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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Truth & Love to mark St. John Paul II's centenary with conference on sexuality, gender identity

(Trumbull, CT) "Be not afraid: Affirming the truth about sex and identity" is the theme of a conference centered on caring for people who experience same-sex attractions (SSA) and gender dysphoria.

The upcoming Truth & Love conference, an initiative of Courage International, will take place within the Diocese of Arlington at the Washington-Dulles International Airport Holiday Inn in **Sterling, VA**, from **April 27-29, 2020**.

This conference is aimed at clergy, religious, and professionals who are seeking comprehensive formation on the topics of homosexuality and gender identity. It is especially geared towards those working in pastoral care, education, medicine, and the mental health profession.

The 2020 event will also mark the 100th birthday of Pope Saint John Paul II by establishing him as the official patron of the Truth & Love initiative.

John Paul II (born Karol Józef Wojtyła on May 18, 1920) served as the Roman Pontiff from 1978-2005, and is known for his extensive writings on sexual morality, particularly *Theology of the Body* and *Love and Responsibility*.

April's gathering will include several witness testimonies from men and women who experience SSA, as well as presentations from experts in the fields of pastoral care, psychology, theology, and medicine.

Courage member and public speaker, Avera Maria Santo, will provide one of several testimonials about being committed to chastity with the experience of SSA.

Featured presenters also include George Mason University law professor, Helen Alvaré; licensed therapist, Suzanne Baars director of In His Image Counseling Center; and Trent Horn, author of *Made This Way: How to Prepare Kids to Face Today's Tough Moral Issues*.

This will be the fifth Truth & Love conference to-date. Prior conferences have been held in Detroit, Mich., Phoenix, Ariz., Bloomfield, Conn., and Rome, Italy.

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

<https://truthandlove.com/conference2020/>



NOTES FOR EDITORS:

Truth & Love is an initiative of *Courage International*, and focuses on providing sound formation to those who, in a pastoral or professional capacity, work with people who experience same-sex attractions and gender dysphoria.

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. 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 of Courage International 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.

Media coordinator:

Ann Schneible, director of communications

communications@couragerc.org

Office: +1 (203) 916-1156