Continuing the healing ministry of Jesus in the name of the Church

"Synodality is a style, it is a walk together, and it is what the Lord expects from the Church of the third millennium,"

Pope Francis Nov. 29, 2021
Our Commitment . . .

As the Church prepares for the Synod on Synodality, the members of the National Association of Catholic Chaplains (NACC) welcome the opportunity to share their joys and challenges on a wide range of subjects relating to their ministry to God’s people and their service to the Church. NACC members minister in 198 dioceses across the United States. Members from thirty-four of these dioceses responded to the survey thereby representing a geographically broad spectrum of the country, a wide variety of ministries and a diversity of the people we serve. NACC members are deeply committed to the work they do. On behalf of the Board of Directors and the membership of the Association, I am pleased to present to the Bishops of the United States this synthesis of our reflections as they continue to prayerfully consider synodality in the Church.

Carolanne B. Hauck BCC
NACC Board Chair
June 30, 2022

Our Prayer. . .

BREATHE IN US HOLY SPIRIT, that we may experience Your Wisdom to hear the promptings You have given to those who voiced these insights for the Synod.

Let us fully understand what You intend for Your Church and our Association in gathering these murmurings You have inspired.

Let us hear them with humility, with an open heart that transcends all prior notions of how things are to be done.

Let us hear them with courage, as we move forward, unafraid, to proclaim Your Voice among Your People and Your Church. We acknowledge without doubt, wholeheartedly, that You are the source of our life as a Church.

Help us to honor those who have heard Your voice and in turn poured out their hearts in Your Name.

We give You thanks that You have moved Pope Francis to seek Your voice among Your people. And we earnestly pray for the success of the Synod on Synodality and the new life it will bring to Your Church.

Lord Jesus, hear our prayer. Amen.

- Robert Legato Sr. BCC
Who we are...

Our mission: The National Association of Catholic Chaplains (NACC) 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 are 1,971 members from across the United States. We are priests, deacons, vowed religious, lay women and men serving as board certified chaplains and lay ecclesial ministers committed to continuing the healing ministry of Jesus. We are chaplains, parish ministers, healthcare administrators and students. We greatly value our work and hold ourselves accountable to the highest professional standards. All certified members of the Association have at a minimum a master degree, at least 1,600 hours of clinical pastoral education in a hospital setting, have met a panel of their peers in order to demonstrate their readiness for ministry on behalf of the Church and complete at least fifty hours of continuing education annually.
Our Process. . .

♦ Starting on March 16, 2022 and continuing through June 1, 2022, members responded to a 17-item on-line survey.

♦ Between March 29, 2022 and April 22, 2022, 182 members participated in 4 facilitated on-line listening sessions.

♦ A committee of 4 met to review the data collected in both the survey and the listening sessions and prepared the draft report.

♦ The Association Board of Directors reviewed the draft and their comments have been incorporated herein.

Our Joys. . .

♦ THE SYNOD is seen as an opportunity for a NEW BEGINNING in the Church; one respondent suggested it represents a NEW PENTECOST.

♦ CHAPLAINCY is a vocation that opens the door to the privilege of accompanying others on their journey toward spiritual wholeness and “joining with Christ in the ministry of healing.”

♦ THE JOURNEY with a broadly diverse group that includes the young, the elderly, those who are LGBTQ, people living with mental illness, those who profess no religion, the spiritual but not religious, as well as a host of others.

♦ CATHOLIC LIFE is a source of joy. The sacraments especially the Eucharist and liturgical life were often cited. Devotional practices such as retreats, the rosary, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament are seen as sustaining, essential sources of life and joy.

♦ SOLIDARITY WITH THE CHURCH, especially collegiality with clergy, represents an ongoing joy among many chaplains participating in the survey.

“Walking into a patient's room is entering sacred space. So often I have experienced the strong work of God's Spirit as part of the encounter.”
Our Challenges. . .

◊ SACRAMENTS for those in need of them are often not available. In those facilities where a priest-chaplain is not on staff, it is often difficult – and becoming more so – to locate a priest able and willing to provide the Sacraments when needed, resulting in missed opportunities for a sacramental encounter and frustration for patients, their loved ones, institutional staff, deacons, lay chaplains and often the priest himself who has to say no.

◊ ECCLESIAL SUPPORT for LAY CHAPLAINS is often lacking. While some report an ongoing, fruitful relationship with their parish or diocese, many others lament that their bishop or pastor appear not to value the work they do or recognize them as co-workers in ministry. Clericalism remains an issue. Often the newly ordained are not adequately prepared for institutional ministry nor how to work collegially with lay persons doing the day-to-day work.

