**VIDEO CONFERENCE ON:**

***ACCOMPANYING HEALTH CARE WORKERS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC***

8,9,10 JUNE 2021

**Opening address of His Eminence Peter Cardinal K.A. Turkson**

Good morning to all of you. We are very grateful for your participation and time.

On behalf of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, and the Superiors here whom you will get a chance to listen to, as a whole we greet you. I wish to welcome you very warmly to this webinar. This continues our conversation with you in the different countries that has been taking place in the past months. This health emergency of Covid-19, as Pope Francis had a chance to say several times, has exposed a lot of fragilities and the vulnerabilities within our society and indeed he says has exposed a lot of other social pandemics. However, this morning we just want to focus on one: the challenges that Covid-19 has posed on health care workers. In the prayer that opened this Conference, we prayed for very many who lost their lives and we wish to appreciate those who are still dealing with this Covid, extending a helping hand.

In his *Message for the 4th World Day of the Poor*, November 15, 2020, Pope Francis said that: “In these months, when the whole world was prey to a virus that brought pain and death, despair and bewilderment, how many outstretched hands have we seen! The outstretched hands of physicians who cared about each patient and tried to find the right cure. The outstretched hands of nurses who worked overtime, for hours on end, to look after the sick. The outstretched hands of administrators who procured the means to save as many lives as possible. The outstretched hands of pharmacists who at personal risk responded to people’s pressing needs. The outstretched hands of priests whose hearts broke as they offered a blessing. The outstretched hands of volunteers who helped people living on the streets and those with a home yet nothing to eat. The outstretched hands of men and women who worked to provide essential services and security. We could continue to speak of so many other outstretched hands, all of which make up a great litany of good works. Those hands defied contagion and fear in order to offer support and consolation.” *(Message for the 4th World Day of the Poor, November 15, 2020, n. 6).*

All of these, in their own very many ways, were the Good Samaritans towards the victims of Covid-19.

Engaged on the front line, with courage and sacrifice, health workers were exposed to acute stress, physical and psychological exhaustion. The daily contact which you made with critically ill patients, the ethical constraints and challenges brought to you won a lot of admiration from very many parts of the world *(Cf. Message of the International Day of the Nurse, May 12, 2020).*

Several patients will not have the occasion to thank you for your services to them. On behalf of them all, this morning we want to say thank you to all of you and express great appreciation for all that you did. Some did not survive the illness, they will never be able to thank you back, probably they will pray for you from heaven. There are also very many who survived but will never have a chance to meet you again. On behalf of all of them, we would like to express gratitude and appreciation for what you did.

Faced with this alarming reality that weighs on the integral health of caregivers, we are all invited, like the Good Samaritan, to be close to one another; to become a community of men and women who take on the fragilities of others and make them their own, sharing their suffering and sharing their pain (Cf. *Fratelli tutti*, n. 67). It is in this light and this spirit that our Dicastery is organizing these sessions to listen to you, to better understand the challenges, your experiences and all that you have done and continue to go through. It is with view to render support, encouragement and express our admiration for all what you do. So once again, we wish to welcome all of you and thank you for your time and availability to engage in this conversation. We pray that God continues to strengthen you and sustain your mission. Welcome to this webinar.