



FAITHFUL TO A MISSION

*Celebrating the Centennial of
the Birth of our Founder*

FR. JOHN F. HARVEY
OSFS

1918 • April 14 • 2018



15 September 2018

Memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows

Dear Courage and EnCourage Family,

A month ago, the Attorney General of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania made public a Report of a statewide investigating grand jury, which detailed credible allegations of sexual abuse of children and youth in six dioceses in Pennsylvania, and shortcomings in the ways that such allegations were handled by diocesan administrators, particularly diocesan bishops, over the years. The Grand Jury Report followed revelations of sexual misconduct and harassment by Archbishop Theodore McCarrick, and all of this news has provoked justifiable anger, sadness and pain among the faithful, particularly among survivors of sexual abuse and their loved ones. “If one member” of the Body of Christ “suffers, all suffer together with it,” Saint Paul teaches (1 Cor 12:26), and in these days the suffering of the Church is grave indeed.

The horror of these crimes of sexual abuse and harassment is amplified by the failure of some bishops and diocesan officials to take corrective action against the offenders, and to communicate honestly with the faithful about what has happened and how they are responding. With that in mind, I am writing to you to share some information regarding connections between the Grand Jury Report and Courage International, as well as to discuss some other issues related to the apostolate and how we handle allegations of sexual abuse and inappropriate behavior on the part of clergy.

A. Priests named in the Report who have connections to Courage International

In my three and half years in the Courage Office, no reports have been made to me or to my staff alleging sexual abuse of minors or vulnerable adults by any clergy associated with the apostolate. My predecessor, Father Paul N. Check, who served as executive director from 2008 through 2016, informs me that no such reports were made in his time, either.

Having reviewed the Grand Jury Report, as well as the archives of Courage International, I have identified three priests who are named in the Report who have some connection to Courage:

1. **Rev. Michael S. Lawrence**, of the Diocese of Allentown, was reported to the diocese the day after an incident of abuse of a minor male in 1982. According to the Report, he was sent for treatment immediately and then returned to ministry. No further allegations were made against him until 2009, when he was accused of abusing a second minor male; the Report does not indicate when the abuse took place. Lawrence died in 2015.

As noted in the Report (p. 49), Lawrence was assigned as Courage chaplain in the Diocese of Allentown from January 2000 until he retired in March 2002. This appointment would have been made by the diocese. I have confirmed with a member of the local Courage chapter that Lawrence did indeed serve in that role; however, no correspondence appears in our archive related to his appointment or his service as chaplain.

2. **Rev. Martin M. Boylan**, of the Diocese of Scranton, was accused of misconduct with a male graduate student in 1993. Further allegations were made in 2016 about incidents occurring in 2005 or 2006 (with a minor male), in 1983 (with a university student) and in 1984 (age unspecified in the Report).

Although a connection to Courage is not mentioned in the Report, I have found Boylan's name in a letter dated December 5, 1989, from the vicar general of the diocese to the bishop, suggesting 24 priests who could be invited to meet with Father Harvey to discuss establishing a chapter of Courage in the diocese. Boylan is one of the 24 priests mentioned. No further correspondence appears in our archive to say whether such a meeting ever took place, or whether Boylan attended, and his name does not appear again in the archive. It should be noted that this letter predates the first allegation against Boylan by more than three years.

3. **Rev. David A. Soderlund**, of the Diocese of Allentown, admitted in 1980 to sexually abusing three minor boys earlier that year. He was sent for treatment several times in the 1980s, including in 1986 when, according to a letter from Bishop Thomas Welsh that is quoted in the Report, he was "relieved of his duties and this time placed under the spiritual care of Father John Harvey, O.S.F.S., and the clinical care of Doctor John Kinnane." It appears that this contact occurred in August and September 1986. We have found no correspondence or documents related to Soderlund in the Courage archive.

B. Father Harvey's work with priests accused of sexual misconduct and abuse

This last case brings up the fact that, beginning in the late 1970s, Father Harvey became well-known for providing pastoral care and spiritual direction to priests and religious brothers who experienced same sex attractions and were striving to live chaste celibate lives. Father Harvey led several "Renewal, Rest and Re-Creation" retreats for such priests and brothers beginning in 1977, and wrote about his experiences with them in Catholic publications. As a result, Father's advice was sometimes sought by bishops and religious superiors who were seeking treatment for priests and brothers credibly accused of sexual misconduct, especially when the victim was male.

In addition to being a prudent spiritual director, Father Harvey was also a keen student of moral theology and psychology, and by all accounts his pastoral care was consistent with the advice given by professionals at the time. Clearly, thanks to major advances in their understanding of the nature of pedophilia and ephebophilia in the last two decades, psychiatrists and psychologists today make much different assessments of, and propose much different treatment for, sexual abusers than those working 30 or 40 years ago. Given Father Harvey's evident interest in staying up-to-date with advances in psychology, as well as his faithful, loving concern for the good of the Church, I am confident to say that, were he working today, he would take the advice of these professionals very seriously and shape his pastoral approach accordingly.

