

September 26, 2015

This final week of September marks 35 years since the first Courage meeting was held in Manhattan. Two years prior to that meeting, Terence Cardinal Cooke sought the aid and guidance of a small team of people including Fr. (now Cardinal) Edwin O'Brien, Fr. Benedict Groeschel, C.F.R. and Fr. John Harvey, O.S.F.S. to prepare such a ministry. The seven members who came together to form this first chapter named the group Courage and formulated five goals which became the "charism" of the Courage ministry. Over the years, the Holy Spirit has continued to guide the apostolate through many challenges, and has blessed our fidelity and perseverance with steady growth and an ever-expanding outreach.

This past week, Courage participated in the World Meeting of Families (WMF), running an expo booth at which a team of Courage and EnCourage members, along with Fr. Bochanski, our associate director, distributed literature and DVDs. We estimate the team spoke with hundreds of attendees. Those expressing an interest in the Courage ministry hailed from many different countries, and included several bishops, priests, and lay people involved in ecclesial ministry. Fr. Bochanski wrote an Op-ed, did radio interviews in advance of this event, and handled media inquiries on the ground. The film *Desire of the Everlasting Hills* was screened on the last evening of WMF, and Dan, Rilene, and Paul, the subjects of the film, attended to answer questions afterwards. Throughout the week, over 325 copies of the film were given away free of charge. In preparation for the Synod, the film has been subtitled in 9 languages and has a study guide to accompany it in each language.

To help prepare for the World Meeting of Families, the five-part catechetical series created by Courage and produced by Chuck Weber ran on EWTN the week immediately before the event. The series collection was also available for purchase at the expo booth. It will soon be sold online through the Courage website. Courage intends the series to be a teaching tool which will help others understand and promote this ministry.

This week, Fr. Check is heading to the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas in Rome, (known as "The Angelicum") to conduct the conference "Living the Truth in Love," which will take place on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, just days before the Synod of the Bishops on the Family. This conference is co-sponsored with Ignatius Press, and will include speakers such as Cardinal Robert Sarah, Cardinal George Pell, Monsignor Livio Melina, and Dr. Paul McHugh. To see the full list of speakers and panelists, please visit the conference website at <http://truthandlove.com>. There will be an advanced screening of *Desire of the Everlasting Hills* in Rome on October 1<sup>st</sup>. DVDs of the film have been sent ahead for distribution, and fundraising efforts are underway.

Several new Courage chapters are forming in the following areas: La Crosse, Wis.; Rockford, Ill.; Davenport, Iowa; Sioux Falls, S.D.; Pensacola, Fla.; Milwaukee, Wis.; Charleston, S.C.; Dallas, Tex. (2nd chapter); Lafayette, La.; Mobile, Ala.; and Orange, Calif. Several of these are a direct result of the August conference in Detroit, "Welcoming and Accompanying Our Brothers and Sisters with Same-Sex Attraction." A book, *Living the Truth in Love*, which includes many of the talks given at the Detroit conference is available for purchase through [Ignatius Press](#).

Courage continues to move ahead with its petition to the Holy See to establish the apostolate canonically as a universal and public clerical association of the faithful. To this end, we have received endorsements from six Cardinals from four countries and already enjoy the support of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. We believe the process is in its final stages. Courage has also been invited to give a workshop at the semi-annual gathering of the USCCB in November in Baltimore. This is a great privilege and vote of confidence by the American bishops and indicates our 2013 workshop was well received.

The 2016 Annual Courage Conference has been scheduled for July 21-24 at Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. Father Bochanski is already hard at work to bring you a great lineup of speakers. We are very excited to be meeting in this new location.

On this 35th anniversary of the first Courage meeting, we can be assured that Courage and EnCourage remain committed in both mission and ministry to the five goals established by the members of that first chapter. We will always adhere to the full teachings of the Church, especially in her understanding of the human person, while striving to provide sound pastoral care and faithful spiritual guidance to those who seek it. May the Lord continue to bless these efforts as we strive together for greater humility and faithfulness.

God Bless you.

Fr. Paul N. Check  
Executive Director

Fr. Philip Bochanski  
Associate Director