



Courage & EnCourage  
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## ENCOURAGE SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

Roman Catholic Diocese of Lansing Chapter

**When: Sunday December 21, 2014 from 2:30 to 4:00pm**

**Where: Holy Spirit Catholic Church  
9565 Musch Rd.  
Brighton, Michigan 48116**

Directions: US-23 to Silver Lake Rd. Exit (exit #55) West on Silver Lake Rd. to Whitmore Lake Rd. (a short distance). South on Whitmore Lake Rd. to Winans Lake Rd.(a three way stop). West on Winans Lake Rd. approximately one mile to entrance marked with a sign for Holy Spirit Cemetery and Holy Spirit Rectory and School. Turn left. We meet in portable classroom number four. Look for Encourage Meeting signs.

Susan and I want to take this opportunity to wish you and your loved ones a

**Blessed and Merry Christmas!**  
and a  
**Happy and Joy-filled New Year!**

We have enclosed with this month's communication a letter from Rev. Paul Check, the Director of Courage/EnCourage, regarding past achievements and future plans for the ministry and the challenges it faces. We urge you to read it and respond as generously as possible.

A second enclosure with this letter is from Fr. Paul Scalia in which he addresses a current expression heard in the media and, in this case, on the lips of a president of a Catholic university. Fr. Paul points out that truth out of balance can be a stumbling block to many. Most of you probably recall the bracelets with the initials W W J D representing the popular phrase "What Would Jesus Do". Fr. Paul points out that Jesus spoke the truth, always lovingly and sometimes firmly. The Christmas holiday and New Year celebrations may afford us the opportunity to share the truth with relatives and friends. Let us pray, that should the opportunity arise, we will welcome the sinner with love and truth.

Another excellent resource is *How to Talk To Your Children About Homosexuality: A Guide For Parents* by Jeff Johnston and is available at a link on the Courage website or through Focus on the Family.

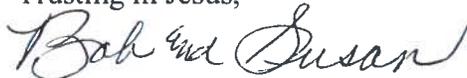
**Please** also remember that we unite to pray each Thursday to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in reparation for our sins and the sins against human sexuality such as same-sex behavior and abortion. Reparation is making amends for the wrongs committed through our sinful condition. Additionally, we pray as intercessors for all our loved ones who will, like the prodigal, someday return home. We generally follow the model given to us by St. Margaret Mary Alacoque in the booklet *Holy Hour of Reparation* published by CMJ Marian Publishers. If you would like a copy of the booklet, we have a small supply in our office or you can order one by calling the publisher at 1-888-636-6799. Another beautiful prayer is the *Chaplet of the Precious Blood* that is available upon request. This beautiful chaplet has been modified to address the specific concerns of Courage and EnCourage members. We have chosen to add this powerful prayer to our Holy Hour of Reparation. Please remember, “that the necessity of reparation is especially urgent today and must be evident to everyone who considers the present plight of the world, ‘seated in wickedness’. The Sacred Heart of Jesus promised to St. Margaret Mary that He would reward abundantly with His graces all those who should render this honor to His Heart.” (Pope Pius XI Encyclical *Miserentissimus*)

**Please note:** If you cannot attend the December 21st meeting, our next regular Diocesan EnCourage meeting is Sunday, January 18, 2015.

For more information regarding our meetings, or to talk about the issue of same-sex attraction in your lives or the lives of loved ones, call our Diocesan office at 517-342-2596 or email us at [courage@dioceseoflansing.org](mailto:courage@dioceseoflansing.org)

We look forward to meeting with you. Let us remember, however, to always respect the right of each to complete confidentiality.

Trusting in Jesus,



Bob and Susan Cavera

“O Lord, enlighten all who do not yet believe, and strengthen those who do, that your kingdom may dawn on all people through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Amen



***Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. (Lk 12:32)***

At the heart of the Gospel, Jesus offers us this reassuring message: our Father in Heaven is good, He loves us, and He will always take care of His Son's "little flock." Deepening peace and trust as children of the Father and disciples of the Son can be a challenge at times. While concerns about the culture and politics, about our families and communities, and even about some discussions within the Church are justified, we pray to see these things in the light of the "serene and kindly countenance" of our good, wise, and loving Father. Nothing falls outside His providence. Nothing lies beyond the reach of His grace.

The teachings of Christ's Church regarding chastity and marriage *cannot change*, because they flow from our human nature, which is created in the image and likeness of the *unchanging* God. The "natural law" of our humanity, writes St. John Paul II, "expresses the dignity of the human person and lays the foundation for his fundamental rights and duties, it is universal in its precepts and its authority extends to all mankind." (*Veritatis Splendor* 51)

We persevere in our fidelity to the truth. Our fidelity, when moved by the love of God and the love of neighbor, also conveys our charity. St. John Paul explains:

*In fact, genuine understanding and compassion must mean love for the person, for his true good, for his authentic freedom. And this does not result, certainly, from concealing or weakening moral truth, but rather from proposing it in its most profound meaning as an outpouring of God's eternal Wisdom, which we have received in Christ, and as a service to man, to the growth of his freedom and to the attainment of his happiness. (VS 95)*

The challenge of the times notwithstanding, the growth and vitality of Courage and EnCourage—in the United States and overseas—testify to the perseverance and fidelity of many. We have countless things for which to be grateful; let me share some of these blessings with you.

