

Lay Witness Talk

The Ultreya includes a Witness Talk. (10-15 minutes)

The purpose of this document is to help you become more familiar with what a Witness Talk is, and isn't, and to help you feel comfortable in giving a witness talk both within the Cursillo community and within your own environments. Given below is some information on witness talks, and how to give a good witness talk.

There are two parts in this document. Section 1 describes the witness talk rules during the normal monthly Ultreya events. Section 2 addresses the additional guidelines for the 4th Day Ultreya Witness talk after a Cursillo Weekend.

Section 1: Regular Ultreya Witness Talk

Cursillo communities often have difficulty finding Cursillistas to do Witness talks at Ultreyas, since people do not quite know what is expected of them and what they could possibly have to say to the gathered community. We are all capable and should be honored to be called at any time to give witness of Christ in our lives. Speakers at an Ultreya are meant to encourage their brothers and sisters 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 **not** a testimonial about what God has done for us, **but a witness as to what we have done** to introduce people to Christ or to change environments for Christ with God's help. It is about a recent experience and how through faith, study and action we are trying to draw closer to Christ and bring others with us to Him. It is also concrete and practical, describing how an action was planned within an environment and what happened regardless of whether or not it was an obvious or immediate success. In 5-10 minutes, you cannot say much, so make the point well and simply relate an experience without more examples and details. You should not over-prepare. It is a talk being shared with friends.

A Witness Talk therefore includes:

- Your description of how you live your life with Christ and how you are trying to bring others to know Him in the ordinary circumstances of your life. How you love Jesus and

how you reflect this love in the relationships of those around you. Do others see your love of Christ in your actions?

- Sharing a recent living experience (preferably within the past 6 weeks) by making just 1-2 points of what you are doing for Christ, how you share Jesus in the normal circumstances of your life.
- Your talk should be simple, sincere, concrete and practical: the “*who, what, where when and why*” of your action. Tell what happened as a result - both successes and failures. What did you plan to do? What was the outcome? Success or disappointment?

A Witness Talk is NOT:

- Sensational
- A testimonial or a conversion story. The most frequent confusion concerning 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 history or spiritual autobiography
- A Bible teaching or sermon
- Too emotional - sharing deep, raw, personal emotions is better shared within a more personal setting with close friends or your spiritual advisor.

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 is helpful to consider these questions:

- Does the talk show that Christ is in my 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! The lay witness is not expected to be something spectacular or awe inspiring; but a simple, faithful witness in the normal, ongoing process of life. When we center our lives on Christ, believe in and use the Cursillo method of personal, one-to-

one contact (make a friend, be a friend, bring your friend to Christ, or closer to Christ) then we are all doing something which can be used in a lay witness talk.

Guiding Questions:

- What are your environments?
- What is a recent (preferably within the past 6 weeks) living example of how you planned to act to bring Christ into one of these environments?
- What did you do?
- What was the outcome?
- How did this action help bring Christ into that environment?

Responding to a Witness Talk

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)

There may be two types of responses: **Affirmation** and **Confirmation**.

- In an **affirming** response, the responder indicates that they understand the Christian principle or method used by the lay witness speaker has been effective for the speaker and that it might be something to try in another environment. All lay witness talks can be affirmed.
- In a **confirming** response, the responder indicates that s/he 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.

The main point to remember is that the 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)

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”.

Section 2: 4th Day Witness Talk

- This talk is intended to be presented by a member of the Fourth Day community as part of the 4th Day Ultreya Celebration after the 3 Day Cursillo Weekend. This person is not a member of the team.
- The presenter is to provide a witness as to how he/she is bringing out the message of the Cursillo. He/she must be able to give witness to being in 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 is to be 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.

METHOD OF PREPARING THE TALK

- Remind the Cursillistas that they are sent into the world by Christ. Remind them that the world is the same now as when they left it on Thursday evening. However, they have changed and they have returned 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 of our lives should be a perennial Cursillo in the sense that we should live the life we have found, rediscovered, or strengthened in the Cursillo in our normal surroundings. 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.