



May 4, 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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***Courage & EnCourage* Conference to Reflect on Saint Joseph**

(Trumbull, CT) “Saint Joseph: Model of Courageous Love” is the theme of *Courage International’s* 34th Annual Conference, which will take place at **Benedictine College**, Atchison, Kansas, **from July 15 to 18, 2021**. The annual conference draws members of Courage – adults who experience same-sex attractions and desire to live a chaste life – and EnCourage – family members and friends of people who experience same-sex attractions or gender identity discordance – as well as clergy, religious and laity who serve in pastoral ministry to this community.

Inspired by Pope Francis's proclamation of the *Year of Saint Joseph*, this year’s conference theme draws on aspects of the life of the foster father of Jesus that will inspire members of Courage and EnCourage.

“For the men and women of *Courage*, Saint Joseph is a shining example of chaste love, of total acceptance of God's will, and of perseverance in pursuit of virtue, even when it requires great sacrifice,” said Father Philip Bochanski, executive director of Courage International.

"For our *EnCourage* members, he is a model of genuine fatherhood, and a reminder that to follow God's plan for ourselves and our families, the most necessary thing is to stay close to, and focused on, Jesus and Mary," Father Bochanski said.

The keynote address at the 2021 conference will be given by **Dr. Greg Bottaro**, director of the CatholicPsych Institute and author of *Consecration to Jesus through St. Joseph: An Integrated Look At the Holy Family*. Other speakers include **Mary Rice Hasson**, director of the Catholic Women’s Forum; **Father Ricardo Pineda** of the Fathers of Mercy; and **Deacon Patrick Lappert, MD**, a *Courage* chaplain and a board-certified plastic surgeon;

The 2020 conference was conducted entirely online due to safety restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. July’s event will also be *Courage’s* first “hybrid” conference: in addition to the in-person gathering at Benedictine College, an online component will allow the participation of members who otherwise would not be able to attend.

“We learned last year that making the conference available online helps us to reach members of our worldwide *Courage International* family -- including people from Australia, the Middle East

and Asia, as well as hundreds from Latin America -- who would not have been able to take part otherwise,” Father Bochanski said.

Conference participants will attend talks on various topics, including pastoral ministry, spirituality, and ways to support family members and loved ones who experience same-sex attractions. The event will also include daily Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, and opportunities to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The main conference will be preceded by a “**Clergy Day**” on **July 14** for priests, deacons and seminarians that will address how to understand and present the Church’s teaching with clarity and charity, and to provide authentic pastoral care.

Registration for English-speaking participants opened May 1, and will close July 1.

Conference talks will also be available in Spanish, both through simultaneous interpretation and original presentations. Registration for an all-virtual Spanish-language conference track will open in mid-June.

More information about conference speakers and registrations is on the *Courage* website at: <https://couragerc.org/conference2021/>

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NOTES FOR EDITORS:

Background on Courage International and EnCourage

Courage International, Inc. is an apostolate of the Catholic Church which offers support to people who experience same-sex attractions who have chosen to live a chaste life. It was founded by Fr. John F. 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 same-sex attractions. In 1992, this group adopted the name EnCourage. Currently, there are more than seventy-five EnCourage 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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