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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LOCAL CATHOLIC GROUP TO VIGIL AT HOMOSEXUALITY CONFERENCE

The Catholic Action Network for Social Justice, (CAN) a local Catholic independent group, will host a vigil in peaceful opposition to the Courage Conference on Thursday, July 27th at 5:30pm across the street from St. Francis Xavier College Church.

Courage is a national Roman Catholic organization affiliated with the ex-gay movement that seeks to help gays and lesbians overcome their sexual orientation. Courage identifies homosexuals as people suffering from "same sex attraction" and promotes the use of reparative therapy to help members overcome this attraction.

The Courage National Conference will be held at St. Louis University (SLU) from Thursday, July 27th until Sunday, July 30th. Archbishop Raymond Burke will preside at the Conference's opening Mass, Thursday at 5:00pm at St. Francis Xavier College Church.

Courage asserts that homosexuality is often caused by childhood abuse, that gay and lesbians are "slaves to their desires" and that homosexuality is a choice and a disorder that can be "treated". Courage's understanding of homosexuality directly contradicts statements by major professional mental health and medical associations including the American Psychological Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Medical Association, and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

CAN initiated this vigil in opposition to Courage's harmful misinformation about homosexuality, and in disappointment at SLU's decision to rent space to this group. The vigil is timed to coincide with the Conference's opening Mass, and hundreds of vigil participants are expected.

The Catholic Action Network for Social Justice is an independent group formed in 2000 to enact the social teachings of the Catholic Church. CAN's work has included promoting Fair Trade, peaceful alternatives to war, and ordination for women in the Catholic Church. Press contacts are listed above, and an informational factsheet on Courage is attached.

Factsheet on Courage

Prepared by: The Catholic Action Network for Social Justice
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Courage is a Roman Catholic group that “ministers to those with same-sex attractions and their loved ones.” The group is a **transformational ministry** that encourages the development of chastity, so that “one can move beyond the confines of the homosexual identity to a more complete one in Christ.” Courage’s understanding of homosexuality directly contradicts statements by major professional mental health and medical associations including the American Psychological Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Medical Association, and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

On Homosexuality:	Courage	Current Medical Opinion
Definition	Refers to people who struggle with “same sex attraction,” rather than accepting the “label” of homosexual, which “discourage[s] those who may wish to try and move beyond homosexual attractions.”	Sexual orientation is an enduring emotional, romantic, sexual or affectional attraction to another person. ⁴
Causes	1) Poor Parenting: the same-gender parent not identifying with child, or the opposite gender parent an “overweening” the child 2) Failure to identify with members of one’s own gender during childhood 3) Abuse during childhood ¹	“Most scientists today agree that sexual orientation is most likely the result of a complex interaction of environmental, cognitive and biological factors. In most people, sexual orientation is shaped at an early age. There is also considerable recent evidence to suggest that biology, including genetic or inborn hormonal factors, play a significant role in a person’s sexuality.” ⁵
Is it a Choice?	From Online Article for Adolescents: “Do I Have A Choice? Yes...you definitely do. You may not want your homosexual attractions...You don’t have to accept and live out homosexual feelings.”	“No. Human beings can not choose to be either gay or straight. Sexual orientation emerges for most people in early adolescence without any prior sexual experience.” ⁶ “Homosexuality is not a choice and cannot be changed.” ⁷
Science & Sources	Primary psychological source is The National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH), a small professional organization of “over 1,000 mental health professionals” that promotes reparative therapy of gays and lesbians. NARTH considers homosexuality a sexual deviancy that is preventable in childhood and treatable in adulthood. Courage often cites NARTH’s 1997 study that claimed to convert a significant number of homosexuals to heterosexuality. The study has been widely criticized as biased, comprised of subjective judgments, and has not been published in a peer-review journal. ² Also references the Catholic Medical Association, whose “Homosexuality and Hope” document states 1) that homosexuals are “Not born that way,” 2) that same-sex attraction is a symptom of a larger problem and therefore treatable, and 3) largely references the NARTH study and several ex-gay organizations. ³	In 1999, the reparative therapy approach of NARTH was condemned as unscientific and potentially harmful in a document entitled “Just the Facts about Sexual Orientation.” It stated: “The most important fact about reparative therapy ...is that it is based on an understanding of homosexuality that has been rejected by all the major health and mental health professions”. The document was issued by groups that together represented more than 477,000 health and mental health professionals including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Counseling Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, the National Association of School Psychologists, and the National Association of Social Workers. ⁸



