

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
CATHOLIC CHAPLAINS

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February 11, 2013

Your Excellency:

On this 2013 World Day of the Sick, the National Association of Catholic Chaplains (NACC) extends to you our gratitude for your pastoral leadership in caring for the ill, aging, and dying. As Pope Benedict XVI states in his address for this day, “May all realize ever more fully that ‘the Church today lives a fundamental aspect of her mission in lovingly and generously accepting every human being, especially those who are weak and sick’ (*Christifideles Laici*, 38).”

On March 24th, 2005, during the 40th anniversary year of the NACC, Bishop William Skylstad, then president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, wrote a congratulatory letter to the members of the NACC that highlighted, “you have brought God’s healing, reconciling, and caring presence to the patients, families, and hospital staff in healthcare institutions throughout the United States.” In 2015 the NACC will celebrate its 50th anniversary as it “continues the healing ministry of Jesus in the name of the Church.”

How does the NACC continue to educate, certify, and support chaplains, lay ecclesial healthcare ministers, and all who continue the healing ministry *in the name of the Church*? It serves under the auspices of the Church in several ways.

- The approval of its Standards and Procedures for Certification was done by the USCCB Commission on Certification and Accreditation (CCA), most recently in 2007, and the NACC submitted annual reports to the CCA. Now this oversight is provided by the USCCB Subcommittee on Certification for Ecclesial Ministry and Service, and the NACC submits an annual report to this Subcommittee.
- The president of the USCCB appoints an Episcopal Liaison, now Archbishop Paul Coakley, Archbishop of Oklahoma City, who provides guidance to both the NACC Executive Director and the NACC Board of Directors on which he serves.
- The Episcopal Advisory Council, populated through invitation of the Episcopal Liaison, meets annually with the Liaison and the NACC Executive Director at the November USCCB Assembly. A copy of a list of the Council is included with this letter.

- NACC members' board certification, required by most health care providers and other ministries to serve in those settings, requires the endorsement of their local ordinary or religious community head. Lay men and women are endorsed as lay ecclesial health care ministers, and when the NACC requests a letter of endorsement from the ordinary, the request is accompanied by the letter of recommendation from the person's pastor or another active priest of the diocese.
- The NACC provides regular communication to all the bishops through the NACC *Vision*. (Bishops are alerted to its electronic format as it is made available every other month.)
- The NACC always invites to its annual conference the local ordinary or his representative of the diocese within which the conference is taking place.

Beyond these ways of the oversight of and relationships to the Church, the NACC seeks to encourage and foster ways for the ordinaries and auxiliary bishops of dioceses to build relationships and structures of communication and accountability with its members so that their ministry is ever more integrated with the diocesan mission and ministry within which they serve. Over recent years, many dioceses have begun to provide more oversight and guidance to this ministry in diverse ways.

To assist this process I sent in last year's February 11th letter to all ordinaries a list of the NACC members who work and/or reside in their dioceses. Many ordinaries responded favorably to that list. **In March, ordinaries will be getting an updated list of our members both working in and residing in their dioceses, if applicable.**

Some bishops asked for examples of how dioceses are communicating with or might communicate with our NACC members and/or better incorporate them into the diocese. Included with the letter is a document with some examples that I had also shared in November with the Episcopal Advisory Council. I hope these examples will be helpful to you. Some dioceses have requested our support to arrange meetings with our members. We are very willing and desirous to do so if you would like that assistance.

The NACC is grateful to you for the diverse ways you offer your support of our members in their ministry to the ill, aging, and dying.

Please contact me (dlichter@nacc.org) or Archbishop Coakley (PCoakley@ArchOKC.org) if you would like to discuss this topic further with either of us.

In Christ's service,



David A. Lichter
Executive Director, NACC

cc: Archbishop Paul Coakley