

9TH CONSULTATION OF THE EUROPEAN NETWORK ON
HEALTH CARE CHAPLAINCY

LISBON, 18 MAY 2006

Mr. President of the Committee of the European Network on Health
Care Chaplaincy (ENHCC)
Reverend Fr. Stavos Kofinas

Other members of the Committee

National Coordinator of the Health Pastoral and Representatives of
the Episcopal Commission of the Health Pastoral of the Portuguese
Pastoral Conference
Reverend Mons. Vitor Feytor Pinto

National Coordinator of the Hospital Chaplaincy and organiser of
the 9th Consultation of the European Network on Health Care
Chaplaincy (ENHCC)

Honourable Representatives of the European Network on Health
Care Chaplaincy
Reverend Priest José Nuno

I am happy to host in our Country such a significant
meeting. It is an honour to be present, here, in the opening
session of the 9th Consultation of the European Network on

Health Care Chaplaincy, in representation of his Excellency the Minister of Health of the Portuguese Government.

We are aware that the onset of illness and disease makes the need for spiritual and religious guidance particularly relevant. It is in these circumstances that it becomes profoundly necessary to follow your words “Building bridges, growing hope”.

We know that it is not possible to think of the practise of health care without considering these dimensions.

The Portuguese National Health Plan, that conducts the activity of the health care institutions for the period 2004-2010, takes into consideration the importance of the spiritual and religious guidance of patients and dedicates special attention to it.

This Plan considers the need to deep the spiritual dimension in the provision of health care, taking into consideration that the situation of illness can affect the way people feel about the meaning of life.

As such, we aim at making institutions and their professionals more aware of this issue in the perspective of creating a culture that is open to the expression of spiritual and religious needs of patients, always guaranteeing the respect for the freedom of each individual.

For this, we appreciate your work and value the positive contribution that it offers for interdisciplinary dialogue that is essential in the health care culture.

The standards that European Network on Health Care Chaplaincy (ENHCC) proposes are, in effect, an undeniable reference for safeguarding and promoting the quality and humanity in health care.

Among us, in Portugal, in the reflection process underway on legislation that regulates the role of Hospital Chaplaincies in the context of the National Health Service, these standards have constituted a strong matter of consensus. We seek a better service for people who are sick, respecting them in their integrity.

The subjects you will examine during these days are current challenges for the European culture and, specifically, for the world of health. I underlie as key issues the bridges between cultures and religions (Bridges across Cultures and Faiths) and Palliative Care.

Your programme for this ninth Consultation is an agenda of fundamental aspects and urgent challenges as they also are in Portuguese society.

For this, on behalf of the Ministry of Health of the Portuguese Government, I wish that you realize your reflection as profoundly as possible and I assure you I will be looking forward to knowing your results.

I congratulate the National Coordination of Hospital Chaplaincy and the National Commission of the Health Pastoral for the initiative of having this ninth Consultation of the European Network on Health Care Chaplaincy (ENHCC) in Portugal.

I welcome all of you to Portugal. This is a hospitable country and the Portuguese are friendly people. I hope you feel at home.