

February 11, 2018
World Day of the Sick

Arch/Bishop
Address
City, ST zip

Your Excellency,

In Pope Francis' message for this 26th World Day of the Sick, he noted, "The Church's mission is a response to Jesus' gift, for she knows that she must bring to the sick the Lord's own gaze, full of tenderness and compassion. Health care ministry will always be a necessary and fundamental task, to be carried out with renewed enthusiasm by all, from parish communities to the largest healthcare institutions." On this day, the members of the National Association of Catholic Chaplains (NACC) are deeply grateful to have shared in this Church's mission of caring for the sick since the bishops founded the NACC in 1965.

We are grateful for the guidance of our Episcopal Liaison, Bishop Donald Hying, Bishop of Gary Indiana, as well as of our Episcopal Advisory Council representing the USCCB regions. They met again during the USCCB November 2017 Assembly and continue to provide us wisdom and direction as we seek to provide leadership and support, not only to our members, but also to those responsible in your dioceses to oversee your pastoral care ministries. Here are some highlights from our discussion.

NACC continues to appreciate being invited to your Provincial meetings, learning how best to support your pastoral care ministry, and how best to share the urgent need for more Catholics to consider this professional ministry. As mentioned in last year's letter, we are very grateful for the opportunity to have NACC representatives come to one of your Provincial meetings to seek your advice on how the NACC can best support those in your diocese who are designated to provide the pastoral care ministry in your parishes and how to best encourage our Church's priests, deacons, religious, and lay members to consider this ministry of pastoral care. We continue to learn from these meetings and discuss them with our Episcopal Advisory Council.

Increasing concern exists about the loss of a Catholic presence in settings where Catholics need spiritual care. Even as NACC continues to use and seek other venues to communicate the urgent need for men and women to consider this professional ministry, we experience two retirements for every new member who embraces this ministry of pastoral care. Half of our members are age 65 and older. As Pope Francis expressed in his letter, "The Church knows that she requires a special grace to live up to her evangelical task of serving the sick." We pray that more might embrace this "evangelical task" as a full-time ministry. Prepared and board-certified priests, religious, permanent deacons, and lay men and women are greatly needed to provide timely counsel for Catholic ethical decision-making, appropriate care for Catholics and their religious needs, and the healing outreach to many who have been at the margins or outside of the Catholic Church who, in their time of suffering and confusion, seek the Church's tenderness and compassion. In our visits with you, we are learning more ways to bring awareness of this vital ministry to priests, religious, deacons, and lay people, as well as seeking your assistance in helping us do so.

NACC is providing leadership in creating and supplying resources for those charged with preparing individuals who care for the vulnerable. In collaboration with many Catholic ministry groups, and with funding from the Raskob Foundation for Catholic Activities, we have been able to identify the competencies needed by those who provide pastoral care in diverse pastoral settings, whether in parishes, health care entities, correctional institutions, long-term care settings, or among migrant/immigrant/refugee populations. The USCCB Subcommittee on Certification of Ecclesial Ministry and Service reviewed and affirmed them as a valuable resource for training programs. With our other Catholic partners for pastoral care, we are now

working on examples of core content and resources that can help dioceses and formation programs strengthen their programs. We look forward to sharing more about this in the coming months.

Our members can be resources for you. Through our visits to your Provincial meetings, we are learning of ways our members can help you. While they serve the Church where they are employed as spiritual care providers and chaplains, parishes and diocesan programs also utilize them to help prepare parish ministers to visit the sick, as well as provide sessions on advance directives and bereavement. Some help train permanent deacons in the pastoral care ministry. Please let us know if we can be of assistance to you in any of these areas. We are glad to communicate with our members how they could be helpful to you and the members of your diocese for the Church's pastoral care ministry.

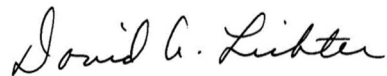
We again are providing you, as ordinary of your (arch) diocese, a list of our members who serve in and/or are employed by institutions in your (arch) diocese. This list does not include our members who are retired or only reside in your diocese. Please let me (dlichter@nacc.org) know if you (or your delegate) see any names about whom you have questions or have knowledge that would be helpful to us. We also include again a document that explains the nature and purpose of your ecclesial endorsement for our members who are preparing for board certification. We hope it will be helpful to you.

On behalf of the leaders and members of the NACC, we remain deeply grateful to you for your support of the NACC and our members in their ministry to the sick and dying. During our Annual Appeal, many of you financially support the mission of the NACC, for which we are also deeply grateful.

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

In the words of Pope Francis, "May our prayers to the Mother of God see us united in an incessant plea that every member of the Church may live with love the vocation to serve life and health."

In Christ's service,



David A. Lichter
Executive Director, NACC

cc: Bishop Donald J. Hying

enc.