

Lay Witness Talk Guidelines:

This talk should always deal with the same topic: “How I Am Changing My Environment for Christ.” It should be brief, no longer than 10 minutes. It is a personal, experiential story that centers on Christ. It is a simple, brief talk about a recent experience in which the speaker tried to do something to bring his or her corner of the world closer to Christ using the Cursillo method. It should be an example of apostolic action that was entered into prayerfully, where the speaker studied an environment and planned some action.

This may sound intimidating, but it should not be. The lay witness is not expected to do something spectacular or awe inspiring; but a simple, faithful witness in the normal, ongoing process of life. When we center our life on Christ, believe in and use the Cursillo method of personal, one-to-one contact (make a friend, be a friend, bring a friend to Christ) then we are all doing something which can be used in a witness talk. Whether it is an apostolic success or disappointment, the results of the action should be included in the talk,

There are four questions to ask yourself to improve a lay witness talk and to make certain that the talk is on target:

1. Does the experience show that Christ is at the center of my life?
2. Does it show how much I want to follow Him?
3. Is Christ the most important person involved in the talk? (is the topic more about me or Christ?)
4. Will sharing this experience possibly help someone else to think of things they might use to transform one of their environments for Christ?

Here are a few things that the lay witness talk should NOT be:

Too long (10 minutes)

Overly sensational,

Overly emotional,

Specifically Cursillo oriented,

Instructional (i.e. “my latest insight”),

And especially it should NOT be a “testimonial”

(A testimonial is what Jesus has done for you, NOT what you have done for Him.)

At the end of the witness talk there is a period of time (usually 10 minutes) for responses from the listeners. A selected lay witness responder will offer an echo response (2-3 minutes) and then the remainder of the allotted time will be open to the floor for further responses. The lay witness should contact the lay witness responder to give a general idea of the talk so that the responder can reflect on how the talk relates to his/her life. The lay witness responder should also begin praying for the speaker and the talk.

A lay witness response can be either an Affirmation or a Confirmation. An affirmation response indicates that the responder hears the speaker describing a particular Christian principle of method. The responder recognizes this principle to be effective in apostolic action, or has known it to be effective for others, or it might be something to try in another environment. In a confirming response, the responder indicates that he/she has used the same principle or method of apostolic action and experience indicates that it works. Anyone asked to do a lay witness response can do either type of response. All lay witness talks can be affirmed. The response should last about 2-3 minutes and should NOT be a critique.

After the allotted 10 minutes of responses, the Spiritual Director will do a gospel response tying the lay witness talk and responses to scripture. The lay witness should provide the Spiritual Director with a copy of his/her talk prior to the Ultreya. The intention is for the Spiritual Director to relate what has been said in the witness talk to something from the scriptures, primarily the New Testament. By this teaching, the Spiritual Director helps everyone at the Ultreya to grow spiritually by showing how scripture relates to daily life.

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