



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Courage International's Response to the Synodal Report

On Tuesday (5 May 2026), the Vatican's General Secretariat of the Synod published the final report of Working Group 9, dedicated to "Theological Criteria and Synodal Methodologies for Shared Discernment of Emerging Doctrinal, Pastoral, and Ethical Issues." As many outlets have already reported, the document contains an unflattering reference to the Courage Apostolate. Further, an accompanying "Annex" provides testimony from one individual about his negative experience with Courage.

Courage considers this report to be both calumny and detraction against the organization and its members. Calumny, because the report mischaracterizes Courage's work. Courage is not nor ever has been involved in "reparative therapy," as alleged. The working group could have clarified this point by simply contacting Courage leadership. Rather than do so, however, the report presents one person's experience and opinion as part of an official ecclesiastical document.

Second, it is unjust to our members for the Synod to publicly present Courage meetings and members in a negative light on the basis of one person's experience. This individual characterizes the meetings he attended as "secretive and hidden." Courage members understand those meetings to be *confidential and secure* – precisely so that they can speak candidly and vulnerably without fear of someone reporting about them. Which is what this individual does when he describes people at the meeting as "lonely, hopeless, and often depressed." Whether his estimation is correct, we don't know. But it's precisely because people often are lonely, hopeless, and depressed that we bring them together for support and insist on the confidentiality that enables them to speak freely about their struggles.

Courage has suffered calumny and detraction before, but usually from secular outlets. It is a great sadness and an additional wound to our members to have this false and unjust depiction in a Vatican document. If synod officials would like to learn more about Courage International, Inc. and its apostolate over 45 years, our chaplains and members would be happy to meet with them.

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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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