

February 11, 2019

World Day of the Sick
Arch/Bishop
Address
City, ST zip

Your Excellency,

In Pope Francis' message for this 27th World Day of the Sick, he begins with *"You received without payment; give without payment"* (Mt 10:8). *These are the words spoken by Jesus when sending forth his apostles to spread the Gospel, so that his Kingdom might grow through acts of gratuitous love.* Members of the National Association of Catholic Chaplains (NACC) are deeply grateful for the gift of serving the Church's mission of caring for the sick, aging, dying, imprisoned, and the most vulnerable of our society since NACC's founding by the Bishops in 1965.

We are grateful for the gift of our Episcopal Liaison, Bishop Donald Hying, Bishop of Gary Indiana, as well as our Episcopal Advisory Council representing the USCCB regions. They offer us guidance as NACC members seek to provide leadership and support not only to our members, but also to those responsible to oversee your pastoral care ministries in your dioceses.

Over the past couple of years, I have shared through this World Day of the Sick letter the partnerships the NACC is developing to strengthen the ministry of pastoral care, not only by certifying priests, religious, deacons, lay men and women to serve in health care and other settings, but also by creating resources and programs to support the formation of the many men and women in your parishes who want to serve the homebound, those in eldercare facilities, hospitals, and prison/correctional settings.

Through NACC representatives who visited with many of you at your Provincial meetings, we heard the value you place on providing more support and resources to those in your diocese who are designated to oversee and/or provide direct pastoral care ministry in your parishes. Having spoken with many representatives who oversee the pastoral care services of their dioceses, we are completing the development of several resources for you.

- The first resource is a **set of competencies for pastoral care**, developed and refined over the past couple of years. The initial drafts of the competencies were shared in September 2017 with the USCCB Subcommittee on Certification of Ecclesial Ministry and Service and were viewed as a valuable resource for dioceses. We are refining them and will make them available this spring.
- Another resource will be a **model of a pastoral care formation program** that provides dioceses a way of envisioning and structuring a pastoral care formation program based on the four pillars of Co-Workers in the Vineyard. The model will include suggested content, methodologies and resources for the program.
- Thirdly, we will provide **links to some current diocesan programs** that offer solid examples of pastoral care formation preparation. We will also be offering a **network** for those charged in your diocese to oversee the pastoral care ministries, so that they can be linked with and learn from one another. We have begun this already with a few diocesan leaders and they have been most appreciative.
- We also have plans to create a **national on-line training/formation program for pastoral care** that will make possible for dioceses to access a national program, endorsed by the USCCB, that they would be able to create/sustain on their own. We are in the process of seeking funding and partnerships to make this a reality.

Finally, we are excited to let you know about our **2019 National Conference, Partners in the Pastoral Care Ministry**, to be held May 31-June 3, 2019, at St. Mary of the Lake University (Seminary), in Mundelein, where many of you were on retreat last month. This Conference <https://www.nacc.org/conference/> has been planned not only for our members, but for all those in your dioceses who are involved in some form of

pastoral care ministry. Please pass on this letter and /or the enclosed brochure to those in your diocese who might benefit from knowing about this.

We are also holding **three preconference formation/training programs on Thursday, May 30, 2019** that will be streamed so that representatives from your dioceses may also participate remotely.

- **A Jail and Prison ministry program will** offered by members of the Catholic Prison Ministry Coalition (<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catholic-education/catholic-prison-ministries-coalition-cpmc.cfm>).
- **Spiritual Care for the Elderly** will be provided by the Avila Institute on Gerontology (<https://avilainstitute.org/>).
- **Developing a diocesan program for pastoral care** will be offered by representatives of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston (<https://www.nacc.org/conference/6hourformationtraining/>).

Before closing, we make a plea again for your help to communicate the urgent need for men and women to consider this pastoral care ministry as a full-time apostolate. The NACC continues to experience two retirements for every new member who embraces this ministry of pastoral care. Half of our members are age 65 and older. Prepared and board-certified priests, religious, permanent deacons, 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.

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.

Please remember that our members can be resources for 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.

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, we also invoke Mary, "May she help us to share the gifts we have received in the spirit of dialogue and mutual acceptance, to live as brothers and sisters attentive to each other's needs, to give from a generous heart, and to learn the joy of selfless service to others."

In Christ's service, David A. Lichter

Executive Director, NACC

cc: Bishop Donald J. Hying
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