCI and chairman of the Forum. I met him also in Rome for 6 years and we had fruitful discussions at the time about the goals and aims for AMI as a NGO, requested by the Holy See.

The history of the Forum goes 10 years back with a question of the Holy See, how to bring the Catholic organizations from all over the world

together. It was by organizing a forum, a platform where we can do some voice making and tell where we are good at.

The first Forum was in 2007. It was a normal chaos, according to Johan Ketelers.

The second one was 3 years later. The one I attend with Michael.

We discussed the goals for the next 20 or 50 years. A real long-term vision.

There were 8 themes at the time:

- Human Rights
- Education
- Family
- Migration
- Health
- Development and environment
- Religious freedom
- Education

We worked in different interdisciplinary groups on social thinking and above-mentioned social themes.

After the Forum Johan Ketelers discovered there were two things needed:

- Financial means for a professional secretariat of two persons. No vertical silo of lots of activity's and people; but quality people are expensive!
- Structural based meetings. We want to be able to sit with the workers in the field. The Vatican stipulated to help the Forum with the search for money but will not provide any means by its self.

He wrote a charter about the organization of the Forum.

- Secretariat;
- General assembly of the experts;
- Experts Committee.

It could be organized like this:

There are thematic tables, in which we can take part, developing a vision for the future, because society will move on. So long term thinking.

The chairman of the thematic table will be part of and report to the Interdisciplinary group. The Secretariat will support.

Challenges in the future will be humanitarian behavior of the peoples.

We loose social cohesion and there is an increasing lack of solidarity these days.

Dr. Fermina Alvarez for sure is of a great help but not always she shared her information and that led to a delay.

This week Johan Ketelers has meetings with the Vatican about the Forum. Hopefully we will hear something about it in a few months.

Concerning AMI; it is interesting for the Forum to learn about the military world.

- How is it organized? Structural; Military Ordinariates and Mission wise, sending chaplains on mission's abroad. Lay people supporting the chaplains in the armed forces.
- What is the relationship of AMI and its network with the military itself?
- Responsibility sharing in what way?
- Moral and ethics
- What is the influence of AMI on the military
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### **Meeting with Stefano Nobile, Advocacy officer of Caritas Internationalis**

Fortunately this organisation is situated in the same building as ICMC. So after an introduction by Mons Ghyra and Johan Ketelers we had the opportunity to talk to Stefano Nobile as well.

Stefano Nobile told us that Caritas Internationalis is the coordinated and facilitating NGO for the Forum of Geneva, no matter if a NGO has the ECOSOC status or not. They organise approximately 4 times a year an event about theological documents of the church.

They also have thematic working groups. We could form a thematic working group on military issues and AMI can enrich the Geneva Forum.

Stefano will send us some documents and we promised him to discuss within the presidency the possibility of becoming a member of this coordinating mechanism among Catholic-Inspired NGOs in Geneva.

It is not necessary to go to Geneva all the time because you can follow through skype also the events.

Dia 14: Geneva

Dia 15 Geneva

Dia 16 ,17 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:

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,

On the occasion of a military pilgrimage to Rome in 1975 the German GKS and AMI agreed on celebrating the World Day of Peace every year. In Germany this celebration takes place every January since 1977.

On January 21, 2016 at 9 o'clock the 40th International Day of Peace took place in the Cologne Cathedral with Archbishop Rainer Maria Cardinal Woelki and about 1.200 soldiers from Germany and different other countries.

According to the provisions of Pope Francis this year's motto was:

**“Overcome the Indifference and win the Peace”.**

President MajGen Norbert Sinn, Vice-President Col Fritz Aflenzer, Secretary-General Nelleke Swinkels - van de Vorst and Vice-Secretary-General Jan van Lieverloo represented AMI in Cologne.

In his homily Cardinal Woelki paid tribute to all soldiers who are working for peace in the world. “The soldiers are committed to use their lives

making the world safer and better”, Woelki said. Moreover, he criticized once again the assaults on women on New Year’s Eve around the Cologne Main Station and the following incitement and stigmatization of refugees. After the Holy Mass for peace, there was a meeting of all the participating soldiers on the square, in front of the Cathedral and the traditional reception at the “Maternushaus”. Delegations of soldiers were invited to meet there with the Archbishop, the Secretary of State of the Ministry of Defence in Germany, Dr. Ralf Brauksiepe and other political, military and ecclesiastical leadership. The AMI Presidency talked to Dr. Brauksiepe thanked him for his interesting speech and handed over a jubilee-book of AMI as a token of our appreciation.

As all years AMI used this opportunity for a meeting with the Executive Council of AMI to discuss the possible content for this year’s conference in the Netherlands and questions about the future of AMI. Another theme on the agenda was the results of travelling to Geneva and in what way AMI could act as a NGO in the future.

Dia 18, en 19 en 20: Vught

The first weekend of April, General Sinn,

for the last important preparatory works for this year's conference.

From Friday April 1 until Monday April 4, 2016 AMI president, Secretary General, treasurer, our designated spiritual adviser, father Patrick Dolan and responsables of the Netherlands, Military Chief Chaplain Tom van Vilsteren, ACOM-President Leon van der Hulst and his Vice President Jan Kleian met in the town Vught, the place where our next conference will take place.

We talked and decided about the organisation and the content of our conference in September.

Vught is a town of approximately 26.000 inhabitants, situated close to 's-Hertogenbosch (Den Bosch) in the South of the Netherlands. Den Bosch itself is a bigger town of long lasting history with 144.000 inhabitants.

First we visited the St. John's Cathedral of 's-Hertogenbosch (Sint-Janskathedraal), because the opening and closing Holy Mass will take place there, afterwards a short walk crossing the city and old town to show and explain the intended cultural program on Wednesday September 21.

In the afternoon AMI, Chief Chaplaincy of the Netherlands and ACOM sat down to discuss about the conference itself. New ideas became discussed.

Later the afternoon all assisted Holy Mass in the church of Vught, where at least one Holy Mass will be celebrated during the conference. At the end of the day we visited Maurick Castle where the closing dinner shall take place.

Sunday morning we all assisted a Holy Mass in the Parish of ViceSecGen Jan van Lieverloo, and it was possible that our designated spiritual adviser, father Patrick Dolan celebrated the mass - in Dutch language!

Sunday afternoon AMI had the opportunity to discuss internal questions of AMI at the home of our Sec Gen, Nelleke van Swinkels - van de Vorst and to meet there even friends of AMI, including all the family of Nelleke!

It was great!

Monday morning all people travelled back home going to the USA and Austria.

Dia 21

20 april Corpsdag in Nederland

Dia 22 en 23

MAY 2016 - the 58th INTERNATIONAL MILITARY PILGRIMAGE to LOURDES

## 58th International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes 2016

Lourdes, in the foothills of the Pyrenees, is the site of apparitions of the Virgin Mary that appeared to a young girl called Bernadette over 150 years ago. Each year it attracts about six million pilgrims.

The International Military Pilgrimage started in 1958 when the French Armed Forces invited the German military to join them in Lourdes as a gesture of post-war reconciliation.

"Gate of Mercy" was the official theme for the last International Military Pilgrimage in Lourdes from May 19 till 23, 2016

Under this slogan almost 15.000 servicemen and women from more than 40 nations and from all continents participated in this wonderful, spiritual event. They followed the invitation of the French military bishop to the 58th International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes to store a living witness for peace in the Marian shrine.

The soldiers took the theme and transferred it to "His door is always open" and produced a wonderful, colourful and spiritual demonstration of their religious beliefs.

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.

From the presidency of AMI the President, Major General Sinn, both Vice-Presidents and of course the Secretary-General Nelleke Swinkels - van de Vorst and Vice-Secretary-General Jan van Lieverloo were present.

As usual we met Friday evening at the Hotel Solitude several AMI delegates and friends to share some drinks and thoughts together.

Saturday afternoon President Norbert Sinn, Vice-President Fritz Aflenzer and our secretary general met each other for a short meeting and in the evening we went together to the reception of Mgr. Luc Ravel, the French

Army bishop.

We talked with the American Archbishop Broglio, good friend of our new ecclesiastical assistant Father Dolan, to the military bishop from Switzerland Mgr. Alain de Raemy. We met Padre Cerchiatti from Rome and several other interesting people, like our dear old AMI friend Commander Jonathan Worthington, with his lovely wife. He joined our AMI conferences several times. Last time was in Nairobi in 2006. We invited him to join us in September but as he told us, they are awaiting for the appointment of the new military bishop of the United Kingdom, successor of Mgr. Richard Moth.

After the reception our Vice President Markus Stromberger organised a so-called “Kärnter Abend”, with all kinds of special drinks and finger food from the region in Austria where he is living. Even Austrian “schnapps” was served. So we spend two evenings with AMI Friends under the protection of the Holy Mother of Lourdes.

During the long weekend, the various groups celebrated mass together, and in smaller groups walked over a stony hillside to trace the Stations of the Cross, a prayer reflection on Christ’s journey to his death.

A torchlight procession saw all the thousands of Lourdes pilgrim’s process by candlelight around the open spaces. Many military pilgrims also immersed themselves in the baths of freezing Lourdes water which came up from the earth during the apparitions that appeared to Bernadette.

During the closing ceremony Sunday afternoon President Sinn and secretary general Nelleke were able to make acquaintances with Lady Jan Gottardi, she is the spouse of an American general and chair of the Military Council of Catholic Woman. Lady Jane will attend our conference in September on behalf of the USA, representing her lay organization.

After wonderful days in Lourdes quickly came the time to say goodbye and

we are convinced that next year, God willing, it will be a reunion.

Dia 24: Activities May and June

Dia 26: Facebook page

Dia 27 en 28: 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. 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 29:

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 my home country The Netherlands

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 the Netherlands and the Dutch Organizing team. I am convinced we did a wonderful job together to make this conference work

Dia 30

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!