

Patriarchal Greeting to the Participants of the Anniversary Consultation of the European Network of Health Care Chaplaincy (in London)

To the beloved Participants of the Anniversary Consultation of the European
Network of Health Care Chaplaincy

With honor and love we convey our full-hearted greetings to all of you, praying that your convocation will be blessed by God's grace and that the Holy Spirit will enlighten each and every one of you during your time together.

We are pleased that you are celebrating both the 20th anniversary of European Chaplaincy and the 10th anniversary of the founding of your esteemed European Network of Health Care Chaplaincy (ENHCC). Throughout these years, the Ecumenical Patriarchate has been a firm supporter of your endeavors, praying that your efforts would bear fruit. Our joy is that, with God's grace, you have indeed exceeded in your goals and your Network has grown in size and matured in spiritual stature, promoting dialogue and offering an avenue of union in working together. We recognize that this was accomplished because of your love and commitment to one another and to those for whom you care. *"We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose."* (Romans 8:28).

Over the past ten years the Ecumenical Patriarchate has been blessed in taking an active role in the formation of the ENHCC. Your honorable Network was founded during the 6th Consultation for Hospital Chaplaincy at the Orthodox Academy of Crete, which we organized in 2000. You have entrusted the leadership of your Network by electing our representative for three consecutive terms as its coordinator. We were also blessed to host three committee meetings with the esteemed members of your organization at the Patriarchate in Constantinople, during which we met with them and were able to personally convey our pastoral concerns and blessings. For all of this, we thank you, praising God for the gifts He bestowed on us.

There is no need to instruct you on the importance of your ministry. Being that you come face to face with suffering and death on a daily basis, you are very well aware of all the aspects of illness and its effects on those that suffer, their families and those that care for them. For there is no greater pain than

the separation caused by illness and death. This is why the Psalmist exclaims “my heart is in anguish within me, the terrors of death have fallen upon me. Fear and trembling come upon me, and horror overwhelms me” (Psalm 55:4). Because you know this agony, you are also very well aware of the importance of your presence as care-givers.

Our paternal prayers are that you remain strong in your service. We know all of the difficulties that you as pastors encounter on a personal and professional level. May you remain “strong with all the strength that comes from His glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light” (Colossians 1:11-12). Only in this way, by remaining strong in the Lord and remaining within the realm of His light – within the realm of His love - will we all be able to convey the evangelical message that “He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of His beloved Son” (Colossians 1:13) .

May your gathering be a gathering of love. Do not let the difficulties of our times discourage you, but remain united as one body so as to continue in the ministry of the Lord. Blessed is the one who shall be deemed worthy of such a ministry; he and she shall be glorified. It is in this spirit that we pray that your Network will continue to flourish for many more years, providing the foundations for pastoral care to all and uniting all through His grace.

With fervent prayers.

+Bartholomew of Constantinople

16th of September 2010