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PRESS RELEASE

Courage International welcomed by Mexican Bishops' Conference

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Representatives of ***Courage International, Inc.***, the Catholic Church's apostolate to persons who experience same-sex attraction (SSA), responded to the invitation to take part in this year's plenary assembly of the ***Mexican Bishops' Conference (CEM -- Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano)***.

"As a bishop of the Catholic Church, I feel very proud of the apostolate that *Courage* is offering to the universal Church," said **Bishop Ramón Castro** of Cuernavaca, México, who was present at the **April 25-28** assembly. "It is very important that, with enthusiasm, courage, and the Gospel in hand, we enlighten the lives of many brothers and sisters who need to be accompanied along this path."

Courage was featured along with four other apostolates at the gathering which was held at the *CEM* retreat house, Casa Lago de Guadalupe, in the city of Cuautitlán Izcalli, Mexico State.

"The accompaniment that *Courage* provides is a gift of Divine Providence, and it offers what very few of us do: that spiritual and human companionship which helps our brothers and sisters on their path to holiness and a real experience of faith," Bishop Castro said, speaking in Spanish. "Receive my blessing and keep it up, we need you!"

Representing *Courage* were **Fr. Philip Bochanski**, executive director; **Fr. Don Wainwright**, 87, *Courage-Latino* coordinator and chaplain who initiated the apostolate in Mexico; **Rossana Goni**, coordinator for *Courage-Latino* and *EnCourage* in the US; and **Andres C.**, a *Courage* member from Chihuahua State.

"I have learned from God that we have received a great gift in the Church, because I know the Church has been in my life through *Courage*," said Andres in Spanish during an April 28 address to more than 130 bishops.

"Having same-sex attractions didn't take me away from God, but it is a thorn within which the grace of Jesus Christ is enough, as Saint Paul teaches us. I know now that I am not alone. I have my brothers in the apostolate who listen to me, correct me and help me; I can talk about all of this without feeling judged and I am able to find friendships which help me to grow in all matters of life," he said.

"Our beloved Church is still imperfect in how it teaches doctrine in its pastoral life, because both of these must go together. The Church has had more than 2,000 years of growing and maturing [when it comes to] many different difficult topics, so the Church also knows how to mature in this topic [of SSA] with love, respect and in truth."

April's gathering marked the 103rd plenary assembly of the *CEM*, under the guidance of its current president, Cardinal Jose Francisco Robles Ortega, Archbishop of Guadalajara.

EDITORS NOTES:

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.

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