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*Hartford archbishop encourages participation in pastoral formation event on homosexuality, gender*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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The archbishop of Hartford is encouraging anyone with a “pastoral responsibility” to attend the upcoming Truth & Love conference, a formation event on caring for persons living with same-sex attractions (SSA) and gender dysphoria in light of Pope Saint John Paul II’s *Veritatis Splendor*.

“More than ever, we need, in the words of Pope Francis, ‘to accompany’ our brothers and sisters with same-sex attraction, to encourage them to live in friendship and virtue, and to do so in a way that is supportive, faith-filled, and prayerful,” said Archbishop Leonard P. Blair, archbishop of Hartford.

“I encourage all those who have a pastoral responsibility to participate in this year’s Conference in Hartford,” the archbishop added.

The conference will take place **October 22-24** at the archdiocese of Hartford’s Pastoral Center (formerly St. Thomas Seminary), in Bloomfield, Connecticut.

The three-day event aims to offer formation for men and women who work in either a pastoral or professional capacity with people who experience SSA or gender dysphoria. Specifically: clergy, religious, educators, workers in the health professions, and anyone involved in ministry or pastoral care, are invited to attend.

An initiative of Courage International, the gathering will center on the theme “**Proclaiming the splendor of truth with love,**” marking the 25th anniversary of Pope Saint John Paul II’s 1993 document, *Veritatis Splendor* (*Splendor of Truth*).

“John Paul II’s prophetic document offers insight into the simplicity of the Gospel as an answer to today’s more complex moral questions, including those relating to same-sex attractions or gender identity,” said Father Philip Bochanski, executive director of Courage International.

“How do we respond when someone comes to us trying to make sense of their same-sex desires or gender dysphoria? This conference is an important starting point for learning how to offer a response that is rooted in truth and authentic love,” Father Bochanski said.

The conference will feature presentations from acclaimed theologians, including Dr. Janet Smith, Dr. Mary Healy, and Fr. Paul Sullins. Participants will also hear witness testimonies from two Courage members featured in the documentary *Desire of the Everlasting Hills*, Paul Darrow and Rilene Simpson.

This will be the fourth Truth & Love conference to date.

Further details are available on the official page for the event: [www.truthandlove.com/conference2018](http://www.truthandlove.com/conference2018)

## NOTES FOR EDITORS:

### **Background on *Courage International and Encourage***

***Courage International*** is an apostolate of the Catholic Church which offers support to persons experiencing SSA who have chosen to live a chaste life. It was founded by Fr. John Harvey, OSFS at the request of the late Cardinal Terence Cooke. The first Courage chapter meeting was held in New York City in 1980, and it was this initial group which developed the Five Goals of Courage: Chastity, prayer and dedication, fellowship, support, and good example/role model. Fr. Harvey was succeeded as executive director by Fr. Paul Check, who held the position from 2008-2016. Fr. Check was succeeded by Fr. Philip Bochanski in January, 2017. Today, Courage has over 150 chapters in fourteen countries. Courage International received canonical status in the Roman Catholic Church as a diocesan clerical public association of the faithful on November 28, 2016.

***EnCourage*** is an apostolate under the Courage umbrella which provides support for families and friends of persons with SSA, and aims to teach them how to reach out to their loved ones with true compassion. The group was first formed in 1987 by families in search of guidance and understanding for supporting their loved ones with SSA. In 1992, this group adopted the name EnCourage. Currently, their chapters can be found in the United States, Canada, Costa Rica, Mexico, Brazil, Australia, Italy, and the United Kingdom.

For additional information, please visit us at [www.couragerc.org](http://www.couragerc.org) and [www.truthandlove.com](http://www.truthandlove.com).

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Truth & Love is an initiative of  
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