



Pope Francis acknowledges the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife, praising “the noblest of professions”

Geneva, 22 January 2020 - Pope Francis has spoken about the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife in a sermon to thousands of pilgrims in St Peter's Square, praising the work and dedication of the profession. The leader of the Roman Catholic Church mentioned nurses and midwives after the Angelus Prayer in Vatican City on Sunday, 19 January.

Pope Francis recalled that 2020 has been designated internationally as the Year of the Nurse and Midwife and asked the faithful to mention them in their prayers. In December, ICN and its partners asked world leaders to provide messages of support for the Year of the Nurse and Midwife at the start of this special year. This call was amplified by ICN's National Nursing Associations, including the Italian NNA, CNAI, which has close relations with the Vatican on issues related to healthcare.

The Pontiff said:

“Let us pray for them all that they may do their precious work in the best possible way.”

The designation by the World Health Organization (WHO) of 2020 as the Year of the Nurse and Midwife is intended to alert governments to the need to recruit and retain staff to prevent potentially disruptive nursing shortages world-wide. WHO figures suggest there will be a shortfall of up to nine million nurses and midwives by 2030 if drastic action is not taken immediately.

ICN President Annette Kennedy said:

“It is wonderful that Pope Francis has spoken out about the essential work that nurses and midwives do. His comments will give a boost to all nurses of different faiths and none.

This year, governments will have to make crucial decisions about the future of the nursing and midwifery workforce.

The Pope's leadership should galvanise politicians around the world and encourage them to make the right choices, which must include starting massive recruitment drives to avert the predicted shortages over the next decade.”

Echoing Ms Kennedy's words, President of the Italian Nurses Association (CNAI) Walter De Caro said:

“It is gratifying to hear Pope Francis' appreciation of the precious work of nurses and midwives, and the importance of 2020 to our profession.

I strongly believe that his message, beginning in Italy, will influence governments and other organisations to invest in the nursing and midwifery workforce so that we can realise their full potential to improve health around the globe.” +++