



Summary

Summary of the General Assembly and Annual Conference of Apostolat Militaire International in Rome, Italy, September 18-22, 2017

Sixteen delegations from 4 continents took part in the 52nd AMI- conference and General Assembly in Rome from September 18 till 22, 2017.

Austria, Belgium Croatia, Germany, Ghana, Kenya, Lithuania, The Netherlands, Nigeria, Philippines, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, United Kingdom, USA, and of course our host: Italy! The organisation team of Italy and especially Col Domenico D'Ortenzi made every effort to offer the participants an excellent and pleasant environment in the eternal city Rome.

The theme of this year's conference was: **"Searching for roots"**

Let us find the "Ten Commandments", guidelines for soldiers, working for peace at home or on missions abroad, by researching the roots of our believe and faith.

Our opening Pontifical Service took place in the Santa Caterina Church, the church of the Italian Military Ordinariate in Rome.

On Monday morning the participants were welcomed by **Mons Angelo Frigerio**, Vicar General of the Italian Military Ordinariate, he gave the participants an overview of the organization of the Military Chaplaincy in Italy.

The first lecture, given by **Archbishop Silvano Maria Tomasi** of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, was titled "The Holy See and the Promotion of International Humanitarian Law".

The second lecturer was **LtGen Roberto Nordio**, deputy Chief of Defence Staff of Italy. He inspired the audience with his lecture, "How can you be a military Leader when Continents are drifting? What are your roots and motives?"

Honourable **(LtGen) Domenico Rossi**, Deputy Secretary of Defence submerged us in what he thinks about the meaning of Democracy in this era and what the role is of Christian Values in political Life?

Last but not least this Monday was the turn on to **Prof. Dr. Theo de Wit**, University of Tilburg/Netherlands, who gave us a fascinating argument with his speech “Justice, Love and Patriotism: Dangerous Liaisons”.

Tuesday, September 21, **Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi**, President of the Pontifical Council for Culture, inspired us with his lecture “Culture, Spirituality, Civil and Military Life” (“Cultura, Spiritualità, vita civile e militare”).

During the week we listened to contributions of **Mike Terry** of Military Ministries International and to **Col Domenico D’Ortenzi**, Italian delegate and organiser of the conference.

Interreligious dialogue with other denominations

Having an open mind to other denominations we visited the museum and the Synagogue of Rome, spoke to very interested young people and learned about our Jewish brothers and sisters, as well as we met Imam, Sheik Salah Ramadan, who gave us a very warm welcome in the Mosque of Rome. The Mosque is the natural religious and cultural focus of Rome's Islamic community. It includes a large library with a collection of over 10.000 books in Arabic.

In the several working groups delegates tried to work out the theme of the conference and to discover the “ Ten Commandments”, guidelines for soldiers, working for peace at home or on missions abroad.

“Spettacolo”, a divine “Concert for Peace” in the Pantheon

One of the highlights of the week was the so-called “Spettacolo”, organised by the Italian Military Ordinariate on Tuesday evening in the Pantheon.

The Pantheon, a former Roman temple, is now in use as a Catholic church, the Basilica Santa Maria ad Martyres.

Two kings of Italy are buried in the Pantheon: Vittorio Emanuele II and Umberto I, as well as Umberto's Queen, Margherita.

H.E. Mons Santo Marcano, Archbishop of the Military Ordinariate of Italy, invited many important stakeholders, among which the Military attachés, stationed in Rome, to this divine concert given by the Polyphonic Choir and Orchestra of the Vicariate of Rome and directed by Mons. Marco Frisina.

General audience

Assisting the general audience on Wednesday morning was another absolute highlight during our conference in Rome. We had the opportunity to see the Holy Father from very near by and President Norbert Sinn and SecGen Nelleke Swinkels explained that we are Catholic lay people and soldiers from 16 nations worldwide and that we work for the Christian vision of life within the armed forces. He told us to stay strong and asked to pray for Him. We handed over to him a small gift of appreciation, including our current booklet about the 2016 conference in The Netherlands.

Elections of a new Executive Committee

On the last day of the conference there were elections of the new Executive Committee of AMI.

President Norbert Sinn, his vice presidents, Col Fritz Aflenzer and WO I Markus Stromberger, Secretary General Nelleke Swinkels, Col (ret) Jan van Lieverloo and treasurer Herman Vriesema will resign at the end of December 2017.

After some farewell and thank you speeches the general Assembly of AMI appointed President Norbert Sinn, after his resignation on the 31st of December 2017, President of Honour of Apostolat Militaire International.

This special appreciation was awarded for his extraordinary and permanent involvement and the many makings given to Apostolat Militaire International.

The Netherlands was elected unanimously by open ballot for the AMI Presidency and Italy was elected unanimously by open ballot for the AMI Secretariat General.

The new Executive Committee consists of the President, Vice Admiral Matthieu Borsboom from The Netherlands, Vice Presidents CAPT RNLN (ret) Frank Markus and WOII Ferry Thannhauser.

The new Secretary General will be Col Domenico D'Ortenzi from Italy and his treasurer will be WOII Damiano Gandolfo.

Celebrating Holy Mass in 5 Basilica's in Rome

Rome is one of the world's most recognizable and remarkable cities in this world. Home to the Roman Republic that became one, if not, the most famous empires in the history of mankind, this city was at the center of Western civilization for over a millennium. Currently Rome is amongst the most visited cities in the world.

There are more than 900 churches in Rome.

We celebrated Holy Masses in the Caterina Church of the Military Ordinariate, Santa Maria degli Angeli e dei Martiri, St. Peter's Dome, Basilica Santa Maria Maggiore and finally in Santa Croce in Gerusalemme. All of them, churches with a long lasting history and of great importance. Most impressive was the Holy Mass in the Choir Chapel in St Peters Basilica.

Honorary papal distinction for the outgoing Secretary General

During the closing dinner, where also was present another President of Honour, Bgen Reinhard Kloss and his wife, there was a big surprise for our outgoing Secretary General Nelleke Swinkels. She received the honorary papal distinction, Knight in the Order of Saint Sylvester.

Nelleke was totally surprised and speechless as she herself stipulated.

In the mean time all delegates are back home safely and will ask attention for the final results of the 2017 AMI Conference in Rome in their own countries.

The 2018 AMI Conference and General Assembly will take place in Croatia in October 2018.