

Notes Presentation Secretary General 2017

Dia 2

Excellencies, generals, vice-admiral, ladies and gentlemen, dear Friends of AMI,

Of course, as AMI Secretary General I am very that you join us here in Rome, Birthplace of western civilization.

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.

Located within the city of Rome is Vatican City, established in 1929 as a separate state and the smallest independent state in the world. The Bishop of Rome – also the Pope – rules Vatican City where the highest functionaries of the expansive Catholic Church conduct their governing and business. The Papacy has been located on these grounds since leaving Avignon in 1377.

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 Vught, The Netherlands in September last year.

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

I would like to show you now an overview of last year's activities of your secretary general.

Dia 3

Last year the AMI General Assembly and Annual Conference took place in Vught / The Netherlands from 18th to 23rd September 2016.

The conference participants were accommodated in the idyllic Landgoed Huize Bergen in Vught, where also as official start of the conference, the opening Holy Mass was conducted.

We were able to welcome participants from Europe, Africa, Australia, North America and South America.

The first-ever participation of Argentina in the conference was especially gratifying. Unfortunately it was not possible to welcome a delegate of South America again this year.

Since the conference was adopted by the Netherlands, it was all the more amazing how professional and structured this General Assembly was prepared by the team of the Netherlands.

The Dutch Armed Forces, ACOM and NKT made every effort to offer the participants an excellent and pleasant environment.

The Presidium defined three key areas, which were dealt with, intensively:

- The consequences of armed conflicts, especially for Catholic soldiers and their families in the background of Laudato Si;^[LITL]_[SEBEP]
- Mercy in Military Life;^[LITL]_[SEBEP]
- Future of AMI

After the participants were welcomed in the Netherlands by Rear-Admiral Henk Itzig Heine, representing the Dutch Ministry of Defense and Mr. Leon van der Hulst, chairman of ACOM, the General Assembly and Annual Conference was officially opened by the President of AMI, Major-General Norbert Sinn.

Dia 4

Already at the beginning the participants expected a highlight. General (ret) Peter van Uhm, the former Chief of Defence Staff in the Netherlands, talked about “The meaning of mercy in military life” and impressed us with his remarks enriched by painful personal experiences.

Both, Military Bishop of Austria, H.E. Werner Freistetter, as well as the Archbishop of the Military Ordinariate of Italy, H.E. Santo Marciànò, enriched the conference with very interesting lectures.

Dia 5

During the first day of the conference AMI elected a new Ecclesiastical Assistant, successor of the Austrian Military Bishop Mons Werner Freistetter. 

AMI members, who were present in Vught, voted unanimously, by open ballot, for the new Ecclesiastical Assistant, Brigadier General (ret) Father Patrick Dolan of the USA.

The lecture series were rounded off by contributions about the future of AMI as a NGO. Prof. dr. Fred van Iersel showed us in his lecture, “AMI’s role as an NGO: invitations, opportunities and challenges”, ways to become successful as a Catholic Inspired NGO.

Afterwards, the Presidium’s guidelines were discussed and contributions were elaborated.

Dia 6

On Wednesday we had our cultural day to explore some of the surroundings, after the Holy Mass in the H. Hart Kerk in Vught, we started the visit at the concentration camp Kamp Vught, and visited further sights of the city of ’s-Hertogenbosch.

After further lectures and meetings in the working groups and the announcement of the results of the working groups, the last day was concluded with the miscellaneous topics of interest of AMI.

Our treasurer gave his financial report and we said goodbye to one of the members of our Auditing Committee, LtCol Andreas Preuss. His successor is 1Ltnt Erik VOZÁR from Slovakia.

Unfortunately he is not able to stay with us this week due to professional duty.

Dia 7

The 51th AMI Conference ended with a pontifical Closing Holy Mass conducted by the Nuncio in the Netherlands, Mons Aldo Cavalli and the Bishop of 's-Hertogenbosch, Mons Gerard de Korte at St. John's Cathedral. At a beautiful official closing dinner in Kasteel Maurik, the participants concluded the conference in a festive setting.

Since both the Presidium and the General Secretariat of AMI are to be re-elected in 2017, these were also heated topics.

Fortunately, the Netherlands has agreed to take over the presidency.

Dia 8

Likewise very pleasing was the invitation of the Archbishop of the Military Ordinariate of Italy, H.E. Santo Marciano, to host the General Assembly and the Annual Conference 2017 in Rome.

I would express once again my gratitude to our Dutch friends, for the shown exemplary hospitality and their excellent organization of the conference 2016 in Vught.