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	Courage	Current Medical Opinion
Definitions: Ex-Gay, Transformational Ministry, Pro-Chastity	Courage refers to itself as a "pro chastity" group, rather than an Ex-Gay ministry because "many Courage members have never labeled themselves gay..." Courage's aim, "to help persons with same-sex attractions develop a life of interior chastity in union with Christ," places it within the transformational ministry category.	In general, Ex-gay ministries believe that homosexual orientation is chosen or is the result of bad childhood experiences and that homosexual behavior is sinful. Transformational ministry describes the use of religion to decrease or eliminate homosexual desires. It takes the approach that freedom from homosexuality is possible through faith and unity in Jesus Christ. Most of these groups uphold heterosexuality as God's creative intent for humanity, and homosexual expression as outside God's will. ⁹
On Coming Out	The act of coming out is a "dangerous trap" whose purpose is to "seek to converts among straight friends and family members to pro-gay values". Coming out is "an act of self labeling which effectively blocks other possibilities for growth."	"The process of identity development for lesbians, gay men and bisexuals called 'coming out' has been found to be strongly related to positive psychological adjustment- the more positive the identity, the better one's mental health and the higher one's self esteem." ¹⁰
Underlying Assumptions	<p>A. Between 1.5 and 3% of the population is homosexual. "The 10% fallacy is part of the gay movement's campaign for acceptance."</p> <p>B. People with homosexual attractions often end up "slaves to their desires," have a "habit of loneliness," and lead a "terribly risky life." Because "sex just for pleasure [without openness to procreation] often leads to sexual addiction," many people have become addicted to gay or lesbian sex.</p> <p>C. Homosexuality is explicitly condemned in the Bible: "You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female. It is an abomination." (Lev 18:6) and "A man who sleeps with another man is an abomination and should be executed." (Lev 20:13)</p>	<p>A. "The homosexual orientation is found in about 10% of the population, a figure surprisingly constant across cultures, irrespective of different values or social standards."¹¹</p> <p>B. "The research on homosexuality is very clear. Homosexuality is neither mental illness nor moral depravity. It is simply the way a minority of the population expresses human love and sexuality. Study after study documents the mental health of gay men and lesbians. Studies of judgment, reliability, and social and vocational adaptiveness all show that gay men and lesbians function every bit as well as heterosexuals."¹²</p> <p>C. About seven of the Bible's one million verses refer to same-sex behavior, and none of them refer to homosexual orientation as it is understood today. Leviticus is a holiness code that forbids round haircuts, tattoos, wearing garments of mixed fabrics, and eating pork or shellfish.¹³</p>

Sources: Sections of note on Courage website (www.couragerc.net) include:

- FAQ: couragerc.net/FAQs.html
- The Nine Spiritual Truths: couragerc.net/PIPNineSpiritualTruths.html
- Six Areas of Spiritual Growth: couragerc.net/PIPSixAreasOfPersonalGrowth.html
- Eleven Church Teachings: couragerc.net/PIPElevenChurchTeachings.html
- Unsure of your Sexuality? couragerc.net/PIPUnsureOfYourSexuality.html
- Unlocking the "Coming Out Trap": couragerc.net/PIPUnlockingTheComingOutTrap.html

Other Sources:

1. Interview with Courage founder John Harvey: zenit.org/english/visualizza.phtml?sid=44630
2. NARTH Study Results on Courage website: couragerc.net/PIPPsychTreatmentStudy.html
- NARTH Study critiqued: religioustolerance.org/hom_nart.htm#study
3. "Homosexuality and Hope": cathmed.org/publications/homosexuality.html

- 4-6. American Psychological Association: "Answers to Questions About Sexual Orientation and Homosexuality": apa.org/topics/orientation.html
7. Statement from Academy of Pediatrics and the Council on Child & Adolescent Health: religioustolerance.org/hom_prof.htm
8. "Just the Facts": apa.org/pi/lgbc/publications/justthefacts.html#2
9. Fact Sheet on Ex-Gay Movement: whosoever.org/exgay/pflag.html and "The real meaning of ex-gay" by the American Psychiatric Association: advocate.com/exclusive_detail.asp?id=19739
10. apa.org/topics/orientation.html
- 11, 12. American Psychological Association Document from 1994: qrd.org/qrd/culture/1994/APA.statement.on.homosexuality-07.31.94
13. Homosexuality & The Bible: soulforce.org/article/homosexuality-bible