◊ WOMEN IN MINISTRY who are well educated and trained are excluded from opportunities to use their gifts to serve in their areas of expertise. This sense of alienation was expressed repeatedly in comments such as, “Women are not made to feel welcome in ministry at every level in the Church.” and “Jesus did not proscribe the exclusion of any from the table… Recognize the vocational calls of women in ministry.” A clear, strong, voice supporting a pathway to the diaconate for women was expressed in both focus groups and surveys.

◊ SUPPORT for PRIEST CHAPLAINS was also found wanting albeit for different reasons. One priest put it this way – “So many times, we encounter ‘the abuse issue’ as the terrible scandal it is, but we seldom hear praise and support for those who have faithfully discharged their duties through the years, caring chastely for their flock.”

◊ VALUE of SPIRITUAL CARE IN THE WORKPLACE where chaplains are not recognized as key members of the professional staff and compensated commensurate with their training and experience. Even in Catholic facilities administrators are slow to recognize the value of spiritual care in healing.

"... visiting the sick is an invitation that Christ addresses to all his disciples."

Pope Francis in his letter on the occasion of the 30th World Day of the Sick.
Our Recommendations…

♦ AVAILABILITY of the SACRAMENTS and ECCLESIAL SUPPORT for RELIGIOUS, DIACONAL and LAY CHAPLAINS – Ministry to the sick and dying must become a higher priority for the Church in the United States. We urge our Bishops to:
  • consider new models of ministry and management in the Church that will result in greater availability of priest to meet the sacramental needs of the sick, and
  • recognize, support and invest in the ministry of Religious, Diaconal and Lay Ministers working in healthcare institutions and hospices.

♦ WOMEN IN MINISTRY – The women who participated in our survey and listening sessions expressed both the joy they experience in ministry and disappointment that very often their skills, talents and hopes for inclusion in the Church go unrecognized or are dismissed. We urge our Bishops to:
  • engage in serious dialogue with women in the Church toward greater understanding, respect and inclusion of women’s voices and skills at all levels of the Church and in its ministries.

♦ COLLEGIALITY IN MINISTRY – Our respondents expressed the view that clergy working in parishes do not always understand and value the vital work of healthcare chaplains in caring for the sick and the dying. We urge our Bishops to:
  • encourage meaningful dialogue between healthcare chaplains and parish clergy and work to incorporate healthcare chaplains into the diocesan structures.

♦ SEMINARY EDUCATION – Many of our respondents suggest that often the newly ordained are not adequately prepared for healthcare ministry nor how to work collegially with lay ministers doing the day-to-day work of caring for the sick and dying in institutional settings. We urge our Bishops to:
  • engage faculty and rectors of seminaries to require each seminarian to engage in at least one unit of clinical pastoral education as part of their seminary experience.
Conclusion...

The Synod on Synodality and the dialogue that has preceded it offer an opportunity for the Church to engage in a meaningful reflection on the state of life in the Church and discern the ways in which the Spirit is leading it to a **NEW PENTECOST**.
With gratitude to the members and staff of NACC for their work on these documents; especially:

**The Synod Synthesis Committee**
- Allison S. DeLaney BCC-PCHAC *(Researcher for Mission Integration, Ascension Health, Williamsburg VA)*
- Robert J. Legato Sr., BCC *(Retired)*
- John M. Pollack BCC *(Chief, Spiritual Care Department, National Institutes of Health – Clinical Center, Bethesda, MD)*
- Erica Cohen Moore *(Executive Director, National Association of Catholic Chaplains)*

**NACC Staff support**
- Jeanine Annunziato *(Administrative Specialist/Education and Renewal of Certification)*
- Ramune Franitza *(Administrative Specialist/Communication Project Manager)*

**National Association of Catholic Chaplains Board of Directors**
- CHAIR - Carolanne B. Hauck BCC *(Director of Spiritual Care Northeast, Trinity Health, Columbia, PA)*
- CHAIR ELECT/SECRETARY Deacon Jack R. Conrad BCC *(Director of Spiritual Care at CHRISTUS St. Vincent Regional Medical Center in Santa Fe, NM)*
- TREASURER - Austine Duru BCC *(Director of Spiritual Care, Beaumont Hospital Grosse Pointe, Grosse Pointe, MI)*
- Rev. Richard J. Bartoszek BCC *(Director of Spiritual Care, Ascension Michigan Ministry Market, Warren, MI)*
- Rev. Lawrence X. Chellaian BCC *(Vice President of Mission Integration, CHRISTUS Health, Texarkana, TX)*
- Ruth Jandeska BCC *(System Director Spiritual Care, Bon Secours Mercy Health Cincinnati, OH)*
- Donna M. O'Brien, MHA *(President at Strategic Visions in Healthcare New York, NY)*