In addition to Soderlund, I am aware of one other case in which Father Harvey provided spiritual direction for a priest who was credibly accused of sexual abuse of minors; namely, Rev. Paul David Ryan, a priest of the Diocese of Ballarat, Australia. Following Ryan's ordination in May 1976, his superiors became aware of sexual misconduct that Ryan had committed with other seminarians during the years of his formation. Ryan was sent to the United States twice – from February 1977 to June 1978, and from June 1979 to April 1980 – to be evaluated and treated by Dr John Kinnane, a clinical psychologist associated with the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. Ryan was later accused of sexual abuse of minors in several parishes, both in Australia in the 1980s, and in a parish in Virginia Beach, in the Diocese of Richmond, in 1979.

According to documents made public by the Royal Commission Into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, undertaken by the Government of Australia, Ryan was under the supervision of Dr Kinnane and the Holy Trinity Center, in the Archdiocese of Washington, in 1977 and 1978, during which time he saw Father Harvey for spiritual direction. Several letters between Father Harvey and diocesan officials from Ballarat were submitted as evidence to the Royal Commission, and from those letters it appears that the diocese did not inform Father Harvey that some of the seminarians with whom Ryan engaged in sexual misconduct were minors. In several letters to Bishop Mulkearns of

Ballarat, Father Harvey expressed misgivings about Ryan living among seminarians at Holy Trinity, and about his undertaking parish ministry in Virginia; however, the bishop appears to have overruled Father Harvey's concerns.

We have found no correspondence about Soderlund, Ryan, or any other priest whom Father Harvey may have seen for spiritual direction in our archive.

C. Recent and future allegations of sexual misconduct by clergy connected to Courage

As I have already mentioned, neither Father Check nor I have received any allegations during our time in the Courage Office against Courage or EnCourage chaplains in regard to the sexual abuse of minors or of vulnerable adults. Likewise, neither Father Check nor I have received any allegations against any Courage or EnCourage chaplains alleging sexual misconduct with adults.

In the interest of communicating sincerely with you, I wish to inform you that I am aware of one situation in which a priest (not a Courage or EnCourage chaplain) violated appropriate ministerial boundaries and behavior, in an online conversation he engaged in with an adult Courage member whom he met in the Courage On Call Facebook Group. This online group is not an official chapter of Courage International, and its membership is not limited to people who attend local Courage chapters. Although I am not personally acquainted with the priest in question, it is my understanding that he has not been associated with a local Courage chapter.

On February 13, 2018, I was made aware that this priest and a lay man had conducted a private text conversation using their personal Facebook Messenger accounts, in which the priest made inappropriate sexual remarks and shared sexually suggestive photographs of himself. To my knowledge there was no in-person contact between the two. The lay man sent me screenshots of their conversation. I contacted the priest's diocese the next morning, and forwarded the screenshots to them; I also reported my understanding of the situation in subsequent conversations with the vicar general and the diocesan bishop. The priest was removed from ministry by his bishop before the end of February.

While Courage and EnCourage groups are founded on a commitment to protecting the privacy of their members, confidentiality is not absolute outside the Sacrament of Confession. Specifically, confidentiality does not apply when a person discusses causing imminent harm to himself or to others, or in cases of admitted or suspected sexual abuse of minors or vulnerable persons. In such cases, clergy and others (known as "mandated reporters") may be required by civil and ecclesiastical law to report such matters to the relevant authorities.

If you suspect or become aware that anyone has abused or is abusing a minor or a vulnerable person, I urge you to report it to law enforcement and child protection authorities immediately. If the abuser is a member of the clergy, you should also report it to his diocese or archdiocese. If you are aware of any sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, violation of boundaries of ministerial behavior, or failure to act on an allegation of abuse, on the part of a deacon or priest, I urge you to report such behavior to his diocese immediately. If the person is a Courage or EnCourage chaplain, or otherwise associated with Courage International, I also ask you to report such conduct to me at (203) 803-1564, or by email to director@couragec.org. I will inform the deacon or priest's diocese of whatever is reported to me. If you have such an allegation to make against me, I urge you to report it to my home archdiocese, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, and to inform the Diocese of Bridgeport, where the Courage Office is located.

Conclusion

"You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free," Jesus said (Jn 8:32), and it is in this spirit that I believe that it is important to share this information with you, in order that we may understand the past, and recommit ourselves for the future. I realize, of course, that this discussion may provoke sadness and pain for many, especially survivors of sexual abuse and their loved ones. Should you have questions or concerns about this letter, or should it cause hurt that I can help to heal, please do not hesitate to contact me. I intend to continue to communicate with you, through the Courage and EnCourage Newsletter and in other forums, about the crisis the Church is facing and how we, as individuals and as an apostolate, can respond with charity in a spirit of service and witness.

I am grateful to count you among the members of our Courage and EnCourage family, and for your support of the apostolate and of one another. United in charity, let us pray together for all survivors of abuse, for the faithful who are confused and scandalized, and for the purification, conversion and healing that the Church needs at this difficult time.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Father Philip G. Bochanski
Executive Director