



APOSTOLAT MILITAIRE INTERNATIONAL
the PRESIDENT

STRENGTHENING CHRISTIAN VALUES WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES WORLDWIDE

MajGen ret. Norbert SINN

Hauptstrasse 41

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Your Excellencies, Generals and Admirals, commissioned officers and non-commissioned officers, dear friends,

Starting a welcome address with a person who is very important and who cannot come is a sad moment.

I just can inform you, that our host, the distinguished Military Bishop of the Netherlands, Jozef Marianus Punt is ill and therefore will not come.

I want to express my gratitude to Military Bishop Punt for making possible and allowing this conference and I wish him on behalf of our whole community all the best and we hope that he will be able to recreate very soon to fulfil his so important tasks and mission as the Military Bishop of the Netherlands Armed Forces.

I am glad that his Vicar General Mons. Alphons Woolderink is present this evening after the Holy Mass.

I am happy to welcome the Austrian Military Bishop Monsignore Dr. Werner Freistetter, who at the same time is until tomorrow our ecclesiastical assistant, and you all, distinguished delegates from 13 countries, especially and finally you, members of the Netherlands delegation, 14 in total. Saying this I may inform you that the very last second before starting the conference, the Gambia, Nigeria and the Philippines informed us that, although all travel preparations were done, the decision had fallen not to send delegates to our conference.

We received greetings from all three delegations wishing us all the best, praying for us and expressing the hope being able to be present next year.

Comrades and friends,

Ladies and gentlemen!

Allow me to introduce myself, as some delegates are part of our AMI-family for the first time.

My name is MajGen Norbert Sinn, until November 2013 Commandant of the Austrian Military Academy „Maria Theresa“ and now retired. Five years ago Austria was elected for AMI Presidency and since then we have the honour to serve as Presidency.

One year ago we received the invitation of ACOM, the Dutch member of AMI and of his Excellency Military Archbishop Punt, to hold our annual conference (the 51st one) in your country. As already mentioned, the Bishop fell ill and not able to join us these days. I am glad that the chairman of ACOM, Mr. Leon van de Hulst, is present here today and will welcome us on behalf of ACOM and the Bishop, here in Vught.

We all feel honoured and are grateful that we can celebrate and work together with our delegates and our Netherlands friends here in Vught, the South of the Netherlands. A really beautiful country, marked by a long-lasting history, with important contributions to the development of modern Europe and the world.

Following the all-over agenda of the last years,

„The Christian Soldier in the Service of Just Peace. – To live authentically according to the Word of God and to spread the Gospel“,

We decided, following the challenging developments worldwide, and especially in the Middle East and the Eastern parts of Europe, and I just want to point out again the stress and the cruelty of the IS and the African tragedies, triggering a new Völkerwanderung (migration of peoples) to the North, as we all can observe directly, touching even the midst of Europe and the European Union, to deal during this year's conference with the question of:

“The consequences of Armed Conflicts, especially for Catholic Soldiers and their families in the background of Laudato Sí;

Mercy in military Life;

And

The Future of AMI

Already now allow me please to express my gratitude to H.E. Military Bishop Punt and ACOM, represented by Leon van de Hulst and Jan Kleian, giving us the opportunity to work in Vught in the Landgoed Huize Bergen. Especially I say “thank You” to all people of the Dutch organisation working in the preparation and organisation of the conference. They all did and do an excellent job!

Let me remind you that our conference takes place just a few kilometres from Den Bosch, the place where the famous painter Hieronymus Bosch was born 500 years ago, and that the famous humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam is named to another important town, not so far away from here.

I also would like to express my gratitude to all lecturers cooperating and addressing us. We are happy having you with us.

I am convinced that at the end of the conference we will have elaborated forward-looking results.

Having said this, I am very happy and grateful to all of you participating and especially I want to thank again Bishop Punt and ACOM, for hosting our conference and all others involved in the organization of this conference.

Now I warmly welcome all 14 delegations present:

ARGENTINA, AUSTRALIA, AUSTRIA, BELGIUM, CROATIA, GERMANY, GREAT BRITAIN, ITALY, KENYA, SLOVAKIA, SLOVENIA, SPAIN, the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA and our marvellous host the NETHERLANDS, taking the responsibility for organizing a huge part of our conference.

At the end I like to introduce to you the AMI EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

To my left:

Colonel Friedrich AFLENZER, Vice President from Austria

WO II Markus STROMBERGER, Second Vice President from Austria,

To my right

Ms. Nelleke SWINKELS-VAN DE VORST, Secretary General from the Netherlands,

Jan van LIEVERLOO, Vice-Secretary General from the Netherlands,

Herman VRIESEMA, Treasurer, from the Netherlands, accompanied by his wife ANS,

With us is our still present Ecclesiastical Assistant, Dr. Werner FREISTETTER, Military Bishop of Austria, who will address us tomorrow and to whom we will say good bye and

to welcome or better to say to elect the new one, father Patrick Dolan from the USA.

Last but certainly not least, my wife IDA who is accompanying me (we have been married since 1973).

And so I formally declare this year's Apostolat Militaire International Conference open.

May our Lord bless us and give us good will and strength.

Thank you for your attention.