



FINAL RESULTS

of the 56th General Assembly and Annual Conference of the Apostolat Militaire International in Video Conference

15 September 2021

Again this year, AMI community continued to experience the effects of the COVID Pandemic, so the AMI gathering was held virtually on 15 September 2021 for the second year in a row. Fifty AMI delegates from 14 countries in 4 continents took part in the 56th General Assembly and Annual AMI Conference via VTC to discuss together the theme of Perseverance,¹ sharing experiences about how to cope with the effects/impacts of COVID.

Through VTC, the General Assembly discussed many topics beginning with the AMI budget 2020 balance / financial plan through 2024, the London Declaration, the awaited release of the CMC App, the tasks assigned to the AMI community through the AMI Action Plan, and finally the elections of the AMI Executive Committee (the re-confirmation of the Dutch-Italian team consisting of Vice-Adm Borsboom Matthieu, Col. D'Ortenzi Domenico and Staff Sgt. Pandolfo Damiano together with CAPT RNLN Marcus Frank, Cpt. Ciccotti Mario and WO1 Thannauser Ferry. Also confirmed was the AMI Conference rotation scheme for the next three years with the AMI Conference 2022 in London hosted by the British Armed Forces Mons. Paul Mason, 2023 in Belgium and 2024 in Kenya.

Declaration of London

During the 56th AMI General Assembly in Video-Conference, the English version of the Declaration of London was endorsed, as was a popular extracted English version. The next step will rest in the hands of the AMI members as they develop stakeholder versions, extracted versions and translations. Continuous AMI policy during the last three decades proposes a Declaration every ten years (due to COVID-19 it has been eleven years) to keep our focus as a lay Catholic military organization. The following aspects were highlighted:

¹ **Perseverance (James 1:12)** "Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him".

- 1) The *Process* built on Vatican II and our applications of that council in earlier Declarations about “Just Peace”.
- 2) The *Structure* combined Catholic Social teaching with military experience – see, judge, act – and is addressed to the international community, the Vatican and other NGO’s. About twenty issues are mentioned on which AMI can discuss with their nations, with international and national organizations and within AMI. One of the conclusions was to develop more concise versions for the AMI app and for young military.
- 3) The *Substance* built on Pope Francis’ teaching (including the Papal encyclical “Fratelli Tutti”), elaborations on Vatican II’s further elaborations of Catholic Social Teaching, but as “continually developing” within the military domain. It proposes a number of specific “do’s and don’ts” to guide everyday military actions in today’s world, and which could be particularly helpful in military education.

Catholic Military Connect App.

The AMI app *Catholic Military Connect* is ready in a final version, and is now in the process of testing, bug fixing, etc., by AMI Delegates who will return their feedback before the final launch of the App. Meanwhile the EXECOM with the Tweeting with God (TwGod) organization and the AMI Strategic Communication WG will prepare a launching plan for the App. In close collaboration with the TwGod, two years of hard working have resulted in an app able to help all Catholic military get pastoral support everywhere around the globe – with or without internet.

Experience during the pandemic

Another important issue was the resilience of military in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Delegations shared their difficulties in the physical, psychological, spiritual and pastoral domains. In many countries military created ways to deal with the limitations of human communication during this crisis, and many of them were working for the public health organizations in their country. Physical contact, face to face, still appeared to be the most important means of communication. Virtual contact does also work, but is limited and it can be used in support of physical presence gatherings. On the other hand, it also has advantages which should be exploited as add on (e-ministry on line).

This period made it clear that isolation also has a social cost – specially to younger generations, including young military. Pilgrimages (walking events) could be a good way to re-set minds in COVID and post COVID times. Several inputs noticed a raised concern in respect to mental health together with the need for rest and recuperation in the post COVID period. In many countries chaplains pay extra attention to meet the soldiers and learn about their problems and those of their families. Their presence in the barracks is often very much appreciated.

AMI Action Plan.

The AMI Action Plan described both the tasks that had been performed as well as the actions still to be taken. Action plan 2018-2021 will be reviewed and extended into the new EC period up to 2024. During the Video-Conference, a few tasks were presented as having priority over the others, although they all need to be completed.

Task named SA-6 (World Meeting of Families – WMOF – in Rome 2022): In one of the last physical meetings with the Holy See in Vatican City, the Dicastery of Laity, Family and Life (D-LFL) mentioned the participation of AMI at the World meeting of families (WMOF) in Rome in June 2022. This topic has already been discussed in Austria in 2019 during our last Conference in physical presence and the General Assembly decided to wait for (and coordinate with) any AMI member availabilities to send their military families for this world meeting. Of course each family will represent its own organization but at the same time be part of the international military lay community -- AMI. In addition, AMI EC will participate in this meeting.

