***Courage Latino* Encounter reflects on Saint Joseph and his example of the Christian life**

"Only chaste love is true," says one of the speakers



With meditations about the chaste and good St. Joseph, illuminated by a scriptures passage from St. Matthew the Evangelist, "When Joseph awoke, he did as the Angel of the Lord ordered and took up his spouse," the 15th Annual Courage Latino Encounter was live-streamed from Mexico City from Saturday, November 13, to Sunday, November 14. The online event had more than 200 attendees including chaplains of the apostolate, members of Courage and EnCourage, and others from locations where a chapter does not exist who receive online spiritual accompaniment.

The first day offered three themed talks, the first titled "The Virtues of St. Joseph" presented by Isaías, a member of Courage in Guadalajara, Mexico. Isaías gave a review of the apostolic letter *Patris Corde* by Pope Francis. In it he spoke of St. Joseph as a loving father, a tender father, an obedient father, a receptive father, a creative and valiant father, a hardworking father, and a spiritual father. "Only love that is chaste is true, and when it is not, that is when one looks for satisfaction in oneself. Joseph loved freely, never putting himself at the center; moreover, he put Jesus and Mary at the center of his life," emphasized Isaías.

The second talk was given by Fr. Victor Olegario Corona, chaplain for the Courage and EnCourage chapters in Guadalajara, Mexico, who spoke about "Chastity in Marriage." The priest offered an explanation of Genesis, about the creation of man and the introduction of sin, to explain the value and meaning of the sacrament of Marriage. In this context, he explained chastity as one of the important virtues that "must be cultivated to have more freedom and which will give you a purity of heart and soul." He shared that "sexuality is a gift given by God and that chastity is an integration of that sexuality," as is explained in the Catechism of the Catholic Church as an invitation to all who are baptized.

The last talk of the day was offered by Fr. Buenaventura Wainwright, director of Courage Latino, who resides in Mexico. His presentation was titled "The Dangers of Frivolousness." Fr. Buenaventura based his talk on the quote from Matthew that speaks to us of destructive intentions and the sinfulness that they leaves on the human heart: "But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander" (Mt15:18-19). From there Fr. Buenaventura explained the meaning of the word "frivolousness" in the dictionary as something "unsubstantial and capricious, with little substance, light, etc." He further shared how this frivolousness harms the human heart and it is necessary to be attentive to it, for all human beings were created by God with free will and we are invited to care for this precious gift from the Father.

That afternoon there were meetings for members of Courage men and women, and also for those in EnCourage. Those groups reflected on how St. Joseph models chastity. The day ended with presentations from a few chapters about devotion to the Virgin Mary in their city or country. These presentations included Guatemala and their devotion to Our Lady of the Rosary, Guadalajara and their devotion to the Virgin of Zapopan or the Visitation, and Mexico City with their devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Sunday began with the celebration of the Eucharist, the presider being Fr. Luis David García, chaplain of Courage and EnCourage in Mexico City, and the concelebrant, Fr. Buenaventura. Afterwards, participants were able to unite in prayer to the Virgin Mary with the Holy Rosary.

Activities focused on the theme of the conference continued with a talk titled "St. Joseph, Model of Faith and Obedience" by Fr. Philip Bochanski, executive director of Courage International. He began his presentation with a quote from St. John that speaks of the permanence of the love of God, and he then explained that to live in this love it is necessary to have faith and obedience: "Faith, which is our acceptance of the truth given to us by Christ, and obedience, that is our willingness to respond to His will."

He then reviewed the virtues of faith, hope, and charity, mentioning how St. Joseph is the model for these virtues which he faithfully lived out. "Because he was faithful, he could be obedient … and it is precisely the omnipotence of God and the faith of Joseph in the power of God that made the difference in the history of the Incarnation." "By way of the example of St. Joseph," he said addressing all present, "if we are faithful like Joseph and believe in the power of God, we can also be obedient like him. If God gives us an order that is beyond our capabilities, then He will give us the grace and strength that we need to do His will. If we only rely on our strength, it will bring about self-satisfaction, bad relationships, and all types of things. However, if we rely on

His strength, it will lead to peace, pure hearts and bodies, authenticity, and happiness in our relationships.

After his exhortation about St. Joseph and his example of a Christian life, Fr. Bochanski shared his understanding and love for all the members of the Courage and EnCourage apostolate, and he said to them "I know that there are days when you feel alone and isolated, days when it is not easy to believe that there is any a person on earth or any soul in heaven who sees you, who knows your worth … What is necessary in those moments is the word which contains all things … We can say 'Jesus' and that is enough' ".

Following Fr. Bochanski's talk, there was a panel discussion titled "The Family of Nazareth, a Family in Crisis," in which participants were offered testimonies of members of Courage and EnCourage. During this discussion, panelists had a conversation with the participants about facing moments of crisis in their families and how they moved forward in suffering and pain.

The conference ended with a farewell opportunity when all the participants could turn on their video and audio and greet one another and give thanks to those who were in charge of this 15th Annual Courage Latino Encounter.

Organizers and participants testimonies of Courage Latino Encounter 2021

"The conference that we experienced was an extraordinary opportunity to share special moments with the Courage and EnCourage family. From the beginning of the conference we experienced the grace and goodness that God gives to each member. Faced with a continued search to be seen, accepted, and loved by the people around us, God spoke to us through the themes, testimonies, celebration of the Eucharist, and all the activities that occurred during the conference. God invites us, like He invited St. Joseph, into our own circumstances, to let ourselves be looked at by Him, to feel loved and accepted by that mysterious God who breaks our plans, to trust in His mercy and to continue walking, always seeking to do His will."
Belinda, Courage Member in Guadalajara who helped with organization of the event

"'Remain in my love as I remain in you'" (Jn15:4). Fr. Philip Bochanski proclaimed the Word and the Word immediately echoed within me, but how can I remain in such perfect love? Without a doubt the answer was shared with us by Isaías at the beginning of the conference when he spoke with such simple language about the profound concept of the virtues. This renewed the light of hope within me during these moments of hopelessness. Yes, the practice of the virtues, that all within me is inclined toward good in thorough obedience, the obedience that does not

harm me nor others as does disobedience, the virtues are perfectly achievable if I commit with a *yes* following the example of St. Joseph. "'If you will return, Israel,' declares the Lord, 'then you should return to Me. And if you will put away your detestable things from my presence, and will not waver'"(Jer4:1). Fr. Buenaventura invited us through the Word of God to see that our good God continues to trust in me and awaits my *yes* to the example of St. Joseph. Thank you for this much needed moment."
Alfredo, Courage member in Mexico City

"We feel blessed and grateful to God for this Courage and EnCourage family for inviting us to this conference. It was set in a beautiful space, with a warm and fraternal homelike atmosphere, with excellent speakers, with interesting themes of intense formation and spirituality."
Yoly and Salvador, members of EnCourage in Guadalajara