

April 8, 1938

Your Excellency,

In the year 1935, as Your Excellency may recall, the Second International Congress of Catholic Nurses was held in Rome. This Congress, which was composed of religious as well as lay nurses, marked the beginning of a new united effort of Catholic nurses to organize themselves better in order to carry out, spiritually and scientifically, their apostolic work in behalf of the sick.

The Holy Father, as a most fitting climax of the Congress and as a testimonial of His deep paternal interest in the apostolate of nursing, accorded to the delegates, more than two thousand in number, an audience at Castel Gandolfo. After describing the important work of the Nurse, her lofty vocation and the preparation so necessary for the successful execution of her mission to the sick, His Holiness told the assembly that it was the duty of every Catholic nurse to belong to Catholic associations of nurses and to promote them in every way possible. Knowing the interest of the Hierarchy in this most important field, I took the liberty, on that occasion, to send to Your Excellency the printed report of the Congress.

Now I have the pleasure of forwarding to you the enclosed copy of the report of the Third International Congress which was held last year in London, under the presidency of His Eminence, Arthur Cardinal Hinsley. I had the honor on that occasion to address the Congress in the name of the August Pontiff. In my message-which may be found on page 25 of the report-the great desire of His Holiness was expressed "that ways and means may be found to emphasize the necessity of bringing all Catholic nurses within the influence of Catholic Associations of Nurses." In accordance with this wish of the Holy Father, it is most desirable, Your Excellency, that the Catholic Nurses of the United States be gathered into one national association under the direction of the respective Ordinaries of the Hierarchy.

The Reverend Father Garesche, SJ, who has given of his time and energy to effect such an organization, now realizing the great good that would ensue if this most important work were carried out under the guidance of the Hierarchy, has signified his intention of retiring from the movement. It is proposed, therefore, in keeping with the wish manifested in the above words of His Holiness; that the Archbishops and Bishops should organize local associations of Catholic Nurses according to the need of their respective dioceses, which in due time, under the guidance of the Hierarchy, might be united to create a National Federation of Catholic Nurses.

In submitting this proposal for your kind consideration, I should be very grateful to Your Excellency if, after full examination, you would give me the benefit of your prudent judgment as to its advisability and as to the most appropriate means of bringing it to realization.

Trusting that I will be favored with an early reply, I am, Your Excellency, with the assurance of my sentiments of high esteem and of cordial regard.

Faithfully yours in Christ,
G. Cardinal Pizzardo

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...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 practices enjoined by the Church. Furthermore, modern theories seek to penetrate the minds of Catholic nurse and to make them become unconsciously strong agents for the propagation of eugenics and neo-malthusianism. 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.