

Unity in Charity

where NURSING, MINISTRY and CATHOLIC MISSION meet

Your Eminence (Cardinal),

Your Excellency (Archbishop/Bishop),

Dear Father (Priest)

I am writing to request that you share information about the National Association of Catholic Nurses with Catholic Nurses in your parishes and diocese. In this time when many changes are occurring in the healthcare field, it important that faithful Catholic nurses are united in supporting the dignity of each human person, each other, their parish, diocese and the Church.

The National Association of Catholic Nurses-USA (NACN-USA) is a membership organization for nurses who share the same Catholic values and principles. Our mission is to give nurses of different backgrounds, but with the same Roman Catholic values, the opportunity to promote moral principles within the Catholic context in nursing and stimulate desire for professional development. This approach to Roman Catholic doctrine focuses on educational programs, spiritual nourishment, patient advocacy, and integration of faith and health. As we continue to share our faith and values with each other, and with other healthcare providers, we simultaneously reach outward to the larger Church and also our communities, as we offer support to those in need.

NACN-USA traces our roots to 1909 when the first local council of Catholic Nurses, the Guild of St. Radegone for Nurses, formed in Boston, Massachusetts. In 1924, the International Catholic Guild of Nurses (ICGN) was founded in Milwaukee, Wisconsin under the spiritual direction of Fr. Edward J. Garesche, S.J. The first International Committee of Catholic Nurses met in Lourdes, France in 1933 and is now known as CICIAMS (**Comité International Catholique des Infirmières et Assistantes Médico-Sociales** and in English: **The International Catholic Committee of Nurses and Medico-Social Assistants**). International meetings were also held in Rome (1935) and London (1937) where His Holiness Pope Pius XI expressed, *“that ways and means be found to emphasize the necessity of bringing all Catholic nurses within the influence of Catholic Associations of Nurses.”* At the 3rd International Congress through his spokesperson G. Cardinal Pizzardo, Pope Pius XI shared a concern,

*“…The exercise of the profession of nurse, is surely one of those which offer the greatest possibility for the apostolate, but we must not forget that the nurse, in the exercise of her profession, has to employ all sorts of technical means, and lives in a materialistic atmosphere, exposed to the danger of a limited interior piety only, dissociated from the profession and exterior practice enjoyed by the Church. Furthermore, modern theories seek to penetrate the minds of Catholic nurses and to make them become unconsciously strong agents for the propagation of eugenics and neo-Malthusianism* [population control]*. It is necessary, then, to protect them by means of Catholic Action, which has for one of its duties to sustain and fortify them in their professional and Christian Formation.”*

CICIAMS is a Private Association of the Faithful recognized by ecclesiastical authority, with a close working relationship with the Holy See through the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Assistance of Healthcare Workers which was combined with three other councils by His Holiness Pope Francis in 2017 into the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development (IHD), under the leadership of Peter Cardinal Turkson.

Back in the 1930’s in the United States, the ICGN adopted a new constitution and bylaws of a “national character” and changed to the National Federation of Catholic Nurses with headquarters in Chicago, Illinois. Local Councils then formed across the United States. Some of those that continue to the present are located in the Diocese of Youngstown, Albany, Chicago, Fall River, Joliet and Libertyville. Around 1942 ICGN became known as National Council of Catholic Nurses (NCCN) and then in 1993 as the National Association of Catholic Nurses, U.S.A. (NACN-USA). NACN-USA was formed under the auspices of the Diocese of Joliet, Illinois, with the permission and spiritual advisement of Bishop Joseph L. Imesch and is a full voting member of CICIAMS. In October 1996, NACN-USA was listed in the Kenedy Directory, the official Catholic directory. See the website for a more in-depth history.

Several of our members serve at the International level. One of our members, a past president of both NACN-USA and CICIAMS, was appointed by Pope Benedict XVI in 2011 to serve on the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Health Care Workers which she did until it was consolidated within the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development in 2017. Members continued to attend the annual IHD Dicastery meeting. Five members represent CICIAMS at the United Nations and have presented statement before the United Nations Commission on Population and Development annually since their election in 2015. Finally, three members serve in other positions with CICIAMS (Pan American Representative, Chair of the Ethics Committee and Member of the Committee on the Family). Additional information is on our website: [www.nacn-usa.org](http://www.nacn-usa.org). I can be contacted at [catholicnurses@nacn-usa.org](mailto:catholicnurses@nacn-usa.org).

I sincerely hope you will help us continue our effort to unite nurses and student nurses across the nation to support one another and our parishes. May God continue to bless and strengthen you in your ministry.

In Jesus’ Holy Name,



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