

Promotion of Courage at the College/Young Adult Level

by Karl M.

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We've spent the last few columns discussing ways of getting the good news of the Courage ministry out to a greater public, primarily through media and local educational/informational efforts. This time around I would like to focus on targeting a specific audience – the college students and young adults who are essential to the future of our Church.

I recently was invited to give a presentation to a group of college students at a college campus in New Jersey. My experience with these types of programs, when presented to an adult audience, has mostly been just providing a 30-45 minute testimony with only a few questions at the end. But the curiosity of these young adults (combined with the fact that the entire group, all of whom are faithful Catholics, had never heard of Courage) resulted in a 90 minute question and answer/discussion session following my talk. The evening convinced me that we are missing out in getting the word to a younger audience and need to start making inroads with this group.

While it might be true, as Pew studies of millennials/Gen Z'ers religious patterns indicate, that we have a crisis with young people drifting away from the Church, we are blessed with a still large and incredibly vibrant group of 20-30 year olds who desire to follow Church teaching – if only someone steps up and helps them understand what that is. What we as Courage members know about Church teaching on same-sex attractions is not as clear to them, given the media confusion surrounding the issue as well as lack of discussion from the pulpit by parish priests. Time spent discussing the topic with them, along with personal witness, helps create an understanding of and respect for the Church's position on hot button issues such as gay marriage, among other things.

How do we reach out to this group? One of the most popular events that parishes/dioceses hold are “Theology On Tap” nights, where younger parishioners gather for talks on Catholic topics as part of a more social/networking type evening. These events are always looking for guest speakers, and many Courage members and chaplains have already done talks at one of these events. Keep an eye open for this type of event in your parish, and see if you can provide literature or possibly a speaker for an upcoming evening.

Another way to get information to this age group is making contact with area Newman Centers, which are centers for Catholic fellowship/interaction on (mostly) non-Catholic college campuses. There are any number of directories for Newman Centers across the country; <https://www.bestcollegereviews.org/features/college-newman-centers/>, for example, is just one listing of fifty top-rated Centers. Making contact with a local Newman Center director and seeing that Courage literature is available (as well as other resources, such as a copy of *Desire Of The Everlasting Hills*) is another easy way to promote the ministry to a younger audience.

A third means is by reaching out to local FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students) leaders. FOCUS has become a major presence at colleges and currently has a presence on over 125 campuses across the nation. Reaching out to local FOCUS missionaries, offering to present information or simply making sure they have a local contact for Courage, is another way to see that college students can learn about our ministry. FOCUS is on board with Courage's mission, as our own Fr. Bochanski was a speaker at their most recent national assemblage.

We are hoping, as an organization, to engage in some promotional activity with the college/young adult audience over the next six months, and this can be combined with local, more direct efforts at outreach. As we all strive to raise awareness of Courage and spread the good word of authentic Catholic teaching on the topic of same sex attractions, reaching this audience is vital to the long term health of our ministry as a whole as well to the flourishing of your local chapter.