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MEDIA RELEASE

Courage/EnCourage conference to celebrate landmark anniversary for families of persons with same-sex attractions

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Courage International, Inc. will hold its annual conference from **July 27-30, 2017** at the **University of Saint Mary of the Lake** in Mundelein, IL, as it marks the **30th anniversary** of ***EnCourage***, the apostolate dedicated to families and friends of men and women with same-sex attraction (SSA).

“The experience of SSA has a profound impact, not just on the life of an individual, but on that person’s family and friends, and on the life of the Church,” said **Fr. Philip Bochanski**, executive director of *Courage*.

“*EnCourage* has been such a blessing for our apostolate and for the Church, and we owe a great debt of gratitude to God for the gift he gave us through Father Harvey and the first *EnCourage* parents. Our annual conference always feels like a family reunion, and in this anniversary year I think that family spirit will be more evident than ever.”

“This event is always a moment of grace for our members and chaplains, as we renew old friendships and make new ones. The spirit of fellowship and support is palpable, and the time we spend praying, learning and growing together will bear much fruit throughout the year.”

Conference participants will have the opportunity to attend talks on various topics, including pastoral ministry, psychology, and understanding family members and loved ones with SSA.

Included among the speakers will be **Daniel Mattson**, *Courage* member, and author of the book: *Why I Don’t Call Myself Gay: How I Reclaimed My Sexual Reality and Found Peace*; **Bishop Frank Caggiano**, bishop of Bridgeport, CT where *Courage* headquarters is located; **Andrew and Annette Comiskey**, co-founders of *Desert Stream/Living Waters Ministries*; **Matt Fradd**, founder of *The Porn Effect*; and Fr. Paul Scalia, Chairman of the Board of Directors of *Courage International*.

Please visit the following link for more information and complete list of speakers: <https://couragerc.org/2017-annual-conference-register-now/>



ADVISORY ON THE USE OF IMAGES:

Due to the sensitive nature of this event, **journalists are strictly prohibited from taking photos and videos of the conference.** This is to ensure that the privacy and anonymity of everyone taking part is respected. **This policy will be strictly enforced.** For those requiring audio/visual media, an **Electronic Press Kit** will be made available by the evening of **July 27**. A designated area for video interviews will also be made available.

All of the conference speakers will be available for interviews. However, **we ask journalists not to approach conference participants without first consulting with the media advisor.** A list of participants who have agreed to speak with the media will be provided ahead of time. Please contact Ann Schneible (details above) for more information.

We thank you in advance for your understanding and cooperation.

BACKGROUND ON COURAGE INTERNATIONAL AND ENCOURAGE

Courage International, Inc. is an apostolate of the Catholic Church which offers support to persons experiencing SSA who have chosen to live a chaste life. It was founded by Fr. John Harvey, OSFS at the request of the late Cardinal Terence Cooke. The first Courage chapter meeting was held in New York City in 1980, and it was this initial group which developed the Five Goals of *Courage*: Chastity, prayer and dedication, fellowship, support, and good example/role model. Fr. Harvey was succeeded as executive director by Fr. Paul Check, who held the position from 2008-2016. Fr. Check was succeeded by Fr. Philip Bochanski in January, 2017. Today, *Courage* has over 100 chapters and serves 1500 people in fourteen countries. *Courage* and *EnCourage* received canonical status in the Roman Catholic Church as a diocesan clerical public association of the faithful on November 28, 2016.

EnCourage is an apostolate under the *Courage* umbrella which provides support for families and friends of persons with SSA, and aims to teach them how to reach out to their loved ones with true compassion. The group was first formed in 1987 by families in search of guidance and understanding for supporting their loved ones with SSA. In 1992, this group adopted the name *EnCourage*. Currently, their chapters can be found in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Australia, Italy, and the United Kingdom.

For additional information, please visit our website at www.couragerc.org.
