

Speaking Engagements: How to Get Them, What to Do at Them (Part 1 of 2)

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by Karl M.

One of the most effective means of raising the profile of your chapter in your diocese and seeing that authentic Catholic truth reaches members of the Church, is securing speaking engagements. Most parishes have adult education or formation nights and are often in need of speaker/topic suggestions for these programs.

Not every Courage/EnCourage member is comfortable speaking on the topic of same-sex attraction in a public forum. Many of us desire to preserve our anonymity in our local parish, and deciding to break anonymity is a personal decision. But to those of us who have stepped up on behalf of the ministry and to the many priests and chaplains that have worked with us over the years to spread the word about Courage, there is little that is quite as rewarding as that discussion after a talk where an individual feels free to speak confidentially about their personal struggles or a parent approaches to thank us for letting them know that the Courage and EnCourage ministries exist to offer clarity on the Church’s teachings and to give them the chance to be connected with other parents who have navigated the same waters.

So how do we best arrange for a Courage or EnCourage informational night in local parishes (or university, or other gathering)? Our experience has shown that the most effective way is either working with your diocesan contact or, if one is not available, your chapter chaplain. We recommend the following:

1. Begin by putting together the program you hope to present. We have found the best approach consists of a one hour program that offers:
 - a. A priest or religious with knowledge of church teaching who can present an overview on that teaching.
 - b. A Courage brother or sister who can give brief (no more than 20 minutes) testimony of their personal journey to Courage and what they have found by being a member of the ministry.
 - c. A period for discussion and Q&A. You can also offer to show the Courage Promo from our website (which is about 11 minutes long) or, if time/interest permits, *Desire Of The Everlasting Hills* or *The Third Way*.
2. Put your program into a flyer style format, and have your chaplain (be he a priest or deacon) prepare a more personal letter to accompany the flyer. This letter might reference the joy that he has encountered working with the members of Courage and EnCourage and how valuable the information to be presented will be for members of the parish community. He might also include a sentence or two from a chapter member.

3. If you work with your diocesan office, have the letter and flyer sent out with the weekly/regular diocesan mailing to all of the parishes; this tends to give the communication a more official status. Most dioceses do a weekly communications packet to parishes. If you cannot have your information distributed in this manner, you may have to do the mailing on your own. If that is the case, you may wish to have a brief cover letter accompany the information and offer a point of contact for arranging for a presentation.
4. Be certain to provide a phone number/email address for pastors/DREs or other point people in the parish to contact in order to set up a presentation.
5. Set realistic expectations. As much as we might wish to involve hundred of attendees in every parish, the simple truth is that many parishes simply won't reply and turnout will be affected by any number of factors. Remember that every soul who does come is a soul who will hear the truth of the good news of chastity and the solution that Courage and EnCourage provide to answer this issue in the world today.

If anyone would like sample flyers or sample letters for mailing to parishes to offer a Courage educational night, please email me at mailforkarlos@gmail.com. We are glad to share any of our materials.

In the next issue we will offer some insight on speaking about Courage at a public event.