



July 31, 2019

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Courage International an instrument of redemption for the Church, says Scottish bishop

(Mundelein, IL) "I'm convinced that Courage is a special instrument of God's salvation for these times," said the bishop of Paisley, Scotland, during the closing Mass of the 31st Annual Courage & EnCourage Annual Conference.

"Courage isn't just an organization through which we will have our wounds healed," Bishop John Keenan said in his homily. "It maybe is a providential instrument in these times whereby, through the offering up of the afflictions of our flesh, the Lord might complete the redemption of His Body which is the Catholic Church we love so dearly."

The Scottish bishop's words echo those of Cardinal Thomas Collins of Toronto, also in attendance, who had earlier said of the apostolate: "In these difficult days Courage is a great sign of hope."

The theme of the 2019 conference was: "Courageous Friendship: Inspiring Hope and Renewal." It took place at the University of Saint Mary of the Lake (also known as Mundelein Seminary) in Mundelein, IL from July 18-21, 2019.

Most of the roughly 300 conference participants were members and chaplains of Courage, an apostolate for adults who experience same-sex attractions, and EnCourage, which is for family and friends of those who identify as LGBT. Other bishops in attendance included Bishop Peter Byrne, auxiliary bishop of the archdiocese of New York, and Bishop John LeVoir of New Ulm, Minnesota.

Explaining that this was his first time attending a Courage conference, Bishop Keenan added: "It's only coming to this conference in these days that I've seen Courage at its heart, for what it is. And I have to say, to you, brothers and sisters, I'm convinced that Courage is a special instrument of God's salvation for these times. I'm convinced that Courage is a special child of God."

Bishop Keenan, who currently serves as a Courage chaplain in within the Paisley diocese, described his experience of becoming involved with the apostolate. "I discovered very quickly that it is a meeting of chaplains, of priests, with fellow disciples, that we're all trying to follow the Lord. We're all trying to find His friendship. We're all trying to grow in holiness together. And I've loved that, I have to say."

In her testimony delivered to the conference attendees, Courage member and blogger, Avera Maria Santo, said: "I don't think I can express in words how much Courage has meant to me over the past two and a half years that I've been involved with it. Now this is my family."

"These are the people I can come to and know that I'm taken care of, that I'm understood, that I'm seen, that I'm known, that I'm loved," she said.

Santo added: "Having this community where I can share my testimony, where I can be myself, which I think I hid for so long, where I can be held to a higher standard, where I can be called to holiness, where I can be uplifted, has meant the absolute world to me."



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 fourteen 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.

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