

## Statement of Archbishop Francesco Panfilo, SDB to all doctors and nurses of the Catholic Agency

Few days ago I wrote a statement to all teachers of Catholic Agency Schools because some teachers had “acted in a manner contrary to the philosophy and identity of Catholic Schools”.

I now wish to address the following statement to doctors, nurses and health workers who operate in St. Mary's Hospital and in the nine Health Centres within the East New Britain Province. But first of all, I express to all of them my sincerest appreciation for their dedicated service in delivering quality healthcare to the sick and suffering in the Archdiocese of Rabaul.

Just like with the teachers, when a nurse applies and is accepted to serve in a denominational agency health centre, he or she undertakes as a *minimum condition of employment* to respect the “philosophy” and “identity” of the Agency. Attempts to abolish this requirement would mean *to abandon partnership*, to remove one of the most potent safeguards of a health centre's identity, and to compel doctors and nurses to act against their Christian conscience.

For this reason I am happy to inform everybody that on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2019, the East New Britain Provincial Health Authority and the Archdiocese of Rabaul's Catholic Health Services, signed a *Memorandum of Understanding*, for the purpose of “providing and coordinating curative, preventive, and primary healthcare services and health promotion and awareness and health education activities to the people of ENB”.

To avoid any possible misunderstanding with anyone, the Catholic Archdiocese included, into the Memorandum of Understanding, this **CONSCIENCE CLAUSE**:

- The Catholic Church Health Services (CCHS) is a faith-based, non-profit, healthcare provider, which operates consistent with the teachings of the Catholic Church.
- This is particularly relevant with regard to abortion, whether manually performed or chemically induced, which is morally wrong in Papua New Guinea.
- It also applies to certain methods of family planning, for example, the use of artificial and surgical means of birth control: *surgical sterilization such as tubal ligation, birth control drugs, hormonal injections and implants, physical devices etc.*
- Thus, CCHS personnel and facilities will neither promote nor distribute artificial and surgical means of contraception of any kind, nor will it allow government and NGO agencies to use Catholic Healthcare personnel and facilities as a venue for such promotion and distribution.
- In addition of this, the Catholic Church condemns euthanasia and assisted suicide, practices that are gaining increasing support in some parts of the world.

Dear doctors, nurses and health workers the task ahead of you is not an easy one. Keep up the good work and aim always to improve the health care you deliver and, please, don't get discouraged when you meet difficulties and trials of any sort. Trust in the Spirit of the Lord and in the intercession of Our Blessed Mother. May God bless you all and fill you with greater enthusiasm in the task ahead of you.

+ Francesco Panfilo SDB 16-09-2019