



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Courage to celebrate 40 years of ministry, moves yearly conference online

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(Trumbull, CT) In response to safety concerns relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, Courage International will kick off its 40th anniversary celebrations with an online webinar, instead of an in-person conference as originally planned, for members, chaplains, and friends of the apostolate.

Set to take place over Zoom on **July 25-26**, the theme of the 2020 Courage and EnCourage Conference is **“40 Years of Courage: A Legacy of Hope”**, marking four decades of pastoral care for men and women who experience same-sex attractions (SSA).

“This year's anniversary offers us a chance to celebrate the witness of our members, whose bravery and resilience should be an inspiration to every Christian who wishes to fully understand and live the virtue of chastity,” said Father Philip Bochanski, executive director of Courage International.

The Courage apostolate was founded by Fr. John Harvey, OSFS in September 1980 at the request of the late Cardinal Terence Cooke, then the archbishop of New York City.

“Over these past 40 years, we've seen Courage grow from humble beginnings with a few members in a small Manhattan office, to an international apostolate with chapters in nearly 20 countries,” Father Bochanski said.

The Courage and EnCourage conference, which is held annually, was originally set to take place at the University of Saint Mary of the Lake (also known as Mundelein Seminary) in Mundelein, IL from July 23-26, 2020. The decision to move the conference online followed the Illinois governor's plan to prohibit large gatherings until a vaccine is identified for COVID-19.

“We're saddened not to be able to see one another in person this year for such an important anniversary,” Father Bochanski said, “but are looking forward to gathering together next year with our Courage and EnCourage family.”

Cardinal Edwin O'Brien, Archbishop emeritus of Baltimore and Grand Master of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher (based in Rome), has extended congratulations to members of Courage and EnCourage as they mark their 40th anniversary. A priest of the Archdiocese of New York when Courage began, he had been appointed by Cardinal Cooke to assist in its founding.



“I recall the early years when a saintly Father John Harvey would travel from Philadelphia to Manhattan for prayer and discussion with scarcely a handful of potential members. It was a long and labored birth but he was never discouraged,” Cardinal O’Brien said.

“Prayer and Perseverance were his hallmarks, as they are yours, faithful disciples of Jesus, freely following him without compromise. Prayer and Perseverance! Thank you all for your splendid witness!”

The presentations at this year’s webinar will center on the Five Goals of Courage, which were established in the early days of the apostolate.

Included among the featured speakers is **Sr. Helena Burns FSP**, who will be speaking on “Brazen Chastity and the Gift of Self”.

Other speakers include **Fr. Sean Kilcawley**, director of the Office for Family Life of the Diocese of Lincoln (Nebraska); **Father Glenn Sudano, CFR**, one of the founding members of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal; **Dr. Stephen Hopkins**, a Nashville-based psychologist who produced the film *Portraits of Courage*; **Deacon Hilmar Pabel**, Courage and EnCourage chaplain in the Archdiocese of Vancouver; and **Father Richard Samour**, Courage and Encourage chaplain for the Archdiocese of San Antonio (who will be delivering a presentation for Spanish-speaking participants).

The event will also feature breakout sessions for members of Courage and EnCourage, as well as one for those in ministry.

Simultaneous translations from English to Spanish will be made available.

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

<https://couragerc.org/conference2020/>



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. Fr. Harvey was succeeded as executive director by Fr. Paul Check, who held the position from 2008 to the end of 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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