Dia 9:

Our annual General Assembly and Annual Conference last year in Vught was very successful thanks to our hosts. I said it before. You all received our group picture, made in front of the conference venue “Huize Bergen” as a Christmas card.

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

Dia 10:

The AMI presidency attended the international conference (Enquête) of the Institute of Religion and Peace and the Austrian Military Ordinariate concerning “**The Soldier – expulsion, fugitive, taking up**”, the role of soldiers in current political developments. It took place at the National Defense Academy of Austria, Col. Father Dr. Stefan Gugerel, head of the Institute, was our host.

Fr. Paul Lansu from Pax Christi Brussels, Col. Dietmar Winkler of the University of Salzburg, Col. Herbert Walzer, of the MOD of Austria, and Dr. Rita Perintfalvi of the Hungary- Austrian bible Congregation were the speakers at the conference.

Fr. Lansu spoke about the actual refugee situation, the numbers and the fate of refugees worldwide, especially the Middle East, Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe.

It became clear that we are confronted with an “Exodus” which in fact always took place but nowadays becomes a huge long lasting wave.

Migration even will not end, when the entire crisis have yet ended.

Dietmar Winkler spoke about expulsion of Christians and the destruction of Christian monuments, especially churches in the Middle East as a form of attempt, to end Christian dwelling and living in the whole region.

Col. Walzer told us about deserters and deserting of soldiers, focusing on the Austrian Armed Forces.

And last but not least Mrs. Rita Perintfalvi spoke about “Hospitality in the Old Testament and the Lord’s reward for the nonhospital ones”.

Everybody needing help and shelter, should receive it, which she stipulated.

We used the opportunity also to meet and to discuss with Prof. Fred van Iersel, the results of our conference in Vught, how to proceed and what to prepare for our meetings in Rome and the Vatican in November.

Dia 11:

Our yearly visit to Rome from November 13 till 18, 2016

From November 13 to 18, 2016 AMI Presidency and our new Ecclesiastical Advisor Father Patrick Dolan travelled to Rome. Most important reason was to start the preparations for our next year’s conference of AMI in Rome.

It was the last week of the Holy Year of Mercy, proclaimed by our Holy Father, and the last week that the “Porta Santa” was open! Lots of pilgrims visited Rome this week.

On Monday November 14, Norbert, Jan and Nelleke started on with an internal meeting to clarify our positions before starting our talks with Military Bishop Santo Marciano on Wednesday.

Topics we discussed were for instance:

The date of the 2017 AMI Conference in Rome;

Content of the 2017 Conference in Rome;

Of course we have to ask the Italian Bishop with what topics he wants to deal in the conference in September;

Elections in 2017 of a new president and new secretary general

Lourdes;

Which nation and AMI member is willing to host the next AMI conferences in 2018, 2019 and 2020.

Monday in the afternoon Jan and Nelleke attended the “Allerheiligenberaad” ,a meeting of the Dutch Bishop’s conference in Rome. The Dutch Bishop Mons De Korte gave an interesting lecture, as well as the Dutch Ambassador to the Holy See, HRH Prince Jaime de Bourbon de Parme. Of course we invited HRH to attend our 2017 Conference in Rome. Norbert, Ida and father Pat brought a courtesy visit to the Austrian Ambassador to the Holy See, H.E. Dr. Alfons Kloss. They informed the Ambassador about goals and work of AMI and the conference of next year.

Dia 12

On Tuesday November 15, Jan and Nelleke attended the Holy Mass for the pilgrims of the Netherlands in Saint Peter’s and a meeting with Pope Francis. The little boy Sebastiaan de Vries handed over to the Holy Father yellow Dutch Tulips.

In the evening we met the Austrian Military bishop Mons Werner Freistetter and the head of the Institute of Religion and Peace, Stefan Gugerell. We had dinner together and discussed about the topics for 2017.

Dia 13

In the morning of Wednesday November 16, we went to the Military Ordinariate of Italy for our meeting with the Bishop. It was a very constructive and friendly meeting with Bishop Santo Marciano, the Vicar general Mons Angelo Frigerio, and Don Santo Battaglia and Colonel Domenico d'Ortenzi. We could set the date for the conference next year, from Sunday September 17 till Friday 22, 2017.

At the end of the meeting we decided that we will try to make a draft program and we will go back to Rome in March and stay at the conference

venue to prepare the conference and take care of the further details and the program of the conference.

Dia 14

After the meeting at the military ordinariate Colonel Domenico accompanied us to the Pontifical Counsel for Justice and Peace.

