



Dear All,

I had an encounter with a journalist of a major Belgian newspaper recently. The newspaper predominantly published very negatively on church and religion in the past months. I asked him why they never publish stories about the good things that spirituality and religion bring in the lives of people. His answer was simple: "Because that is no news. And those stories tend to become too woolly." Yet, as chaplains and people concerned with spiritual care, we witness so many stories that bring good news (and are not woolly but very real!). We see caregivers who do more than what they are paid for, volunteers who give their time and love, patients witnessing of faith in their healing and future, families supporting each other and being faithful in care. Often this is inspired by their spirituality. There is plenty of good news in our professional world!

As we celebrated Hanukah, Ashura, Christmas, the New Year and Epiphany in the past weeks, we also celebrated good news: words and dreams of hope and love. Revelations that inspire us to do good and care, that bring us closer to God and to our fellow human beings and deepen our spirituality. It is my sincere hope that those feasts were special to you.

The New Year has begun. There are new steps to be taken in the European Network of Health Care Chaplaincy. We will keep you updated and ask for your opinion. Meanwhile our Dutch members are already planning ahead for 2012, thinking of Amsterdam as the next place to meet. The committee will meet in June 2011 in Utrecht to check out the plans and to follow up on your suggestions. I look forward to getting back on that with you. Finally, I would like to wish you and your loved ones a blessed new year! May it bring you many good things on a personal, spiritual and professional level. I would like to conclude with a challenging quotation about our profession, taken out of an unpublished article by Robert Mundle. Robert is a chaplain in the Toronto Rehabilitation Institute. The article is called "Prophetic Pastoral Care and the Refashioning of Identity in Hospital Chaplaincy". It will be

published later this year in a book called "Prophetic Witness in World Christianities . Rethinking Pastoral Care and Counseling".

"Therefore, chaplains can contribute much more ambitiously to healthcare teams. To do so they must embrace the ambiguity of their split professional identities and the essential insecurity that characterizes the history of pastoral care. They also require more transparency, accountability, and a much bolder affirmative vision for the future of pastoral care. No doubt this is a daunting task.

Yet I think there are at least three steps to a bolder vision for the future of pastoral care. The first step is to expand the ethnography of hospital chaplaincy. At its heart pastoral care is a reflective practice and I think chaplains can investigate further and describe in more detail what it is like. The second step is to raise the profile of hospital chaplains in the medical literature so that chaplaincy is no longer seen as an absent profession. And the third step is to think more ambitiously, and dare I say even *prophetically*, of chaplaincy as social action that contributes to the broader paradigms of political and public theologies."

(ROBERT G. MUNDLE)

That doesn't sound too bad as an agenda for the New Year!

All my best wishes

*Anne*

Coordinator of ENHCC