



Office of the President

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Most Reverend William S. Skylstad, D.D.
Bishop of Spokane

March 24, 2005

Dear Members of the National Association of Catholic Chaplains,

On behalf of my brother Bishops, I am extending to you our heartfelt congratulations on the 40th anniversary of your existence as a Catholic organization of chaplains.

For 40 years, you have brought God's healing, reconciling, and caring presence to the patients, families, and hospital staff in healthcare institutions throughout the United States. You are present to those whose well-being and wholeness have been diminished through sickness.

Animated by the Gospel imperative to further the caring and healing mission of Jesus, you as chaplains have committed yourselves to transform relationships, structures, and services, to create a stronger, unified voice for justice in order to enhance the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities. Your presence at the bedside of patients has witnessed to the inherent dignity of the human person and the equality of men and women.

Everyone who stops alongside the suffering of another person, in the words of Pope John Paul II, is a "Good Samaritan." As chaplains, you follow the model of the Good Samaritan who "binds up their wounds" through expressions of genuine care and compassion, offering healing through active listening and prayer, whether verbally or non-verbally. You help those suffering find meaning in their suffering in union with the suffering of Christ in his act of redemption.

Since 1965, you have endeavored to raise the standards of your ministry. As the Bishops wrote in our 1981 pastoral letter, *Health and Health Care*, "We recognize the valuable programs that exist in Catholic educational institutions that include nursing and medical schools, as well as basic and special programs for other health professions." We are grateful for your excellent Clinical Pastoral Education Programs administered by NACC CPE supervisors that so competently prepare chaplains and lay ecclesial health care ministers to tend to the emotional, social, and spiritual suffering of those who are ill and dying. Many of your students bring what they have learned outside the walls of healthcare institutions into many other areas of care for the aged and outcasts of society.

These programs have inspired, educated, and trained interns to adopt physically, emotionally, and spiritually healthy lifestyles, and prepared them to participate in caring and healing ministries, sometimes even moving beyond the walls of health care institutions into the community. Your programs have taught others how to bring comfort and hope to those in pain, and to accompany them as they move from suffering to peace. They have promoted ecumenism and interfaith dialogue, established cooperative relationships with colleagues of other churches and faith traditions, and collaborated in projects of mutual concern.

All of our people are blessed because of your service in and outside healthcare ministry. Once again, congratulations on your 40th anniversary of the National Association of Catholic Chaplains.

Sincerely yours in the Lord,

Most Reverend William S. Skylstad
Bishop of Spokane
President