



6 April 2023

Holy Thursday of the Lord's Supper

Dear Friends,

Today the Church celebrates **Holy Thursday**, recalling the institution of the Most Holy Eucharist at the Last Supper, and with it, the sacred Priesthood. As part of this commemoration, every diocese celebrates a "**Chrism Mass**," during which the holy oils used for the sacraments are blessed and consecrated by the diocesan bishop. As the Roman Missal notes, the Chrism Mass is also "a manifestation of the Priests' communion with their Bishop," and after the homily, all priests present are invited to renew the promises of their ordination.

I live in the Diocese of Bridgeport, where the Courage Office is located, but I am a priest of the **Archdiocese of Philadelphia**. Today I concelebrated the Chrism Mass there, in the same cathedral-basilica where I was ordained a priest in 1999. On my ordination day, among other commitments, I promised respect and obedience to the archbishop who ordained me and to those who would succeed him.

During the Chrism Mass, Archbishop Nelson Pérez made an announcement that affects not only the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, but our Courage and EnCourage family as well.

Archbishop Pérez has decided to call me back to Philadelphia for a new assignment: **As of June 19, 2023, I will be appointed Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia for the archdiocese**. In keeping with the promise I made on my ordination day, I will accept this assignment in willing and respectful obedience to my archbishop.

The Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops (2004) notes that a Vicar General "is to assist the Bishop in the governance of the diocese" and, as Moderator of the Curia, he has "the specific task of coordinating administrative affairs" among diocesan offices and agencies,

“keep[ing] in mind ... that diocesan structures should always be at the service of the good of souls [and] the care of persons.” It is not a position that I sought or requested, but I am deeply grateful for the trust and confidence that Archbishop Pérez has in my ability to carry it out.

Accepting this new assignment necessarily means leaving Courage International, however, and my years serving the apostolate have been the most fulfilling and fruitful of my entire life. Courage has had a profound impact on me, spiritually and personally, and serving you has taught me so much about what it means to be a shepherd, an intercessor, and a spiritual father. I will miss this special apostolate, and you, very much.

The bishops of our Episcopal Board have appointed **Father Kyle Schnippel**, the chair of our Board of Directors, to serve as **Acting Executive Director** when I step down on June 3 (the feast of our patrons, the Martyrs of Uganda). Father Schnippel has been a Courage and EnCourage chaplain, and a member of the Board of Directors, for many years, and many of you know him from the annual conference. He and our Associate Director, Father Blatchford, will cooperate in the day-to-day ministry of the Courage Office until the Episcopal Board appoints a new Executive Director. I am certain that these fine priests will continue to provide the courageous leadership and generous spiritual fatherhood that you deserve.

I look forward to communicating more with you in the weeks ahead, and I hope to see many of you at the Annual Courage and EnCourage Conference at the end of July. In the meantime, please continue to pray for me, as well as for our directors, staff, chaplains and members. Sudden change can be difficult, but it provides a blessed opportunity for all of us to grow in faith, hope and charity as we renew our trust in Divine Providence.

Be sure of my love and prayers for you, now and in the years to come.

Yours,



Father Philip G. Bochanski
Executive Director