



Easter 2017

*Death and Life have contended, in that combat stupendous:
the Prince of Life, who died, reigns immortal.*

Dear Friends,

These words from the Easter Sequence summarize beautifully the mystery of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus. He took upon himself the burden of our sin; he handed himself over to death for our salvation; and now he is risen, to die no more. In these days of the Easter Season we rejoice in the victory that Christ won over sin and death, and in the many little victories he accomplishes in us each day, as he gives us the grace of conversion and calls us to be his disciples.

The mystery of Easter teaches us never to lose hope, but to depend totally on the Risen Christ amid all our necessities and trials. Each day that I spend involved in the ministry of Courage and EnCourage convinces me more of this fact: The Lord will never abandon us! He will never let us down! I know that so many of our members and chaplains have experienced the same, and they can testify to the power of grace working miracles in their lives—miracles of healing, mercy and transformation, in great ways and in small.

It is a pleasure to invite you once again to celebrate these blessings of fellowship and support as we gather for the annual **Courage and EnCourage Conference**, which will take place at the **University of St Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, Illinois**, from **Thursday, July 27 to Sunday, July 30, 2017**. As always, we have assembled a roster of speakers who are sure to provide encouragement and inspiration, and we will be joined by many bishops, priests, deacons and religious with a heart for our work.

This year will be a special opportunity to celebrate the **EnCourage Apostolate**, as we mark the 30th anniversary of the first parents' group meetings in Toronto, and the 25th anniversary of EnCourage taking part in the annual conference. Many of us know someone with a son or daughter who has come out as homosexual, and we see how difficult it can be for parents to keep the Faith while striving to keep family relationships intact. If you know someone in this situation, consider inviting them to come to the Conference and meet the EnCourage family. If you *are* someone in this situation, know that the EnCourage family is ready to welcome you.

We will also have the chance to express our thanks and best wishes to **Father Paul N. Check**, who was named rector of Saint John Fisher Seminary Residence in Stamford, Connecticut, last December, after nine years as executive director of Courage International. These last two years working alongside Father Check have been a source of many blessings and much joy for me, and I am grateful to know that our apostolate still has a special place in his fatherly heart, as he continues his service now as a member of our Board of Directors. The apostolate expanded greatly under Father Check's leadership, not only in the number of chapters, but in our ability to impact the life and ministry of the Church, especially through sharing the teaching of the Church and our pastoral experience with priests and others in ministry.

The work of Courage and EnCourage is still growing, as you may know. Late last year, we received **official canonical status** as a public association of the faithful, under the protection of the Diocese of Bridgeport, whose bishop, Most Rev. Frank J. Caggiano, serves on the Episcopal Board that governs our apostolate. This spring, I have had the opportunity to work with dioceses around the United States, as well as bishops in Scotland and in Mexico, to plan new chapters and train new chaplains. We also held a very successful **Truth and Love conference** in January, co-sponsored by the Diocese of Phoenix, and we are continuing to provide resources and assistance to people in all aspects of ministry to our brothers and sisters who experience same sex attractions.

None of this would be possible without your continued support. I ask for your prayers for a very special intention at this time: that the Lord will identify the priests he has chosen to join the staff of the Courage Office, and that he will inspire their bishops to release them for this important work. Since Father Check's departure I am the only priest in the office, and while I am blessed with an outstanding staff, so much of our work depends on the spiritual fatherhood and pastoral experience that belong in a special way to Christ's priests.

We also rely on your financial support. I hope that you will consider making a donation to Courage International—perhaps \$100, or whatever your circumstances will allow—to help us in our efforts to expand our service to the Church. In particular, if you have benefitted personally as a member of EnCourage, or love someone who has, you might consider making a larger donation than usual to commemorate EnCourage's anniversary year.

It will be a great joy to see you at our annual conference in Chicago. In the meantime, please keep us in the Courage Office, and our Courage and EnCourage members and chaplains, in your daily prayers, and be assured of our prayers for you.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Father Philip G. Bochanski
Executive Director