

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Friendship, renewal at center of Courage International's upcoming conference

"Courageous Friendship: Inspiring Hope and Renewal", is the theme of *Courage International's* upcoming annual conference for men and women who experience same-sex attractions (SSA) and families of those who identify as LGBT.

This year's gathering will be held at the **University of Saint Mary of the Lake** (also known as **Mundelein Seminary**) in Mundelein, IL from **July 18-21, 2019**.

The main conference will be preceded by a "**Clergy Day**" on **July 17** for priests, deacons, and religious who wish to receive formation in how to minister to persons who experience SSA.

Courage member and well-known young adult blogger, **Avera Maria Santo**, and *The Catholic Man Show* hosts, **Adam Minihan** and **David Niles**, are among the featured speakers at this year's event.

Father Michael Gaitley, MIC, Director of Evangelization of the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception in Stockbridge, Mass., will also be giving an address.

Other confirmed speakers include the director of the Catholic Women's Forum, and member of the board of directors for Courage International, **Mary Rice Hasson**; FOCUS' regional director for parish outreach, **Kelsey Skoch**; co-founder and president of The King's Men, **Mark Houck**; and Courage member and author, **David Prosen**.

Conference participants will have the opportunity to attend talks on various topics, including pastoral ministry, psychology, and understanding family members and loved ones who experience SSA.

The event will include daily Mass, an evening of all-night Eucharistic Adoration, and the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Simultaneous translations from English to Spanish will be made available.

Additional information and updates will be available at the event page:

www.couragerc.org/event/annualconference2019/

NOTES FOR EDITORS:

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 then succeeded by Fr. Philip Bochanski in January, 2017. Today, Courage has more than 150 chapters in eighteen 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 who identify as LGBT, and aims to teach them how to reach out to their loved ones with compassion and understanding. The group was first formed in 1987 by families in search of guidance for supporting their loved ones who experience SSA. In 1992, this group adopted the name EnCourage. Currently, they have more than seventy-five chapters in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Australia, Italy, Singapore, and the United Kingdom.

For additional information, please visit our website at www.couragerc.org

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