



Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. (Lk 12:32)

At the heart of the Gospel, Jesus offers us this reassuring message: our Father in Heaven is good, He loves us, and He will always take care of His Son's "little flock." Deepening peace and trust as children of the Father and disciples of the Son can be a challenge at times. While concerns about the culture and politics, about our families and communities, and even about some discussions within the Church are justified, we pray to see these things in the light of the "serene and kindly countenance" of our good, wise, and loving Father. Nothing falls outside His providence. Nothing lies beyond the reach of His grace.

The teachings of Christ's Church regarding chastity and marriage *cannot change*, because they flow from our human nature, which is created in the image and likeness of the *unchanging* God. The "natural law" of our humanity, writes St. John Paul II, "expresses the dignity of the human person and lays the foundation for his fundamental rights and duties, it is universal in its precepts and its authority extends to all mankind." (*Veritatis Splendor* 51)

We persevere in our fidelity to the truth. Our fidelity, when moved by the love of God and the love of neighbor, also conveys our charity. St. John Paul explains:

In fact, genuine understanding and compassion must mean love for the person, for his true good, for his authentic freedom. And this does not result, certainly, from concealing or weakening moral truth, but rather from proposing it in its most profound meaning as an outpouring of God's eternal Wisdom, which we have received in Christ, and as a service to man, to the growth of his freedom and to the attainment of his happiness. (VS 95)

The challenge of the times notwithstanding, the growth and vitality of Courage and EnCourage—in the United States and overseas—testify to the perseverance and fidelity of many. We have countless things for which to be grateful; let me share some of these blessings with you.

Our documentary film, *Desire of the Everlasting Hills*, has been very well received in the Catholic press and in the many venues where it has shown. We have prepared a study guide that will accompany the film to aid conversations. Translations for subtitles in Italian and French will soon be added to the Spanish. We received two restricted gifts in 2014—one of \$25,000 and one of \$50,000—to aid in the promotion of the film and of the apostolate through the media. Please continue to pray for Rilene, Dan and Paul, who are offering themselves with great generosity.

Episode one of our five part catechetical series made its debut on EWTN in October, and in time, we look forward to the broadcast of the other four episodes. That series nears completion, and it likewise will be accompanied by a study guide. Upcoming in 2015: Courage and Sophia Press will partner to publish a book of testimonials. If you are interested in sharing your story for that project, please contact the central office. Also, our next annual national conference is **July 30 - August 2, 2015 at USML in Mundelein.**

In early November, our episcopal board met in Baltimore during the USCCB conference. The members of that board are Cardinal Dolan, Archbishop Cordileone, Bishop Caggiano, Bishop LeVoi, Bishop Olmsted, Bishop Rhoades, and now Bishop Seitz, who served for 12 years as Courage chaplain in Dallas. The episcopal board confirmed the nominations of two priests to the board of directors: Fr. Peter Ryan, SJ, head of the USCCB's office for doctrinal and canonical affairs and longtime friend of the apostolate, and Fr. Randy Sly, a priest of Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter serving in the Arlington, VA diocese, who has been assisting Chuck Weber in the work of the five part series.

The episcopal board also approved the nomination of a priest to serve full-time in the central office as associate director. The presence of another priest who understands our mission and the needs of the people we serve will be a special gift. As soon as all of the necessary work for this transfer is complete, I will be pleased to announce his name.

Other actions of the episcopal board: final approval of our canonical statutes, soon to be forwarded to the Holy See; and the expression of the board's support for finding a role for Courage at the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia in September and at the Synod in Rome in October next year. Please pray particularly for these intentions, invoking the intercession of Cardinal Cooke and Fr. Harvey. The voice of Courage and EnCourage members deserves a hearing at these gatherings.

The episcopal board also approved our 2015 budget, which has doubled to over \$500,000 in just a few years. One of the main reasons for this increase is the expansion of staff at the central office, which has grown from two full-time employees to five in the same short time: the executive and associate directors, the business manager, the program manager (Angelo), and an assistant for me, Heather Voccola, who has recently joined us from Holy Apostles Seminary in Cromwell, CT.

I am appealing to your generosity once again at year's end so we can fund all of the operations of the central office and in particular, to pay a just wage to our employees. Would you please consider a gift of at least **\$100**, or for those who can, **\$500** or **\$1,000**, in support of an apostolate personally important to you or to someone you know and love? I do not like asking anyone for money. It is an occupational hazard of leading a nonprofit, and therefore, humbling. But your generous gift reduces the burden of our fundraising and helps leverage my time for work directly related to the goals of the apostolate, especially to provide educational opportunities and materials for clergy and those who need to hear our message.

Finally, it is with some sadness that I wish to express the gratitude of many for the loyal and diligent service of Deacon Jerry Lambert, our business manager since 2010, who will be leaving us in December to begin work in a new part of the Vineyard. Deacon Jerry and his wife, Jane, have become an important part of the Courage and EnCourage family and we ask the Lord to reward their gracious service. Please keep them in your prayers.

God bless you.

(R.) P-N. Ch

Fr. Paul N. Check
Executive Director