

Council News

Fall River Diocesan Council of Catholic Nurses

The Fall River Diocesan Council of Catholic Nurses is presenting a lecture, "Happy Birthday, St. Paul," to be followed by Mass and lunch on March 28, 2009 from 8:30 am to 11:30 am at St. Ann's Hospital in Fall River, Massachusetts. For reservations or information call Betty at (508) 678-2373.

How to start a Diocesan Council of Nurses

by Mary Pellizzari R.N. and Eula Sforza R.N.

Here are some suggestions for starting a council based on our experience of starting the Council of Catholic Nurses of the Diocese of Joliet, Illinois. Always remember that God is your C.E.O. and prayer is essential. We have always prayed before every meeting and before doing any work for the Council. It has given us strength, guidance, and the assurance that God really wanted us to start a Council and be there for our nursing peers. Nurses are always supporting others and this is a way to support them.

First, know the boundaries and the circumstances of your diocese. The Joliet Diocese has seven counties with a larger population of nurses in the northern counties closer to Chicago employment. We focused on this area to reach a greater number of nurses and because we lived there. Contact your bishop through your diocesan chancery office. Eula and Claire Lareau, who were Chicago Archdiocesan Council members, met with our Joliet bishop to explain the purpose and function of diocesan councils and to express an interest in starting one in the Joliet Diocese. He told them he would give his permission if we could find at least 43 nurses who were interested.

Next, plan and conduct an interest meeting, inviting friends, co-workers, and other interested nurses. This meeting can be held at a parish or a hospital. We started at St. Mary's Parish with a priest welcoming the group and leading them in an opening prayer before he left for his evening parish work. The purpose of this meeting is to acquaint Catholic Nurses with the concept of a diocesan council and the importance and benefits of

having a council. We wanted to provide nurses with spiritual support and information about the difficult medical and legal ethics that many are encountering in our profession today. After introductions and dialogue gather the names, addresses, and phone numbers of those nurses who are interested. You may even want to pass out a questionnaire regarding issues, concerns, and ideas they have, which could be given to an interested friend who was unable to attend. If there is interest and hopefully enthusiasm, seek volunteers to be acting officers (President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer) for one year to give the council stability during formation. Give the nurses an opportunity to donate seed money for initial costs and postage.

The next step is to let the Bishop know how the interest meeting went and how many nurses are interested. Ask his permission to form a diocesan council and to appoint a spiritual director who might be a hospital chaplain or who might have a medical or legal background. Our Bishop did this but restricted us to only one Mass per year as a group. The rest was up to us.

This will be a busy time for your group. Keep everyone informed and involved. During your formation meetings led by your acting officers you will need to name your Council, choose a patron saint, a motto, and a logo. You will need to write your by-laws, establish dues, get a post office box or stable address, open a bank account, and plan your first program. The vice-president is a great asset to plan programs. The first program can be spiritual or educational. Our first program was on burnout and was presented by a psychologist at the

president's hospital. Tap your resources. God will send you the help and the talents needed. You will need to advertize your existence in your diocesan newspaper, all parish bulletins, hospitals, nursing homes, etc. A membership application is a must as members come forward. You might even publish a simple newsletter explaining your Council to be sent to nurses responding to your publicity.

We incorporated our council with the state of Illinois for annual fiscal accountability, but this is not necessary. We suggest that you keep your by-laws as simple as possible. Be sure to include the duties of each officer and your voting procedure. A copy of the Joliet Diocese By-laws is available from our President, Roberta Kaminski, CCNDJ, P.O. Box 4556, Wheaton, IL 60189.

The number and types of meetings you have are your decision. We began with four a year. A newsletter is

important and should be sent at least twice a year. You have many decisions to make, but all of your effort will be worthwhile. You are in our prayers. If you have questions please contact us.

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Note: At this time the NACN - USA is revising their by-laws so that every member of every council will belong to their local council, national and CICIAMS.

About NACN

Mission Statement

The National Association Catholic Nurses, USA gives 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, we simultaneously reach outward to the larger church and also our community, as we offer support to those in need.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

The National Council of Catholic Nurses is a national organization and is comprised of Catholic nurses from the various archdioceses and dioceses of the United States and individual nurses from those dioceses where no Council exists. The association was formally organized in June 1940, not by the Catholic nurses but by the Administrative Board of Bishops of the United States at the request of His Holiness, the late Pope Pius XI. The Holy Father, in a letter, asked that there be local associations of Catholic nurses where feasible, according to the needs of the respective dioceses, under the guidance of the Bishop and in due time be united to create the National Council. The late Pope Pius XII reiterated the request of his predecessor by saying, "The Catholic Nurse must carry on her professional activity in the light of the Church's doctrines and Christian morality."

The Council was given two directives: to have a better understanding of the teachings of the Church; and to practice Christian principles in daily living.

The Council in no way replaces membership in professional organizations but should inspire its members to be active leaders in professional groups.

The National Council of Catholic Nurses is under the supervision of the Episcopal Chairman of Lay Organizations who appoints a National Spiritual Director from among the diocesan spiritual directors.

The purposes of the Council are:

1. To protect, encourage, and advance the spiritual, professional, and material welfare and social contacts of Catholic nurses.
2. To encourage and assist in the formation of an association of Catholic nurses in every diocese in the United States.
3. To foster and encourage among all nurses the spirit of charity in the care of the sick by emphasizing the spiritual and social values and opportunities in the exercise of the profession of nursing.
4. To provide an agency through which Catholic nurses will be able to speak and act corporately in matters of common interest to their profession.