Our documentary film, *Desire of the Everlasting Hills*, has been very well received in the Catholic press and in the many venues where it has shown. We have prepared a study guide that will accompany the film to aid conversations. Translations for subtitles in Italian and French will soon be added to the Spanish. We received two restricted gifts in 2014—one of \$25,000 and one of \$50,000—to aid in the promotion of the film and of the apostolate through the media. Please continue to pray for Rilene, Dan and Paul, who are offering themselves with great generosity.

Episode one of our five part catechetical series made its debut on EWTN in October, and in time, we look forward to the broadcast of the other four episodes. That series nears completion, and it likewise will be accompanied by a study guide. Upcoming in 2015: Courage and Sophia Press will partner to publish a book of testimonials. If you are interested in sharing your story for that project, please contact the central office. Also, our next annual national conference is **July 30 - August 2, 2015 at USML in Mundelein.**

In early November, our episcopal board met in Baltimore during the USCCB conference. The members of that board are Cardinal Dolan, Archbishop Cordileone, Bishop Caggiano, Bishop LeVoi, Bishop Olmsted, Bishop Rhoades, and now Bishop Seitz, who served for 12 years as Courage chaplain in Dallas. The episcopal board confirmed the nominations of two priests to the board of directors: Fr. Peter Ryan, SJ, head of the USCCB's office for doctrinal and canonical affairs and longtime friend of the apostolate, and Fr. Randy Sly, a priest of Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter serving in the Arlington, VA diocese, who has been assisting Chuck Weber in the work of the five part series.

The episcopal board also approved the nomination of a priest to serve full-time in the central office as associate director. The presence of another priest who understands our mission and the needs of the people we serve will be a special gift. As soon as all of the necessary work for this transfer is complete, I will be pleased to announce his name.

Other actions of the episcopal board: final approval of our canonical statutes, soon to be forwarded to the Holy See; and the expression of the board's support for finding a role for Courage at the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia in September and at the Synod in Rome in October next year. Please pray particularly for these intentions, invoking the intercession of Cardinal Cooke and Fr. Harvey. The voice of Courage and EnCourage members deserves a hearing at these gatherings.

The episcopal board also approved our 2015 budget, which has doubled to over \$500,000 in just a few years. One of the main reasons for this increase is the expansion of staff at the central office, which has grown from two full-time employees to five in the same short time: the executive and associate directors, the business manager, the program manager (Angelo), and an assistant for me, Heather Voccola, who has recently joined us from Holy Apostles Seminary in Cromwell, CT.

I am appealing to your generosity once again at year's end so we can fund all of the operations of the central office and in particular, to pay a just wage to our employees. Would you please consider a gift of at least **\$100**, or for those who can, **\$500** or **\$1,000**, in support of an apostolate personally important to you or to someone you know and love? I do not like asking anyone for money. It is an occupational hazard of leading a nonprofit, and therefore, humbling. But your generous gift reduces the burden of our fundraising and helps leverage my time for work directly related to the goals of the apostolate, especially to provide educational opportunities and materials for clergy and those who need to hear our message.

Finally, it is with some sadness that I wish to express the gratitude of many for the loyal and diligent service of Deacon Jerry Lambert, our business manager since 2010, who will be leaving us in December to begin work in a new part of the Vineyard. Deacon Jerry and his wife, Jane, have become an important part of the Courage and EnCourage family and we ask the Lord to reward their gracious service. Please keep them in your prayers.

God bless you.



Fr. Paul N. Check  
Executive Director

# The Gospel “Welcome”

By Fr. Paul Scalia Tuesday, December 2 2014

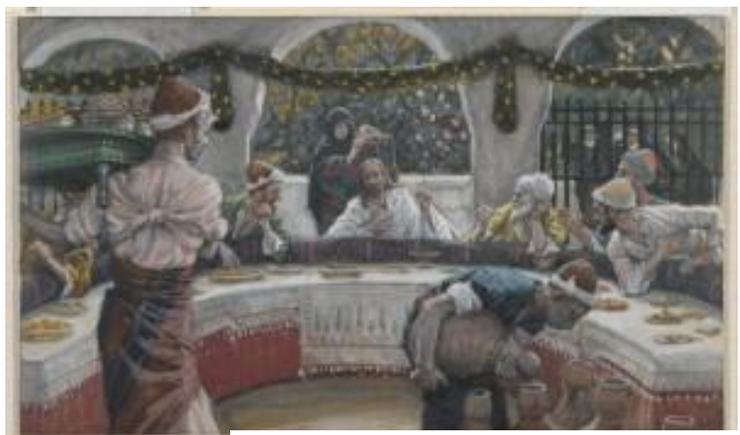
Very much in Catholic news of late has been the issue of *welcome*. The interim report from October’s Extraordinary Synod posed questions, for example, about the Church’s capacity to welcome homosexuals. Shortly after, Father Timothy Lannon, SJ, president of Creighton University explained his curious decision to provide benefits to same-sex “spouses” of employees with the even more curious line, “I asked myself, what would Jesus do in this case? And I can only imagine Jesus being so welcoming of all people.”

