

THE WITNESS TALK AT ULTREYA & REUNION MASSES

Witness talks are given at Ultreya (large group reunions) or at Reunion masses. They are similar to grouping where you discuss your recent encounters with Christ including piety study and action. The difference is; the witness talk is thought out and prepared ahead of time and is a little longer in time (10 minutes). It focuses on one or two themes, or a single event. And, it is given to the entire group that is present at the Ultreya or Mass rather than just a few people that you are grouping with.

The **purpose** of the witness talk is **encouragement**. We are called to encourage our brothers and sisters to continue in their efforts to become better apostles for Christ and His church.

So how do we encourage? We talk about our **recent** experiences and encounters both good and bad. We can relate these to Piety, Study and Action. Notice I said **recent**. This is not a life story or something that happened long ago. You may refer to something in the past if it is relevant to the current event but **don't witness about something you did years ago**.
Example; Carol Steir gave a witness that included the present state of the church and she mentioned that the rosary society that she has been praying with for 20 years always said this prayer after each decade. "Eternal Father please send us holy priests.....". she never gave it much thought until recently with the pedophile and predator gay priest scandal that has come to light. So that was ok.

The witness should be about **ordinary things** that you do in your life. It doesn't need to be spectacular or miraculous. You don't need to have some unbelievable momentous experience. Just everyday ordinary stuff. If you have a miraculous encounter by all means tell us about it. But that is rare. Just relate your ordinary every day life experience.

The church that we find ourselves in is our current environment. This may be our family, neighborhood, work place or social arena. It can be about seemingly random encounters with strangers or people that God put in our path. The witness should, therefore, be centered on **your efforts at evangelization** in those areas, how the Lord is working through you to build up His Kingdom on earth. The specific role you will be filling is to witness to current evangelizing efforts.

WHAT THE WITNESS TALK SHOULD NOT BE:

- It should **not be sensational**. We are not in competition with each other. What we ask is that **it be real. Unembellished.**
- It should **not be a sermon** or an instruction in Cursillo or Catholicism. That area is covered in the Doctrinal talk given after the witness.

I know that I am guilty of this on occasion. I notice that other teachers by profession have the same issues that I do. Resist the temptation. Just tell your story and **let the Holy Spirit teach** and guide the listeners based on what they hear of your testimony.

- The length of the witness talk should be no more than **10 minutes**. When preparing your talk, see how long it takes ahead of time by reading it out loud at home the same as if you are giving it to the group.

OK I'm Guilty again. I've given 2 or 3 witnesses that lasted 20 minutes. I'm the only one who is allowed to do that because I'm the lay director. No only kidding. We all should keep them short.

- It need not be overly **emotional**. Your honest delivery will convey the message. If you get choked up over something personal, great but don't ever try to plan or act out emotions to make a point.
- Please **don't try to entertain**. Don't try to be funny or witty or clever or put on a show. No one comes here to be entertained. Its ok to say something funny here and there but don't make that the overriding presentation. That really detracts from the good message that you have to encourage others to be disciples of the Lord and help spread the good news by our actions among those who God puts in our 1 square meter.
- This is **not a formal talk**. You are sharing your witness with friends.

WHAT THE WITNESS TALK SHOULD BE:

- It should be **your life** lived out as a Catholic and a Cursillista and how the Lord is working through you in your environment. *One witness I gave was about a waitress that needed prayers who just happened to waited on us. Another was about a battered women that God put in my path while I*

was on a job in Illinois. One was about my fathers baptism. A couple on messages that I believe were from God. Just everyday life.

- It should be concrete and **practical**, carried out in the normal flow of your life.
- It should be centered on and **be about Christ and how you were His instrument**. Or how God put you in a certain situation where you could be his voice or his hands or his messenger, or His sacrificial lamb.
- It should be centered in the **present**, usually within **the past 6 months**. *I counted 19 Cursillo witnesses that I have given and almost all of them were events that happened in just the last few weeks of my talk. Two of them were spur of the moment because no one signed up or didn't show up. The last one was on something heard just 2 days before my witness. I didn't have anything in mind and then I heard something on the radio that I could relate to and so that became the witness that I shared with the group. Now I'm not recommending waiting until the day before to write a witness but in this case I kept praying to the Holy Spirit to give me something to share with my Ultreya, and He did.*
- It should be **descriptive**, explaining only enough of the Who, What, Where, When and How necessary to make your witness clear.
- It should concentrate only on **1 or 2 points** rather than a whole series of examples.
- A brief passage from the **Scriptures** may be read that will tie into your witness. This is not a Bible Study. Too many scripture passages only serve to complicate your witness. It's more proper for the Doctrinal speaker to use some bible passages.

