

February 11, 2015  
23<sup>rd</sup> World Day of the Sick

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Your Excellency,

Over the past several years, on behalf of the National Association of Catholic Chaplains (NACC), our members, our USCCB Episcopal Liaison, and our Episcopal Advisory Council, I have taken the occasion of the Church's World Day of the Sick to write and thank you for your support of our NACC members. They are the eyes, ears, hands, heart, and soul of the Christ and His Church in so many diverse health care settings throughout our country and beyond. They are among those who are addressed annually in the Pope's World Day of Sick address. This year Pope Francis' theme, "I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame," from the book of Job, aptly describes how our members (priests, religious women and men, lay women and men, and deacons) view their ministry as they live out the NACC mission, to "continue the healing ministry of Jesus in the name of the Church."

It is with particularly deep gratitude this year that the NACC celebrates the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding in April 1965 by the United States bishops to provide training, support, and certification for those offering pastoral care services to the ill, infirmed, and dying. NACC's original statement of purpose was "to assist the chaplain toward the realization of progressively higher ideals, with attendant spiritual, intellectual, and personal characteristics, in the pastoral care of patients and staff of the institution." The NACC remains dedicated to its mission as it "advocates for the profession of spiritual care and educates, certifies, and supports chaplains, clinical pastoral educators, and all members who continue the healing ministry of Jesus in the name of the Church." We thank you for your endorsement and support of the NACC and its members.

As I have shared in previous letters, the profile of the NACC members has dramatically changed over the years. A membership that was comprised 30 years ago of 52 percent religious, 38 percent priests, 12 percent lay, and 4 percent deacons, is now a profile of 54 percent lay, 25 percent sisters, 17 percent priests, and 4 percent brothers and deacons.

Over recent years, in this World Day of the Sick letter, I have included information on how our members serve in the name of Church through your endorsement of their ministry, and their relationship to you and their local faith communities. Our members' faith lives are enriched in their parish communities, and they often serve in a variety of volunteer ministry roles, besides being employed as chaplains and pastoral care providers, most as board certified professionals. Our members are utilized in their parishes to form parish ministers in visiting the sick, and some dioceses use our members to train permanent deacons in the pastoral care ministry. Please consider our members as invaluable resources to you and your priests in the Church's pastoral care ministry.

As a result of conversations with our Episcopal Advisor, Bishop Donald Hying, and our Episcopal Advisory Council (list included) over the past months, I want to make you aware that many of our members are also connected to their dioceses through their participation in the (arch)diocese's Safe Environment program. Please note that, because each (arch)diocese has its own program and requirements, the NACC does not provide a Safe Environment education program, nor does it require Safe Environment training for certification. While most employers where our members are employed require and provide training programs and most of our members might not be directly employed in a diocesan institution, I ask you, however, to please review how your (arch)diocese wants our members to participate in a Safe Environment training program. Some dioceses make Safe Environment education a prerequisite for providing our members an endorsement for NACC certification.

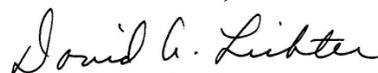
Within the next month, every ordinary will again receive from the NACC a list of our members ministering in his diocese. That list will provide you again the means to communicate with our members your diocese's Safe Environment program and expectations of our members, if you are not already doing so. Also, please know that the NACC professional code of ethics includes specific standards regarding exploitation of power in professional relationships, and refraining from any forms of sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, or sexual assault, as well as any form of harassment, coercion, intimidation, or otherwise abusive words or actions in relationships in ministry.

As we mark this year's World Day of the Sick in the 50th anniversary of the NACC, our members are renewed in their vocation to serve the Lord, and grateful for the gift of their call to be a minister of healing for those God gives them to serve. They pray for the gift of the Spirit, as expressed by Pope Francis in his 2015 World Day of the Sick exhortation. "It is a way of seeing things infused by the Holy Spirit in the minds and the hearts of those who are sensitive to the sufferings of their brothers and sisters and who can see in them the image of God." They join Pope Francis as he entrusts "this World Day of the Sick to the maternal protection of Mary, who conceived and gave birth to Wisdom incarnate: Jesus Christ, our Lord," and as he prays, "O Mary, Seat of Wisdom, intercede as our Mother for all the sick and for those who care for them! Grant that, through our service of our suffering neighbors, and through the experience of suffering itself, we may receive and cultivate true wisdom of heart!"

So, the NACC is grateful to you for the diverse ways you offer your support for our members in their ministry to the ill, aging, and dying. During our Annual Appeal, many of you also financially support the mission of the NACC, for which we are deeply grateful.

If there are other ways, the NACC can be of support to you, please let me know. Please contact me ([dlichter@nacc.org](mailto:dlichter@nacc.org)) or Bishop Donald J. Hying ([bishophying@dcgary.org](mailto:bishophying@dcgary.org)), if you have questions about the work of the NACC, NACC members in your (arch)diocese, or any other concern.

In Christ's service,



David A. Lichter  
Executive Director, NACC

cc: Bishop Donald J. Hying