

Raising the Identity and Profile of Courage in your Diocese

by Karl M.

Over the next few issues of the Courage newsletter, we will be addressing a number of considerations which relate to working with your local diocese in order to raise the profile of Courage in your community. Two of the most basic steps in this process are, first, establishing regular communication with a contact in the appropriate diocesan office, and second, developing a channel of communication with the parishes that comprise your diocese.

Diocesan contact person

As an apostolate of the Church, it is vital for any Courage chapter to have a contact person in the diocesan office; this can help with everything from communicating with parishes, to exhibiting or presenting at events, and obtaining funds for resources needed to spread the message of Courage. All dioceses have an office which is responsible for groups like Courage; it may be the office of marriage and family, the pro-life work, evangelization, programs and ministries, or an office under another title. Whatever office this is for your diocese, it is one of the most important contacts you can make, as they will be able to assist you in building your chapter's presence. Without being intrusive, it is vital to keep this office aware of meeting schedules and activities. Additionally, chapter leaders should arrange to meet annually with representatives of this office.

Direct contact with all parishes

Another important resource is the development of a directory of parishes in your diocese, with contact information (names, email addresses and phone numbers) for pastors, business office staff and directors of religious education or directors of adult faith formation. Generally, a diocesan contact can be great for reaching out to local parishes and encouraging them to include a "blurb" about Courage in their bulletins. In addition, it is very beneficial for the local chapter to send promotional packets to parishes on a semi-annual basis; these could include materials for distribution – chapter brochures, business cards of local priests and deacons involved in the ministry, etc. – small posters to hang on church/social hall bulletin boards, a personal one-page typed testimonial (where appropriate, and if a member is willing), and contact information for the chapter. You might also consider offering to help organize or assist with a parish educational night on the Church's response to the pastoral care of persons who experience SSA.

We will continue this discussion in next month's newsletter. Meanwhile, for those who will be attending this month's Courage annual conference to join Deacon John, Annie T. and me for a workshop devoted to "Fostering Good Relations with your Diocese" as part of Saturday's breakout sessions.

If anyone has any specific questions about chapter growth and promotion, or would like assistance with ideas for brochures, websites or parish programs, please feel free to contact me at mailforkarlos@gmail.com.