



## People with same-sex attraction take Courage at conference

By Lou Baldwin

More than 350 men and women gathered at Villanova University July 17-19 for the Courage/EnCourage Conference 2014.

The group encourages Catholics with same-sex attraction to live in chastity in accordance with Catholic teachings and gives moral support to them and also to parents and others who have a loved one with same-sex attraction, through the group EnCourage.

It was the largest gathering of the group since, well, the last time they met in the Philadelphia area, in 2009.

The theme for the Courage conference was “Move beyond the confines of the homosexual label to a more complete identity in Christ,” according to its website.

The Gospel reading for the July 17 Mass that opened the conference included the passage from Matthew 11:30 in which Jesus tells his disciples, “My yoke is easy, and my burden light.”

Archbishop Charles Chaput, who celebrated the opening liturgy, spoke of the challenge of doing what is right even when we know it is difficult to do it. It doesn't stop being a responsibility and a burden, but because we carry it with the Lord it is lighter as result, he explained.

Art work for the conference featured Caravaggio's Jesus calling of St. Matthew to discipleship. Perhaps this is appropriate in that Matthew was a tax collector, a sinner if there ever was, from the viewpoint of most Jews in Roman occupied Judea.

Interestingly, Caravaggio did not say which man in the scene was Matthew; the painting can be a metaphor for anyone tempted by sinful behavior.

The popularity of the conference could have more to do with the quality of the speakers than the location. Major speakers included Helen Alvaré, a professor of law at George Mason University; Dominican Father Dominic Brent, assistant professor of philosophy at the Catholic University of America and a popular retreat master; Immaculée Ilibagiza, a survivor of the infamous Rwanda massacre in 1994 who found the power to forgive through prayer; and Father Paul Check, the executive director for Courage International.



A local speaker of note was Father Philip Bochanski, C.O., who is the chaplain for the Philadelphia Courage group, of which about 10 members were at the conference.

Father Bochanski's talk, “Natumgongo Jubilees,” focused on St. Charles Lwanga and his companions, who in the 1880s were brutally executed by the king of Rwanda because they would not engage in homosexual

activity with him.

“They are our patron saints; they were challenging the king and many of his courtiers by not performing homosexual acts,” Father Bochanski said. “They were martyrs for chastity.”

Father Bochanski also spoke about the five goals of Courage — “Chastity,” “Prayer and Dedication,” “Fellowship,” “Support” and “Good Example.”

Attendees received a prayer that also appeared on the conference website's registration page, to which visitors were invited to pray in preparation for the conference: “Lord Jesus, I consecrate my sexuality to you; cleanse my mind, my memory, my imagination and my dreams of all disordered content. Grant me the gift of chastity, to bring my sexual drive into subjection of your Holy Spirit dwelling within me. If there be any dividedness in my heart in this regard, please make my heart pure and simple.

“Guard my weakness by your Holy Cross through the intercession of your Mother Mary, my guardian angel, St. Charles Lwanga, and the communion of saints. Amen.”

Among the Philadelphia members was “Carl,” who gave member testimony at a pastoral seminar for priests led by Father Check.

“I talked about the challenge of trying to do what we know is right even if we know it is difficult to do,” Carl said. “The Gospel reading ‘his yoke is easy,’ doesn't stop it from being a responsibility and a burden, but because we carry it with the Lord it is easier.”

In from Ohio along with her husband was “Maryanne” and they were attending as members of EnCourage.

“Listening to the witnesses gives me hope,” Maryanne said. “Because of their witness, because of their struggle, they give me encouragement for my son, even though he doesn't know we are here.”

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### Archbishop names patron saints for World Meeting of Families

St. John Paul II and St. Gianna are the patron saints for the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia next year, Archbishop Charles J. Chaput announced during the Sunday evening Mass July 20 at the Cathedral Basilica of SS. Peter and Paul. He made the announcement during the exposition of the first-class relic of St. John Paul II over the weekend at the cathedral.

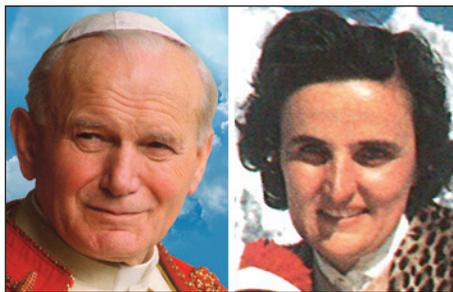
St. John Paul is linked closely to Philadelphia as he became the first pope ever to visit the city. In 1979 he celebrated Mass on Logan Circle for nearly 1 million people. Fifteen years later he celebrated the first World Meeting of Families, which aimed to strengthen the bonds of family across the world.

At his canonization last spring at the Vatican, he was declared “the pope of the family.”

St. Gianna Beretta Molla was a pediatrician and mother of four who gave her life to bear her fourth child in 1962. She was beatified in 1994 — the year of the first World Meeting of Families — by St. John Paul and canonized by him in 2004.

She is the patron saint for mothers, physicians and unborn children.

“St. John Paul II and St. Gianna have been chosen as the two worthy patron



**St. John Paul II and St. Gianna**

saints to guide all in preparation and participation of this international event as they fully embody the history, mission and theme of the World Meeting of Families 2015,” said Archbishop Chaput.

The theme of the meeting is “Love is our mission: the family fully alive.”

The archbishop said the two saints “had a deep and abiding commitment to strengthening the family and sustaining it with love. This historic event will give thousands from around the globe the opportunity to share in the same commitment of our patron saints.”

To commemorate the announcement, Archbishop Chaput concluded Mass with a blessing of the relic of St. John Paul II asking for his heavenly intercession. The relic is of his blood, which remains in a liquid state.

### Immaculate Heart Sister James Grace passes at age 65

Sister James Grace Sheeran died July 6 in Camilla Hall, Immaculata, in the 47th year of her religious life. She was 65 years old.

Born in Philadelphia, Sister James Grace entered the Congregation of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in 1966 from Immaculate Conception Parish, Germantown, and professed her vows in 1969.

Sister James Grace taught first and second grades for more than 40 years in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and the Diocese of Camden.

The funeral Mass was celebrated at Camilla Hall on July 12.

Father Joseph Di Gregorio was the celebrant and homilist.

Concelebrants included Msgrs. Edward M. Deliman and Joseph Logrip, and Fathers William J. Bleiler, Christopher Cooke, Anthony R. Hangholt and Paul M. Kennedy. Deacons Stanley and Joseph Zaleski assisted at the Mass.

Sister James Grace is survived by members of her religious community, her siblings Mary Beth (Daniel) McCollum, Nancy (Andrew) Trainer, Gerard Sheeran and Gregory (Elizabeth) Sheeran and in-laws Margaret (James) Sheeran, Peter (Sallie) Schirmer, Edward (Gretchen) O’Mara, nieces, nephews, grand-nieces and grand-nephews. She was also survived by her loyal community at St. Martin of Tours Convent, Philadelphia.

She was predeceased by her parents, James and Grace Bleiler Sheeran and siblings, James, Sheeran, Sallie Schirmer and Gretchen O’Mara.

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