Here we met again Mrs. Flaminia Giovanelli, Mrs. Christine Jeangey and Mons Tomasi, who is working for the counsel after his resignation as permanent observer to the Holy See in Geneva. We discussed important topics for the council with Mrs. Giovanelli and Mrs. Jeangey such as: Protection of civilian and religious personnel by military (for instance in Syria where religious personnel stays in the war zone for education of the children) and the position of prisoners of war.

We told them also that we as NGO apply for ECOSOC and Caritas Internationalis. The rest of the week we met Padre Giulio Cerchietti and informed him about the plans of next year's conference in Rome.

Dia 15

Of course we visited the State Secretariat again and had a meeting with the new Assessor for General Affairs of the Secretariat of State, Mons. Paolo Borgia and Mrs. Fermina Alvarez. Our last appointment in that the week was at the Pontifical Council for Cultures. We met again Mons Melchior Sanchez de Toca Y Alameda, vice secretary of the Council. Of course it is more or less showing AMI's Flag what we try to do in Rome and tell them who we are and what we try to accomplish with our work. We ask them for support and advice and offer our expertise as a NGO working for the military.

Dia 16

Thursday evening Colonel Domenico d'Ortenzi and his lovely wife joined us

for dinner and we talked about the ideas we acquired in these last few days. And we asked the Colonel if he would consider taking over my task as Secretary General.

Dia 17, 18 en 19

As already mentioned Norbert, Jan and me, this time together with our spouses, travelled again to Rome in March for meetings with Military Bishop Santo Marciànò and the Italian organizing Committee, consisting of Colonel Domenico d'Ortenzi and Lieutenant-Colonel Roberto Vergari. During these two days many of the open questions could be brought to a solution.

Especially regarding the main topics of the conference, the place where it shall take place and the Holy Masses in different, imposing Roman churches, starting with the Pontifical Opening Holy Mass in the Santa Catharina Church of the Military Ordinariate of Italy.

Theme of the AMI Conference 2017 will be: **"Searching for roots"**.

And we will deal with questions of:

- Military Leadership
- Democracy and Christian Values,
- Erosion of International Law
- What is truth?

Of course we will discuss the above mentioned topics this week under the umbrella of chapter 79 of the encyclical "Gaudium et Spes: "Those who devote themselves to the military service of their country should regard themselves as the agents of security and freedom of peoples. As long as they fulfill this role properly, they are making a genuine contribution to the establishment of peace".

Hopefully one of the intended outputs this week shall be, as it is called

before, “Ten Commandments for soldiers”. A guideline for soldiers, working for peace at home or on missions abroad, by researching the roots of our believe and faith.

We are convinced to put with our conference agenda our finger directly on the pulse of our world and its challenges for Christians.

Dia 20 en dia 21

April 4, 2017, the Dutch AMI member ACOM organized a national gathering of AMI Netherlands. The meeting was held at the ecumenical training center of the Dutch military chaplaincy services in Soesterberg, the Netherlands.

ACOM is an ecumenical Christian union for soldiers and civilians working at the Department of Defense in the Netherlands.

ACOM is the legal successor of the Catholic union of St. Martin’s. In the 1990s ACOM took over the representation of AMI after a request of the former military bishop, Mgr. Dr. Ph. Baer.

The April gathering was the first national gathering of AMI ever.

The objectives were threefold.

First of all, the delegation wanted to look back at last year’s conference in Vught, the Netherlands. Secondly, of course it wanted to prepare for this year’s meeting in Rome. But the underlying main objective was to attempt to mobilize a network of Catholic soldiers in the Dutch military, to consider how new impulses may be given to the lay apostolate among military in the Netherlands.

In this respect it was an experiment to see if national gatherings can developed to vital meetings.

Leon Verhulst, chairman of ACOM, opened the meeting and welcomed all 40 participants. Head of delegation mr. Jan Kleian, a long time participant in AMI, summarized the history of AMI and ACOM’ s participation in it.

I provided a substantial survey of themes AMI has dealt with at the International level. I emphasized AMI's combination of spiritual exchange, studying Catholic Social Teaching on war and Peace, and practical support for military chaplaincy services.

Chief of Roman Catholic Military Chaplaincy service, Tom van Vilsteren, explained the position and role of Catholic military chaplains and their contribution to lay apostolate. Professor dr. Fred van Iersel Ph.D., who is advisor for Ethics to ACOM too, provided an overview of recent developments in the approach of Just War and Non-Violence inside the Vatican.

