



To

David A. Lichter

Executive Director

The National Association of Catholic Chaplains

Belgium, March 2nd 2015

Dear David,

Please convey my heartfelt congratulations to all members of The National Association of Catholic Chaplains on the occasion of your conference in Arlington celebrating your 50th anniversary.

I was touched by the title of the conference: honoring the gift. Indeed, being called by God to care for those who are sick, dying or experiencing a turning point in life, is a gift. I always say we have the best calling and the best profession in the world. When people think of the best profession in the world it usually involves sunny weather, outdoors, lots of free time and the occasional palm tree on a white sandy beach. That is because they do not know the joy and fulfillment chaplaincy can bring on a daily base. It is awesome to be able to step into Jesus' footsteps and contribute to the wellbeing, spiritual growth and community of a person in care. Not only our calling is a gift but also those we care for are a profound gift to us. They enrich our lives in many ways. In them we have an opportunity to see a glimpse of God's presence in this world. Their presence in our lives makes us more aware of what life is truly about and changes our spirituality and view on the world. And lastly, it is a gift to have an association which supports you, gives the opportunity for sharing, enhances your professional competencies and at the same time inspires your spirituality. A heartfelt thank you and congratulations to all those who made/make that possible.

Chaplaincy is challenged in many ways in our times. Economical cuts and organizational changes in healthcare are a few examples. But Catholics have a dynamic tradition. They always found the strength and creativity to adapt and go there where they are needed the most! *Evangelii Gaudium* inspires us to do just that. Our dynamic tradition does not only inspires our spirituality but also our engagement towards the best spiritual care possible which requires continuous education and research on spiritual care.

I truly wish that during these days in Arlington, you will all be blessed by a festive atmosphere, a feeling of gratitude and an openness to be inspired and learn. In name of all members of the European Network for Health Care Chaplains, I congratulate you and wish you a bright and promising future! We look forward to working more together with you in the coming years!

Prof. Dr. Anne Vandenhoeck

Coordinator of The European Network of Health Care Chaplains

Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies

Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium