

1981 – 2006
25 years of
living with
HIV/AIDS

Letter of Welcome for
2007 HIV and AIDS
Ministry Gathering



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Dear Gathering Participants:

As we convene once again in Chicago, I am rather certain that your hearts, like mine, are filled with mixed emotions. Many of you already have shared your sadness and concerns about the earlier announcement by the Network's Board of Directors that financial constraints have dictated our decision to close the office and staffing of the Network. This decision was reached only after a great deal of reflection, efforts, contacts, and planning to find alternatives that might have allowed continued operation of the Network as we have known it for the past number of years.

At the same time, I hope that many of you, like I, are experiencing emotions of great joy and thanksgiving for the privilege to serve with and for those whose lives have been directly touched by HIV – both in the United States and in other parts of the world. It is my sincere belief that the Network indeed has fulfilled its stated mission: **“Giving witness to the Lord Jesus Christ who brings light to all darkness, the National Catholic AIDS Network assists the Church in recognizing the pain and the unique challenges inherent in the HIV/AIDS pandemic and in living out the Gospel mandate by offering compassionate support, education, referral and technical assistance.”**¹ My “belief” has been confirmed many times over by the eloquent testimonies we have received from people whose lives and ministries have been enriched by outreach and information provided by the Network.

This 2007 Gathering provides us with the challenge and opportunity to put into practice the theme for this event: **“Be not afraid!”** As National Catholic AIDS Network colleagues, friends, and supporters, let us carefully consider these words, proclaimed by Jesus to His Apostles during several post-Resurrection visits with them ring out in our ears. Let us attempt to discern God's will on how best to preserve the mission of the Network despite our inability to maintain an office and staff. Perhaps most importantly, let us not forget the challenge Jesus left to His Apostles – to continue and even expand the Church He had founded – not through His continued physical presence on this earth but rather through their humble struggles and efforts constantly fortified by the divine accompaniment and grace of our all-powerful and Triune God.

Please be assured of my deep thanks and prayers – and that of all my colleagues on the Network's Board of Directors - as we reflect, debate, and plan together during the 2007 Gathering and then as we go out to continue the work that God has begun in us.

In the peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ,

Rev. Robert J. Vitillo President, Board of Directors



¹ Adopted by the Board of Directors, October of 1998

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