

# LAY WITNESS TALK

## Guidelines

As a Cursillistas, we, from time to time are requested to prepare a Witness Talk. Some would easily embrace or accept the honor to be a speaker. Others, would hesitate since people do not quite know what is expected of them and what they could possibly have to say to the community. To be a speaker is a huge responsibility but a great honor to share your inner most experience as you journey with Jesus Christ.

### What is witness talk?

A witness talk is a truthful living experience of what the speaker is or believes. **It is not a testimonial about what God has done for us, but rather, what we have done to introduce people to Christ or simply how we change our environment for Christ with God's help.** It is presented with humility, sincerity, integrity and personal.

### In Cursillo, we have 3 types of witness talk:

1. **Basic Witness Talk** (10 minutes time allocation) usually this witness talk is given by newer Cursillistas. About one to six months at the Ultreya. This type of witness will usually focus on a reflection of where they were, where they are now, how they got there and the joy/sorrow experienced along the way. This talk awakens the desire among all the participants to renew their own efforts at evangelizing their environments. It is important to have this type of witnesses for two reasons:
  - a. First, it helps the newer Cursillistas become an accepted part of the larger community.
  - b. Second, it helps the seasoned Cursillistas to remember the journey that they have been on.
2. **Regular Ultreya Witness Talk** (10-15 minutes time allocation) This witness talk is given by seasoned Cursillistas, who are active members in a group reunion. Speakers at an Ultreya are meant to encourage fellow Cursillistas in Christ. It is a demonstration of the true meaning of the word Ultreya “onward” “upward” – a cry of encouragement to all. The witness is about Jesus Christ, - how we live with Him and how we are trying to bring others to know about Him in our daily lives. It is about an experience and how faith, study and action bring us closer to Christ and bring others with us to Him.
3. **4<sup>th</sup> Day Witness Talk** (10-15 minutes time allocation) This talk is intended to be presented by a member of the Fourth Day community as a part of the 4<sup>th</sup> Day Ultreya celebration after the 3 Day Cursillo Weekend. This person is not a member

of the Cursillo weekend team. The speaker provides a witness as to how he/she is bringing out the message of the Cursillo. He/she must be able to give a witness to being a Group Reunion, attending Ultreya, and evangelizing in his/her environment. This talk serves as a wrap up talk to what the participants on the Weekend have heard for three days. It also serves as a continuing witness to others in the Fourth Day community that living a life of piety, study and action is possible in our world today. This talk will provide additional evidence that they (we) can change the world one environment at a time. It exhorts the new Cursillistas to perseverance and to value the methods of perseverance offered in the Cursillo (Group Reunion and Ultreya). This talk should be realistic and enthusiastic because it considers the problems, we face in pursuing in our world in the context of a central truth of the Cursillo: Christ and I are an overwhelming majority. It is also full of joy, because it is the personal witness of a Cursillista who has lived the message of Cursillo in his/her daily life and has seen Christ at work in the speaker's family, work, and social environments.

#### **A Witness Talk therefore includes:**

- A personal sharing of one's growing union with Christ,
- Your growing knowledge of Christ
- Bringing others to know Christ, or changing of circumstances so that Christ is better known, loved and served.
- Your love to Jesus and how you reflect this love in the relationships of those around you.
- Your talk should be short, simple, sincere, and enthusiastic.
- Your success and failure to bring others closer to Christ.

#### **A Witness Talk is *NOT*:**

- An emotional high (should not be all feelings).
- A tale of an extraordinary event (people can better relate to God working in the ordinary circumstances of life).
- Irrelevant to life (keep it down to earth).
- A propaganda message for his or her own favorite cause or organization.
- An outpouring of personal troubles that ends in a call for help.
- A testimonial or a conversation story. The most frequent confusion a lay witness talk is the difference between a "testimonial" and a "lay witness". A *"testimonial" is what Jesus has done FOR you. A "lay witness" is what you are doing for HIM!"*
- A life story or spiritual autobiography.
- A bible teaching or sermon.

When preparing your witness talk, consider why you are sharing something. Will this sharing inspire others to think of things they can do to transform their environments for Christ? It helps to consider the following questions:

- Does the talk show that Christ is in your life?
- Does Jesus have an important place in the talk?
- Does it show how much I want to follow Him?
- Will the experience I share give others the encouragement they need to try to transform their environments for Christ?
- Can other people readily identify with my situation?

All this may sound intimidating, but it is not! Witness talk is not expected to be something spectacular; but a simple, faithful witness in the normal, ongoing process of life.

### **Method of Preparing the 4<sup>th</sup> Day Witness Talk**

- Remind the new graduate Cursillistas that the world is the same as when they left it on Thursday evening. While they may have changed, they would return to face the same families, friends, and coworkers.
- Emphasize the greatness of the responsibility to be apostles in the world. Express that this responsibility is a natural consequence of being Christian, that the responsibility arises out of our baptism and confirmation.
- Reinforce the essential value of maintaining contact with Christ first and with their brothers and sisters in Christ second. The speaker witnesses how he/she has maintained contact with Christ through prayer, liturgy, sacraments, and a program of formation. The speaker witnesses as to how he/she has maintained contact with his/her brothers and sisters through regular participation in Group Reunion and Ultreya: keeping in contact with those who also are dedicated apostles. The speaker stresses how we are much stronger as a team than we are as individuals and that an isolated Christian is a paralyzed Christian.
- Emphasizes that all our lives should be perennial Cursillo in the sense that we should live the life we have found, rediscovered in the Cursillo in our normal surrounding. The speaker must be enthusiastic about his/her role in being an apostle. He/She lives out his/her life by giving of their own idealism, dedication (self-surrender) and spirit of love.
- End the Talk with final encouragements to the new cursillistas. The witness should emphasize that even though we cannot do everything, we all can and must do something. Remind them that they are filled with Grace from the

Holy Spirit. They have gifts and talents from God meant to be shared, and as Apostolic Christians, serve as the light and salt of the earth.

As you know, at the end of the witness talk, there is a period devoted to responses from listeners.

1. **Lay Response:** (2 to 3 minutes time allocation) There are two types of responses:

**AFFIRMATION and CONFIRMATION.**

- a. **In an affirming response**, the responder indicates that they understand the Christian principle or method used by the witness speaker. That the method has been effective for the speaker and that it might be something to try in another environment. All witness talk can be affirmed.
- b. **In confirming response**, the responder indicates that he/she has had a similar experience and has used the same principle or method of apostolic action and, through experience, confirms that it works. *A confirming response can only be given if there has been a similar experience.*

We must remember that response is not a critique. Each response should be very brief, to allow time for responses from the rest of the group.

2. **Clergy Response** (5 minutes time allocation) Following the community responses, the Spiritual Advisor is asked for a scriptural response to the witness talk. The spiritual Advisor (for the Ultreya) should have heard or obtain a copy of the witness presentation prior to it being given at the Ultreya. From the information, the Spiritual Advisor should prepare a summation in light of the Gospel. This is the point where the Spiritual Advisor attempts to unite the evangelistic growth with the spiritual growth, reminding those present that their lives and actions are indeed “Good News”.