



For Immediate Release

Contact: Communications Office communications@couragerc.org

+1 203-803-1564

(Vatican City) On the morning of February 6, 2026, Courage International was blessed to participate in a private audience with Pope Leo XIV. Present for the audience were: Most Rev. Frank Caggiano the bishop of Bridgeport, Connecticut who is the Chairman of the Courage International Episcopal Board; Rev. Kyle Schnippel, a priest of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati and Chairman of the Courage International Executive Board; Rev. Brian Gannon, the Executive Director of Courage International; and Angelo Sabella, a Courage member of 31 years.

The opportunity to share with the Holy Father the works of the apostolate, to provide pastoral accompaniment to persons who experience same-sex attraction but who strive to live chaste lives or to accompany family members who have a loved one who identifies as LGBTQ, was a momentous occasion. The apostolate has grown steadily over the last 45 years, expanding to serve members in countries around the world. This historic occasion affirms the peaceful joy of the staff and members of Courage who seek to grow in holiness through living the truth in love.

Background

Courage International, Inc. is an apostolate of the Catholic Church which provides pastoral accompaniment to people who experience same-sex attraction 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 from 2017 to May 2023. The current executive director is Fr. Brian Gannon.

Today, Courage has more than 160 chapters in 15 countries. Courage and EnCourage received canonical status in the Roman Catholic Church as a diocesan clerical association of the Christian Faithful on November 28, 2016.

EnCourage is an apostolate under the Courage umbrella which provides pastoral accompaniment 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 without compromising their Catholic faith. 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 100 EnCourage chapters in 8 countries.

For additional information, please visit our website at www.couragerc.org

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