



Bishop of Gary

**DIOCESE OF GARY**

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March 1, 2005

**Dear Members of the National Association of Catholic Chaplains:**

**“Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endures forever” (Ps 118:1).**

**As we celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the National Association of Catholic Chaplains, I give praise and thanks to the Lord for all of you who have responded to God’s invitation to continue the healing ministry of Jesus. What a blessing you have been and continue to be to those who are sick or dying, to their families, and to all who serve them! How blessed is the Church for each one of you!**

**The NACC was established 40 years ago within the Bishops’ Conference to provide professional training, standards, and certification for those priests who were ministering in specialized settings to the sick. Today, the NACC continues to be enormously successful in accomplishing this goal by providing a highly skilled professional body of board certified ecclesial health care ministers who meet rigorous standards for personal, theological, and professional competency along with ecclesiastical endorsement.**

**In the wondrous plan of God, the composition of our dedicated chaplaincy corps has changed most significantly. While all of our Catholic chaplains were priests in 1965, priests currently compose only 17 percent of our number. Fortunately, the Church has been blessed in being able to extend the ministry of Jesus through great numbers of qualified and certified deacons, religious, and lay ministers who devote their lives to Jesus’ mission of healing in the Church.**

**The NACC offers an enormous advantage to the Church in assisting the bishops in the oversight of this vital ministry. It also assures the people whom we serve that those who minister to them in behalf of Jesus and His Church are grounded in Catholic theology, adhere to the “Ethical and Religious Directives,” and extend the ministry of the Church with the formal approval of the bishop.**

**In the name of my brother bishops, I thank you for your great love for the Church, the value you place upon your Catholic identity, and your close identification with your bishops. May God reward each of you in rich measure for the compassionate, healing love which you bring to others in the name of Jesus and His Church!**

**With all best wishes, I am**

**Sincerely yours in the Lord Jesus,**

*+ Dale J. Melczek*

**Most Reverend Dale J. Melczek, DD  
USCCB Episcopal Liaison to the NACC  
Bishop of Gary**

DJM/vm