The Welcoming Jesus line serves as a good trump card. Not to welcome – or not to appear welcoming – would therefore mean to disagree with Jesus. Of course, Jesus as “welcoming of all people” is not just a figment of Father’s imagination. Indeed, it is a profound reality. More real than many would like to consider. But providing benefits to those in a sinful lifestyle stretches the meaning of Christian welcome beyond the breaking point. All of which raises the question of what a Christian welcome means.

We all want to know that we are welcome. We can point to moments when the feeling of welcome was palpable, and therefore encouraging. We can just as easily point to other moments when we felt profoundly *unwelcome*, and therefore alone. One of the effects of sin is alienation and isolation. So, to speak of our Lord as *welcoming* resonates within every human heart desiring healing and reconciliation.

And He is indeed welcoming. His actions and words resound with welcome. The crowds go out to Him precisely because they feel welcome – because He speaks of forgiveness; He favors the poor and outcast; He touches the untouchable. In Simon the Pharisee’s house, He welcomes the repentant woman. He rebukes the disciples who prevented the children from coming to Him. He welcomes the cries of blind Bartimaeus, when the crowds sought to silence Him. And, in a variation on the theme, He welcomes Himself to Zacchaeus’ house. His detractors praise Him with words they intend as an insult: “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.” (Lk 15:2)

His doctrine conveys that same welcome and inclusivity. His parable of the mustard seed we understand to indicate the Church’s embrace of all nations. He tells a parable about the king who, wanting to fill the hall with guests, commands his servants, “Go out, therefore,



The Meal in the House of the Pharisee by James Tissot, c. 1888 (Brooklyn Museum)

into the main roads and invite to the feast whomever you find.” So they did, gathering “all they found, bad and good alike.” (Mt 22:9-10) Perhaps most significantly, in the parable commonly seen as the summary of the Gospel, the father welcomes his prodigal son home.

And yet. . . And yet His welcome is somewhat curious. After all, He begins His public ministry with the word *Repent!* Not *Welcome!* He is *not* welcoming to those who are duplicitous or, more to the point, seeking to justify their own lives rather than adhere to His truth. His welcome requires a minimal acceptance of His truth. The Gospels tell us fairly often about His frustration with the crowds. And every so often it flairs up: “O faithless and perverse generation, how long will I be with you and endure you?” (Lk 9:41) “This generation is an evil generation. . .” (Lk 11:29)

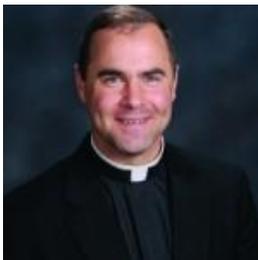
Nor does He trim His doctrine to accommodate people, to make them feel welcome. When the crowds take offense at His teaching on the Eucharist, He significantly allows them to walk away. The beautiful parable about the crowds called to the wedding feast ends with the expulsion of a man who came “without a wedding garment” and then our Lord’s sober lesson: “Many are invited, but few are chosen.” (Mt 22:14)

And those words get to the heart of what a welcome means. As much as we want to be welcome and invited, we also know that every invitation has expectations. Every welcome mat has also the understanding that we cannot do whatever we please when we walk through the door. “Many are invited, but few are chosen,” because not all shape their lives according to the invitation’s demands.

To the world, the Gospel Welcome must appear odd indeed. It *is* a welcome. . .to repentance. It *is* an invitation. . .to change of heart. He welcomes all who will repent, all who avail themselves of His forgiveness and healing – all who, acknowledging their sin and ignorance, embrace His grace and truth. It is indeed the most important welcome for sinful humanity: a welcome to His Sacred Heart. . .provided we recognize our need for it.

As our Lord, so also His Church. For the Church to be authentically catholic, she has to proclaim Jesus’ invitation *universally*, to welcome *all* who *desire the grace of conversion*. She cannot empty that welcome of meaning, either by severity or by laxity. It would be no welcome at all if the means of grace were not made abundantly available to all who seek Christ. At the same time, it would be untrue and therefore uncharitable not to make known what the Gospel welcome requires.

To cut corners on either the invitation or the demands would be to fail to imitate the Good Shepherd.



#### **About Fr. Paul Scalia**

Fr. Paul Scalia is a priest of the Diocese of Arlington, Va. He serves as the Bishop's Delegate for Clergy.



*Lord Jesus, you came to bring us  
the fullness of joy and to free us  
from all the pale imitations of  
happiness. This Advent, remove  
any barriers we have put up to  
keep you out of our lives. Teach us to  
welcome your presence wherever  
we find it, even in the difficulties  
and challenges of daily life. As we  
reach out in love to others, especially  
Courage friends and EnCourage families,  
may we come to know in our hearts  
that we are welcoming you, our Lord and Savior.  
Amen*