Task named SA-7 (World Youth Day – WYD – in Lisbon 2023): Also in this case, in one of the last physical meetings with the Holy See in Vatican City, the Dicastery of Laity, Family and Life (D-LFL) also mentioned the participation of AMI at the World Youth Day in Portugal 2023. This topic has also been discussed in Austria in 2019, but because we now have more time, the AMI EC will discuss this task next year, hoping to meet in London 2022 in physical presence. Some proposals are needed to identify a clear way ahead.

Task named SA-2 (Testing and enriching “AMI good practices”): AMI EC shared the document named “AMI Good practices in the formation of Catholic military laity” written by the AMI Secretary General and presented as a Thesis at the end of the 1st course for Catholic inspired NGOs’ operators held by The Holy See and the Pontifical Urban University in Rome in September 2020. The idea is to share with all AMI members this paper in order to test such practices, to practice them, and to enrich this set of ideas with the member experiences from each nation. To this end, all are asked to test it and to give suggestions in order to enrich it. Once tested and enriched, it could be a reference for the formation of military laity shared by AMI member nations.

Task named SC-11 (The way of the cross «Via Crucis»): This is a new AMI EC initiative. The general idea is to commemorate as the AMI community **Jesus Christ's crucifixion** and passion on the Good Friday 2022. With the help of everyone, the AMI "Way of the Cross" will be sent through videos (mobile phone camera or MAC/PC), performed by various AMI delegate, and coordinated to present a military-flavored 15-station prayer.

Last but not least, 14 AMI video testimonies from 9 different AMI nations were recorded by several AMI members and finalized both for the above mentioned app and the apostolate through the web. The delegations were called upon to deliver more of these worthwhile testimonies, especially from lay people.

Elections of the new AMI President, AMI Secretary General and AMI Treasurer

After a three-year mandate of the Dutch-Italian Executive Committee and the decision of the Dicastery of Laity, Family and Life to prolong the mandate of the current office holders until the 2021 General Assembly, according to the AMI Statute art. 6.2², art. 7.1³ and art 7.5⁴ (<https://www.apostolatmilitaire.com/statute/>), this year the General Assembly was called to elect the new AMI President, the new AMI Secretary General and the AMI Treasurer for the mandate 2022-2024. The Ecclesiastical Assistant, Brig. Gen. Fr. Patrick Dolan, was elected in the year 2019 according to the AMI Statute art. 6.2.

As a result, the Dutch-Italian team was confirmed for another mandate 2022 – 2024 and the current members of the Executive Committee were confirmed: AMI President Vice-Admiral (ret) Matthieu Borsboom, AMI Secretary General Col. Domenico D’Ortenzi, and AMI Treasurer Staff Sgt. Damiano Pandolfo together with Cpt. Frank Markus (Vice AMI President), Cpt. Mario Ciccotti (Deputy AMI Secretary General) and WO1 Ferry Thannauser (Vice AMI President).

Discharge of the Treasurer and elections.

The General Assembly also reviewed its financial workings and discharged (certified as correct and true) the AMI Treasurer after a thorough presentation on the financial budget 2020 and financial plan 2021-2024.

Moreover, the General Assembly held elections for one its two cash-auditors and because of the current particular circumstances related to the COVID pandemic, Military Chaplain (LTC) Don Milan Pregelj (Slovenia) who was supposed to be replaced, was confirmed for one more year together with 1LT Darko Boban (Croatia) with a broad consensus of the General Assembly.

Annual contribution

During the AMI Conference, the increase of the annual contribution was discussed. As it is well known, the promotion and spreading of AMI throughout the world has been significantly increased in the last years through participation in conferences, meetings and opportunities for direct discussion (except for 2020 and 2021). AMI EC thinks that these trend will start again during the next three years.

As can be imagined, the aforementioned lines of action of participation in conferences and increasing the AMI's "social media" capacity – including the CMC app - have led to an increase in expenses that would require a greater commitment in financial terms both for

² “The Executive Council of AMI shall be elected for a three-year term of office by the General Assembly. ...”

³ “In the case of an upcoming election for the Executive Council, national delegations may present candidates for the offices of President or Secretary General to the General Assembly, to be elected in conformity with Article 5 of these Statutes.”

⁴ “Organizations that wish to nominate persons for offices in the Executive Council notify the Secretary General two months before the General Assembly that has such election on its agenda.”

"full members" and, hopefully, member nations with "open membership" and "friend associates".

For these reasons, during next year's Conference in London 2022, the General Assembly will be called upon to express its opinion on a possible increase in the annual contribution to €1000 which, has remained at €800 per year since at least 2012. Without this increase it will not be possible to perform all the tasks as mentioned in the Action Plan in a proper way.

Conclusion

The EXECOM was re-elected for a three-year mandate with an appreciation of the fruitful work that has been done along the last four years. The course of AMI is steady; and, based on the Declaration of London, AMI is motivated and inspired to take new initiatives to strengthen the faith of Catholics in the military and encourage them in their countries and organizations.

More information can be obtained by contacting the AMI Secretary General.