WITNESSING OR TALKING IN PUBLIC IS NOT ALWAYS EASY FOR SOME PEOPLE. HERE ARE SOME HELPFUL HINTS:

We are all friends in Cursillo. Speak as if you were talking to your best friend. You are not putting on a show or on a stage. You are only telling your friends how God is working in your every day, ordinary life.

Ask your permanent group members for help. Discuss it with them. Maybe give your talk to a couple of them before hand as practice and also to get their constructive input.

Begin your talk with a **prayer**. With the Holy Spirits help, there is nothing you can't do.

Some people like to **write out** their talk in full, while others just work off of **Bullet points**. Either way Be sure to supply the Doctrinal speaker with a **copy of your talk** in advance (a one week prior if possible). The Doctrinal is done by a priest, deacon, or a religious at the reunion Mass.

At Ultreya, if a **Doctrinal** is not possible, then a **Spiritual Reflection** may be given by a layperson that is recognized in the Cursillo community as a person of prayer and insight. Or we could have **Echo's**

All of these **aspects** of a witness talk that I just gave are **guidelines**. Try to follow them. However, there may be exceptions to the rule at times. If you want to do something a little different, follow your conscience and just ask yourself if it is appropriate. If it is go for it.

WHAT IS AN ECHO?

Echo's are comments by the people who just heard your witness. They are meant to add to, or reinforce themes or topics covered in the witness. For example a person echoing may recall a similar incident or event in their life.

You may point out something that was said that will help you in your situation. Or something that gave you hope.

An echo is not meant to say how much you enjoyed the talk, or compliment the witness speaker on the good job that they did.

Remember the ABC's of witness talks. They are to be Audible, Brief, and Christ centered.

May God bless you as you seek to give example and strength to our community

Summary Witness talks are:

The purpose is to **Encourage** one another

Recent prayer, study, evangelizing efforts or events

Around **10 minutes** long.

ordinary things

centered on your efforts at **evangelization**

doesn't have to be **sensational**

not be a **sermon**

don't try to **entertain**

it is about **your life**

be about **Christ** and how you were **His instrument**

It should be **descriptive**

not a **Bible Study**

The Cursillo Doctrinal or Spiritual Reflection

What it should be:

The Doctrinal at a Cursillo Reunion Mass, or Ultreya, is meant to instruct, inspire, encourage, exhort and guide those who hear it to promote a closer walk with Christ and each other. It must be given by a priest, deacon or professed religious. It is the responsibility of the witness speaker to arrange this.

At Ultreya, if a Doctrinal is not possible, a qualified layperson may do a Spiritual Reflection in its place. It must be referenced as such; as it is not a Doctrinal. The layperson should be one who is respected in the community of Cursillo, knowledgeable in the Cursillo method, the scriptures and church doctrine related to the topic.

The Doctrinal, or Spiritual Reflection, must be based on the material given in the witness – imparting only Catholic doctrine as it applies to the witness. It is important that the witness be based on an aspect of Cursillo such as: Piety, Study, Action / Evangelization, Environments, Obstacles, Prayer, Faith, and the successes and failures of the individual in living the Cursillo method in the relationships we encounter. The Doctrinal will focus on these themes or topics and the related outcomes.

Sources for this teaching are: Cursillo literature (such as: Leaders Guide, The Fundamentals, Three Day Weekend, Pilgrim's Guide), sacred scripture, The Catechism of the Catholic Church, the Documents of Vatican II, and selected supportive literature and materials. Only Catholic Church teachings can be referenced.

The Doctrinal, or Spiritual Reflection, should be concise and relatively brief, approximately ten minutes in length. It is important that the Doctrinal speaker receive a written or typed copy of the Witness at least one week before it is to be given. This will have to be worked out between the speakers and confirmed by the Ultreya coordinator. The Doctrinal speaker should also work to ensure the quality of the witness as to content, length and message intent.

What it is not:

The Doctrinal, or Spiritual Reflection, is not:

- to reference non Doctrinal teaching from private revelation.
- a Bible Study
- a reflection on the Scriptures or the Daily Readings
- a rambling dissertation
- a time to chastise anyone
- a forum for private opinion
- a time to recruit people for projects

an opportunity for the Doctrinal speaker to witness