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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Courage's executive director to receive Cross Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice**

(Trumbull, Conn.) Courage International's executive director will be among the latest recipients of the *Cross Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice*, an honor conferred by Pope Francis on those who have given distinguished service to the Roman Catholic Church.

Father Philip Bochanski, who has served the Courage apostolate for over a decade – first as chaplain, and eventually as the executive director – will receive the Cross on December 9, 2019, during Vespers at the Cathedral-Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul in Philadelphia. The Cross will be conferred by Archbishop Charles Chaput, OFM Cap., on behalf of Pope Francis.

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia's [November 25 statement](#) acknowledged Father Bochanski's years of service to men and women who experience same-sex attractions, adding: "He has worked tirelessly, with compassion and great sensitivity, to advance Church teaching on human sexuality, and gained national respect for the Courage apostolate in the process."

On receiving the announcement of the award, Father Bochanski said: "I am deeply grateful to Pope Francis for awarding me the *Cross Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice*. My service to the Courage and EnCourage apostolate over the years has been a tremendous privilege and the part of my priestly ministry in which I feel most like a true spiritual father. I see this special gesture of the Holy Father as an honor for the whole Courage and EnCourage family, a public recognition of the way in which our shared pursuit of holiness, and our commitment to speaking and living the truth in love, are always at the service of the Gospel, of the Church, and of the Pope and bishops. I sincerely hope that our members, chaplains and friends in all the countries where Courage is serving will receive this news with joy, and know that they are seen and supported by the Holy Father and have a special place in the heart of the universal Church."

Ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia in 1999, Father Bochanski began his involvement with the apostolate as the archdiocesan Courage chaplain in late 2009. Upon his appointment as associate director of Courage International in 2015, he relocated to the headquarters in Connecticut. He was named its third executive director on January 1, 2017.

Father Bochanski will be among 10 members of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia to receive various honors from Pope Francis in the December 9 ceremony.

First established by Pope Leo XIII in 1888, the *Cross Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* – which, in Latin, means: "for the Church and for the [Roman] Pontiff," that is, the Pope – is a decoration of the Holy See conferred on laity, religious and clergy in recognition of sustained and exceptional service to the Catholic Church.



**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.

Media coordinator:

Ann Schneible, director of communications

[communications@couragerc.org](mailto:communications@couragerc.org)

Office: +1 (203) 916-1156