



November 2019

Dear Friends,

Once again it is my pleasure to write to you at the time of year when our thoughts turn to giving thanks for the blessings we have received from God through the Church and through the apostolate which brings us together. As I visit with clergy and others in ministry, see new chapters of Courage and EnCourage being formed, and hear from our members about the impact that their participation in the apostolate is having in their lives, every day seems to bring another reason to grow in hope and to trust more securely in the plans of Divine Providence.

This year I have some personal reasons to give thanks, and I hope that you won't mind my sharing them with you, my Courage family, and asking you to join me in offering praise to God. In May, I celebrated the twentieth anniversary of my ordination as a priest, and in December I will mark ten years since I started as the local Courage chaplain in my home archdiocese of Philadelphia. I have now spent half of my priesthood serving Courage and EnCourage, and it has transformed my life in ways that I could never have imagined on my ordination day. What a privilege it has been to act as a spiritual father to our members, and now to the whole apostolate. I give thanks to Our Lord continually for the ministry he has entrusted to me.

In addition, I recently received word that Pope Francis has seen fit to honor me with the "*Cross Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice*," a medal which the Pope bestows on clergy and laity in recognition of "sustained and exceptional service" to the Church (*pro Ecclesia*) and to the Holy Father (*pro Pontifice*). I must see this special gesture of the Holy Father as an honor for the whole Courage and EnCourage apostolate, a public recognition of the way in which our shared pursuit of holiness, and our commitment to speaking and living the truth in love (cf. Eph 4:15), are always at the service of the Gospel, of the Church, and of the Pope and bishops.

Thank you for your continued support and collaboration in the exceptional service that Courage International is undertaking, which has been sustained now for nearly forty years. I look forward to celebrating our jubilee with you, and invite you now to save these important dates:

Opening of the Fortieth Anniversary at the 2020 Annual Conference

July 23–26, 2020

University of Saint Mary of the Lake, Mundelein, Illinois

Anniversary Mass celebrated by Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York
Saturday, September 26, 2020, at 12:00 noon
Church of Our Lady of the Rosary, 7 State Street, New York, N.Y.
(This parish was the location of the first Courage meeting on September 26, 1980.)

Closing of the Fortieth Anniversary at the 2021 Annual Conference
July 15–18, 2021
University of Saint Mary of the Lake, Mundelein, Illinois

Meanwhile, our service to the Church continues at home and abroad. Ten new chapters have been founded in the United States in the past year, as well as chapters in Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru, The Philippines, Poland, Scotland, Spain and, most recently, Lithuania. In October, Spanish-speaking priests from more than a dozen countries participated in two online *Jornadas de Estudio* (“Clergy Study Days”) presented by our Courage Latino team, receiving formation in the teaching of the Church and the work of the apostolate.

We were also privileged to provide several webinars this Fall for vicars for clergy and others who work with priests and to discuss ways to provide pastoral care and support for clergy who experience same sex attractions and are committed to living their celibate commitment with integrity and the integration which defines the virtue of chastity. Moreover, it has been my privilege to welcome priests from around the country to the Courage Office in Connecticut, to spend a week or so with us and with members of our local chapters in preparation for their work as new local Courage and EnCourage chaplains. I am grateful for their commitment, and for the way in which our members have welcomed them and shared their insights.

None of this is possible without your support. As our work continues to grow and spread, our need for resources of time, talent, and money likewise increases. I encourage you to continue your generous support of Courage International and, if possible, to increase your gift this year.

Our friends and benefactors, living and deceased, are remembered monthly at Mass in our office chapel, and daily in the prayers of the Courage Office team. As we all give thanks for the gifts we have received from Our Lord, through the hands of his Holy Mother and the ministry of the Church, his Bride, please know how grateful I am for your generosity and support.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Father Philip G. Bochanski". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "P" and "B".

Father Philip G. Bochanski
Executive Director