Then, Now, & The Next 40 Years

by Tina N.

My first experiences as a member of a Courage chapter were in Toronto in 1994. I'd read a reference to the apostolate in a book some years earlier, but didn't know about my local chapter at the time. I won't re-tell my testimony here as I've already had the privilege of sharing my story at an annual Courage conference in 2011, the summer after Father Harvey passed away. Both Angelo and I were asked to give witness talks at the 2011 conference as we'd worked closely with Father Harvey for many years. We knew even while we were working alongside him that those were special, never-to-be-repeated experiences, and we treasured those times dearly. Accordingly, our testimonies that summer gave special homage to a humble priest whose faithfulness had a huge impact on our own lives and on the lives of so many others.



In "Memory and Identity" Pope St. John Paul II reminds us of the importance of memory in shaping our sense of identity, and this certainly holds true for those who participate in and represent the Courage apostolate. Although I only entered the Courage family in 1994 and started working for the apostolate in 1996, I was aware I'd joined a community of friends who had a history that preceded my involvement by many years, and that every part of each person's story was and always would be important to our ongoing growth and development. Those who joined the apostolate as Courage members, EnCourage members, Chaplains, staff, or volunteers were encouraged to take the time to learn the history of this ministry, to really understand who we are and why we exist.

Even now, or perhaps *especially* now, in the age of social media and instant information, it's worth taking the time to read and re-read those books which explain the founding,

history, and development of Courage: *The Homosexual Person: New Thinking in Pastoral Care*, *The Truth About Homosexuality: The Cry of the Faithful*, *Courage: A Ministry of Hope*. These books help us to deepen our value and appreciation of our ministry as we realize the great pastoral solicitude and years of tireless service that have gone into ensuring that our apostolate has been built on a solid theological foundation with the sole purpose of drawing its members ever deeper into the heart of Christ.

At Courage, adults of all ages and backgrounds are provided with a spiritual plan that draws them into the riches of Catholic spirituality, encouraging them in a life of chastity and good works, and guiding them with the wisdom of the Saints and the eternal truths of Christ and His Church. Courage and EnCourage members are part of a worldwide spiritual family; we have our chapter meetings and our conferences and retreats, and we also spend time together in other ways: going on vacations and pilgrimages together, opening our homes to one another when members visit our respective corners of the world, and living in community when the opportunity or need arises. The development of meaningful friendships and the strong sense of belonging to an international Catholic community is intrinsic to the Courage experience.

My hope and prayer on this special occasion of our 40th Anniversary is that the Courage apostolate and community will continue to thrive for many, many years to come. There's much we can learn from and imitate in those who have gone before us, whether they be those who have preceded us within this ministry, or those saints who have preceded us within the life of the larger Church. Humility is the foundation of holiness, and often the best act of humility is to recognize the wisdom of those who have travelled this path before us and to submit ourselves to their guidance and intercession. May we continue to be deeply rooted in and committed to sound Catholic teaching and the best pastoral practices, and may our apostolate – its members and its shepherds - always strive, with God's grace, to cultivate the virtues of humility and holiness. Amen.