



Thanksgiving 2017

Dear Friends of Courage and EnCourage,

"I want to be remembered as being faithful to a mission." With these words, featured in the documentary film *A Profile in Courage*, our beloved founder, Father John F. Harvey, OSFS, summed up his reflections on the precious gift that he left to us and to the Church: the Courage and EnCourage apostolates. What may have seemed to Father Harvey like a project for his retirement years – he was already 68 when the first Courage group met, and he led the apostolate until his 90th year – has grown beyond anything he could have imagined. Amid many developments over nearly four decades, both Father Harvey and the spiritual family he founded have always been *faithful to the mission* entrusted to us by the Catholic Church.

What is that mission, exactly? In 1986, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith wrote a *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons* in which they described what an "authentic pastoral program" for people who experience same sex attractions looks like. Such a program, they wrote, will

- act "*in full accord with the teaching of the Church*" and present that teaching clearly;
- "*assist [people who experience same sex attractions] at all levels of the spiritual life: through the sacraments ... prayer, witness, counsel and individual care*";
- realize that a person who experiences same sex attractions, "*as every human being, deeply needs to be nourished at many different levels simultaneously*"; and
- avoid describing the human person "*by a reductionist reference to his or her sexual orientation,*" insisting rather "*that every person has one fundamental identity: to be the creature of God, and by grace, His son or daughter, and an heir to eternal life.*" (nos. 15-16)

As we approach the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Father Harvey (born April 14, 1918), *fidelity to the mission* that the Church has entrusted to us is more important than ever. In both ecclesiastical and secular circles, questions of how the Church should provide pastoral care for people who experience same sex attractions, and how those brothers and sisters of ours can find their place in the Church, are being asked in many forums, at many levels. Sadly, the discussion that has been taking place recently often lacks the clarity and charity that we read in the CDF's letter.

How can this be so? Human nature hasn't changed in the last 30 years. The moral law in general, and sexual morality in particular, are the same as they have ever been, since they flow from the nature of the human person, and from the unchanging Truth that is revealed to us in Christ. The Gospel still calls every human being to discipleship and to virtue, including the virtue of chastity. The Sacraments are as effective and as necessary for the life of the disciple as they have ever been. Above all, the love of God for His sons and daughters, and the goodness of His plan for our lives, is the same yesterday, today and forever.

What is needed today, therefore, is not debate or innovation, but *fidelity* to the perennial teaching of the Church and *fidelity* to her pastoral mission.

Courage International is committed, as you well know, to being *faithful to the mission* of serving our brothers and sisters who experience same sex attraction, and their loved ones, with the truth and love that come from the Sacred Heart of Jesus through the heart of His Church. This mission was further clarified for us last November when we were established as a *public association of the Christian faithful*, and our Statutes (centered on the Five Goals of Courage and the Five Goals of EnCourage) were approved by ecclesiastical authority.

Since that time, I have had the privilege of presenting the Church's teaching, and our faithful pastoral approach, to priests, deacons, seminarians and others in ministry in more than twenty dioceses – in all regions of the United States, as well as in England, Scotland, Italy and Mexico. Along with members of Courage and EnCourage, I was invited to speak about our work at the Convocation of Catholic Leaders, held last summer in Orlando, and on *The Church Universal* on EWTN, as well as to address the national bishops' conferences of Mexico and Guatemala. Our *fidelity to the mission* is inspiring many others to join in that mission with us.

The coming year will be an exciting one for the Courage and EnCourage apostolates. Please save the date for the *30th Annual Courage and EnCourage Conference*, which will be held at Villanova University in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, from July 12 to 15, 2018. The centerpiece of our conference will be a commemoration of Father Harvey's 100th Birthday, and we plan to include similar commemorations in the regional retreats for Courage members that take place around the country throughout the year. In collaboration with the Archdiocese of

Hartford, Connecticut, we will also host a *Truth and Love Conference* there from October 22 to 24, 2018, which is designed specifically for clergy and others in ministry.

We are also *faithful to the mission* of communicating the truth of Church teaching through our online presence, especially with our new website, **truthandlove.com**. The coming year will see an updating of our main website, **couragerc.org**, to make it even more accessible to current and potential Courage and EnCourage members. When it relaunches in early 2018, it will be bilingual in English and Spanish, part of an ambitious effort we are undertaking over the next three years to expand our Spanish-language outreach to countries throughout Latin America, as well as in Spanish-speaking areas of the United States.

None of this work is possible, of course, without your cooperation. I urge you to give generously of your prayers and your financial resources to support the work of Courage International, as we provide pastoral care *faithful to the mission* of the Church, and assist bishops, clergy and other pastoral ministers to participate in this mission along with us. Your generosity in the past inspires me to ask you to be even more generous in this jubilee year, in recognition of the great debt that the Courage and EnCourage family owes to our dear Father Harvey.

Please know how grateful I am for your continued support of Courage and EnCourage, and be sure that you and your loved ones will be remembered in my prayers and those of our members and chaplains.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Father Philip G. Bochanski". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Father Philip G. Bochanski
Executive Director