

NACN-USA President Diana Ruzicka Gives Riveting Presentation at USCCB Convocation of Catholic Leaders

July 3, 2017

Diana Ruzicka, President of the National Association of Catholic Nurses-U.S.A. was an invited panelist at the U.S. Conference of Bishops' *Convocation of Catholic Leaders* in Orlando, Florida over the 4th of July weekend, culminating its *Fortnight for Freedom*. The panel was titled "Catholic Health Care: Ministering to the Spiritual and Physical Needs of All People." The goal of the session was to enable participants to "understand the opportunities and responsibilities we all have to transform the culture of healthcare and to go forth as missionary disciples bringing the Truth, that is Jesus Christ to their practice."

President Ruzicka was the first of the panelists to speak after introductions by Bishop James Conley (Lincoln) and Archbishop Peter Smith (Portland) and the Moderator, Dr. Steven White. She gave a compelling presentation [link] to a standing-room-only audience, addressing conscience protection, nursing education, euthanasia, and redemptive suffering. She wove these themes together by the concept of "Truth," as found in *Humanae vitae*, *Veritatis Splendor*, *Evangelium vitae*, and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's *Declaration on Euthanasia*. She stressed the necessity of having a properly formed conscience when invoking conscience protection.

The realities of threats to conscience, beginning in nursing education through years of professional practice, were identified with practical examples of how to reinforce health care practice that supports the spiritual and physical wellbeing of patients, as well as methods of evangelization of parish communities. President Ruzicka continued to identify challenges to moral health care practice through the life span, with the escalating threats of euthanasia, enabled by such documents as Physicians Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment, which can provide for the denial of proportionately beneficial treatment for those facing challenges at the end-of-life. She gave a very compelling example, with an excellent culminating analysis of our understanding of redemptive suffering.

President Ruzicka was followed by representatives of the National Catholic Bioethics Center, the Catholic Medical Association, Catholic hospital administration, and health care sharing ministries, which provide alternatives to participating in health insurance mandates that violate conscience. A lively discussion with the audience, supportive of conscience rights, followed. Many opportunities for interagency collaboration surfaced resulting in Diana Ruzicka being invited to present at the national convention of the Catholic Medical Association. The National Association of Catholic Nurses-U.S.A. was extremely well represented by President Diana Ruzicka, and we thank her profusely for this witness of faith in practice.