**NACC Episcopal Advisory Council:**
- USCCB EPISCOPAL LIAISON Most Reverend Donald J. Hying, Bishop of Madison
- Most Reverend Robert P. Deeley, Bishop of Portland in Maine
- Most Reverend Manuel A. Cruz, DD, Archdiocese of Newark
- Most Reverend Barry C. Knestout, Bishop of Richmond
- Most Reverend Shelton J. Fabre, Archbishop of Louisville
- Most Reverend Donald F. Hanchon, Archdiocese of Detroit
- Most Reverend Robert D. Gruss, Bishop of Saginaw
- Most Reverend James Johnston, Jr., Bishop of Kansas City/St. Joseph
- Most Reverend Peter F. Christensen, Bishop of Boise
- Most Reverend John C. Wester, Archbishop of Santa Fe
- Most Reverend John G. Noonan, Bishop of Orlando
- Most Reverend John Michael Botean, Bishop of St. George in Canton, Eparchy of St. George in Canton for the Romanians
Catholic Prison Ministries completed their synodal process independently and concurrently.

**Purpose:** The Catholic Prison Ministries Coalition is the central hub for Catholic jail, prison, and detention ministry efforts in the United States. We offer:

- A shared virtual space for best practices, interest group dialogue, and collaboration;
- Educational webinars and a database of organizations and resources;
- Prison ministry formation opportunities for dioceses and Catholic organizations;
- Support of ministries serving the incarcerated, formerly incarcerated, victims, their families, and those who work and minister in these contexts;
- Opportunities for joint action and legislation on behalf of criminal justice reform, and promotion of restorative justice practices; and
- A professional development pathway for the next generation of jail and prison ministers and change agents.

**Our Questions:**

*Do you feel part of a larger faith community?*

- Often, men and women feel part of one or multiple faith communities within a correctional facility, but they do not feel welcome once they have reintegrated back into society.

*Are you involved with more than one faith community in your correctional/detention facility (i.e., Catholic, Jewish, Baptist, etc.)? If so, which faith communities are you currently involved with?*

- Men and women often attend multiple faith services while incarcerated including, but not limited to, Muslim, Protestant, Native American and Jewish services. Survey participants shared that music was often better and more inviting in other denominational services.
Do you have access to the Sacraments at your correctional/detention facility? If so, how often do you receive the Sacraments?

❖ Availability to the Sacraments is varied, based on the location of a correctional facility. Some participants receive Sacraments weekly, monthly and some don’t have any access due to limited priest availability or security access issues.

Which Sacraments and faith-based services do you participate in?

❖ The type of religious service available to incarcerated men, women and juveniles vary, but Mass, Communion services, bible studies, contemplative prayer, one-on-one pastoral care and faith sharing groups were most common.
❖ Participants volunteer for multiple roles during Mass and other services while incarcerated such as chapel clerk, altar server, musician and reader.

What are some obstacles that are keeping you from experiencing your faith (i.e., access to the Sacraments, resources, etc.)?

❖ Limitations from Covid are mentioned often in the surveys, including access to the Sacraments, religious services, interactions with volunteers and security access issues. “Sometimes I have questions and there is no one here to answer them, especially when we are in lockdown.”
❖ There is the assumption from many, some based on lived reality, that faith communities are not welcoming to people who have been incarcerated. There is a hope that upon release from incarceration that faith communities will be accepting and forgiving.

Our Recommendations

❖ The participants expressed a desire to have more frequent opportunities to receive the sacraments. We recommend the Bishops consider new and creative ways to make more priests available for prison ministry, creating opportunities to encounter people incarcerated or detained. This would assist in breaking down fears, barriers, and implicit biases for future ministerial opportunities.
❖ The participants expressed a desire for devotional practices and regular encounters with Church volunteers. We recommend the Bishops support volunteer recruitment efforts by educating and inspiring Catholics to respond to their Baptismal call for ministry to serve those affected by incarceration and detention; to expand existing ministry outreach to provide support, accompaniment, perpetual adoration, centering prayer, bible studies, rosary, etc. for those in confinement.
❖ The participants expressed a desire for additional resources. We recommend the Bishops access formational training for Catholic volunteers and professional ministers. With the development of experienced Chaplains, our next generation can be recruited, inspired, and mentored. We recommend that Bishops provide resources sufficient to meet the spiritual, emotional and physical needs identified for people impacted by the carceral system.

CPMC website: Catholic Prison Ministries Coalition: https://www.catholicprisonministries.org/

Catholic Prison Ministries Coalition report submitted by
Karen Clifton, Executive Coordinator and Jarrod Kinkley, Coordinator for Special Projects