

VENICE CURSILLO MOVEMENT

Giving a Witness Talk at an Ultreya

A Definition:

“The Ultreya is a community which makes itself visible in a gathering. It is a community of those who, in an attitude of progressive conversion, are united in one faith, one Lord and one Baptism. Because of this, they feel the need for coming together to share and mutually give power to each other’s living what is fundamental for being a Christian and they feel a conscious commitment to discover and make concrete their style of living it, in accord with their personal vocation.

The Ultreya is a supplement to the ecclesial community as an instrument of perseverance and growth in the Christian Life.”

Fundamental Ideas

Why a Witness Talk?

1. To give witness to a person’s growth in their living union with Christ so that others may be encouraged to go and do likewise.
2. To expose others to the innumerable apostolic life styles being lived within the Christian community by a variety of witnesses so they may encounter a broad range of possibilities for Christian growth and evangelization.
3. To offer concrete examples of how to live what is fundamental for being a Christian in one's family, neighborhood, place of work, or with one’s friends.
4. To share in a practical way, so it may be imitated, how one is evangelizing his or her environment.

How is a Witness Talk Given?

1. In a “vivencial” way, in other words the living experience of what one is or believes. As in all Cursillo talks, a truth is presented (e.g. God is love), and then a living experience from the life of the speaker is witnessed to (e.g., a recent example from the person’s life to make the point of the truth).
2. By preparing beforehand through prayer and palanca for discernment as to what to share so that the witness will be natural, sincere, normal and personal.
3. Scripture should be used to relate the truth to life and to the experience itself so the community may penetrate more deeply into the Word of God.
4. The witness should not be an instruction nor an intellectual exercise but something that is a personal sharing of one's:
 - a. Holiness, growing in union with Christ;
 - b. Formation, growing in knowledge of Christ;
 - c. Evangelization, bringing others to know Him or the changing of circumstances so that HE is better known, loved and served.
5. Keep it simple, short (10 Minutes) and enthusiastic. It should be so balanced that it is not:
 - a. “Cursillo sharing” (since I made my Cursillo),
 - b. An emotional high (not all “feelings”),
 - c. An extraordinary event (God usually works in the ordinary circumstances of our life),
 - d. Irrelevant to life (keep it down to earth),
 - e. A propaganda message for his or her own thing,
 - f. An outpouring of personal troubles that ends in a call for help.

What are the Essential Elements of a Witness Talk?

The three essential elements are:

1. A truth, that comes through the outline of the talk;
2. A life, that of the person giving the talk;
3. A living experience that gives witness to the truth present and being lived in the being of the person.

Therefore, a witness talk should unfold as follows:

1. Piety - Christ, my personal experience of Him in my life and circumstances;
2. Study - Scripture, how my life is tied to the gospel;
3. Action - Living experience of my love of God, and love of neighbor from my life at the present moment.

Who Can Give a Witness Talk?

One who is living the truth he or she is going to witness to. When a person talks about what he or she is living, it is always told well as long as they do not live it merely to tell it.

When we seek orators instead of holiness we usually end up with only oratory. When we seek out those who are living the life in grace to the best of their ability, when they speak, it is truly a witness. (When I came to you, I did not come proclaiming God's testimony with any particular eloquence. 1 Cor. 2:1).

Personalities who dazzle will entertain either by their eloquence, wit or knowledge. Those who live close to God will reflect Him. A person cannot share what he does not have. It is important that those who share do so because of the testimony of the life they live, and not because it is their "turn."

NOTE:

The brief comments made by lay persons after the witness talk should relate to the same circumstances as the speaker but with their own personal experience confirming what was said.

Witness speakers should give the spiritual advisor of the Ultreya (if present) some idea of the theme and scripture references before the Ultreya, so he can prepare his summation and interpret the witness in the light of the Gospel.