



European Network of Health Care Chaplaincy

Leuven, October 9th 2011

To the participants of the second international conference of the ecumenical patriarchate for pastoral healthcare

Dear Father Stavros,
Dear Participants,

I am sorry I cannot be with you at your second international conference due to the fact that I am starting a professional association for chaplains in my own country (Belgium) and have to lecture during the starting conference. But allow me, through father Adamantios who is a committee member of ENHCC, to speak a few words to you.

When Steve Jobs died last week, the media did not reveal in their broadcasting financial reports of Apple, nor did they say how rich he was, but they kept repeating his speech at the University of Stanford in 2005 on death. He described death as "the single best invention of Life. It is Life's change agent." His views on death implicated a vibrant perspective on life. Indeed, one does not go without the other. He pleaded to live life fully because of the presence of death. Something, I am sure, that chaplains experience from time to time. Dealing with death is an important part of the work of chaplains. It implies they are confronted with the finitude of the lives of patients, the

grieving of loved ones but also with their own finitude and vulnerability. It sometimes leads to living life in the consciousness of its limitations and as a consequence trying to live it to the fullest. The theme of the conference thus seems challenging and interesting.

In this letter to wish you a fruitful conference, I especially want to mention the enormous work father Stavros Kofinas did for our network. He has been a coordinator for 8 years and was particularly involved in the growth of the ENHCC. I am sure that once again you will experience his enormous work drive and his motivation to bring chaplains together from all over the world. We will honor him at our next consultation in the Netherlands in June 2012.

It is fitting to mention the apostle Paul to participants of a conference on Rhodes Island. Paul said in his first letter to the Corinthians: "God is faithful" (1 Cor. 1, 9). It is a wonderful thing to hear, to experience and as Christians to try to achieve ourselves. Indeed, as chaplains we should be recognized by our faithfulness to patients, their loved ones and to staff, especially in front of the gates of death.

I do wish you all an inspiring and enriching time in Rhodes.

Leuven, October 9th 2011

Dr. Anne Vandenhoeck

Coordinator of the European Network of Health Care Chaplaincy