At the end of the day, Mr. Jan Kleian was very satisfied about the successful first meeting and expressed his commitment to continuation of this type of meetings. There seem to be good opportunities to widen the network of committed catholic soldiers in the Dutch military. We can speak of a successful first step.

Dia 22

From May 18-22, 2017 - 59th International Military Pilgrimage took place in Lourdes.

Since in 1858 the 14-year-old Bernadette Soubirous reported about several Maria appearances, Lourdes developed to the worldwide most-visited Catholic place of pilgrimage.

The annual soldier's pilgrimage takes a special position under the pilgrim's travelling. After the end of the Second World War Lourdes became a place for reconciliation.

“Dona Nobis Pacem – Grant us Peace” was the official theme for this year's International Military Pilgrimage in Lourdes.

Almost 20.000 servicemen and women from more than 40 nations and from

all continents participated in this wonderful, spiritual event.

It is always an unforgettable experience to be present together with soldiers of different armed forces at the Holy Mass and to pray together for peace in the world.

Every year many friends of AMI, who participated in this pilgrimage, came together to share their experiences and a glass of wine.

From the presidency of AMI the President, Major General Sinn, both Vice-Presidents and the Secretary-General were present. AMI executive committee used the opportunity of the pilgrimage to meet friends and interested people and to talk about our organization and the upcoming general assembly and conference in Rome September this year. It was for the presidency a special feeling knowing that it was last time assisting the pilgrimage in its responsibility.

For the first time the AMI flag was presented in Lourdes. During the Austrian-Swiss service in the field camp, the flag stood proudly alongside the flag of the Vatican, which was supported by the Swiss Guard.

Dia 23: Activities May and June

Dia 24:

As you know we are on Facebook, we have a website and since last year an AMI Whatsapp group. We can use all kinds of modern media, to stay in contact with AMI. We can share ideas, support the Presidium and work together on important themes for future AMI Conferences.

Dia 25 en 26: Carinthia

As you all know, every year I go to Carinthia, Austria on holiday. This year Maarten and I went to Durnkrut where our president lives. We celebrated

together with Norbert and Ida and a lot of guests, the 50th Birthday Party of Katja Jedlicka, we worked on the program and on the texts of the AMI Roll-ups.

They were produced this summer as public relations equipment for our conferences and especially for tomorrow evening. We would like to show our guests at the concert in the Pantheon what AMI stands for.

We enjoyed each other's company when visiting Prince Eugene of Savoy's country estate in the Marchfeld .

There was a major exhibition, marking the third centenary of the birth of Maria Theresa, explores the life and work of this monarch and empress-consort. Norbert and Ida living in the Austrian wine region, so of course we tasted a good glass of wine.

Dia 27:

My dear Friends,

This was a list of activities of your Secretary General during the last year. I realize that this is my 9th and final report as Secretary General. The first time was in 2009 and I remember how nervous I was.

So I stand here before you with a little melancholy.

I had such wonderful years being secretary general of AMI and I enjoyed every minute of it.

I am also very grateful for the things I learned and could achieve by working together with so many friends from all over the world. I will cherish those friendships also when I am no longer Secretary General of AMI.

Dia 28

Two people I want to thank especially today. They were during the last 9 years some kind of guardian angels for me. And you know the meaning of it:

Somebody who looks after and is concerned with the welfare of another.
I had two of them.

Herman. He is a person of integrity. Good with numbers. Reliable treasurer, hard working not only for AMI but also for lots of other organizations. I am going to miss his funny way to give us his report and I am very happy to be on his list of lucky, lovely ladies in his life.

Dia 29

Jan, my substitute, my personal ecclesiastical assistant, sparring partner and travel companion to all kind of meetings. Jan was partly responsible for the themes chosen, in the programs, of the AMI Conference, in the last 9 years.

He suggested lots of speakers we could ask to give us a lecture and his input was always in a constructive way. And he was the first deacon AMI ever had assisting in Holy Mass.

Words cannot express my gratitude for the help of both of you and I would like to underline this gratitude with a small personal gift as token of this thankfulness. Under one condition: Our period together only ends at the end of this year! Please give them a warm applause.

Dia 30

I feel very blessed with so many friends all over the world and of course during these days, gathered here in Rome.

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

Of course I want to thank our hosts from Italy and the Italian organizing team. I am convinced we did a wonderful job together to make this conference work.

Dia 31

If you think that I will be getting bored I can assure you that will not be the question. All children and grandchildren live in our village and are thrilled that grandma will have more time for them. Lots of time!

But first of all, let's have a wonderful conference here in Rome!

Thank you very much for your attention!