



Faith, Hope & Courage

WITNESS GUIDE

What is a witness presentation?

One of the most effective means of presenting a stewardship message is through **witness presentations**. Quite simply, a witness presentation (many times called a lay witness presentation) is a talk made from the pulpit to Mass attendees/other parishioners by a fellow layperson, minister, or parishioner. This type of presentation gives the people a different voice, and hopefully a message from someone “just like them”. However, for ***Faith, Hope & Courage***, the right person to give the witness may be a member of staff due to their experience of parish life during this time.

Each presentation offers a unique opportunity to:

- Say “thank you” to those who are participating in the life of the Church. We can never say “thank you” often enough!
- Bring added depth, knowledge, and personal experience.
- Inspire people to continue their personal journey of becoming good stewards.
- Present specific, first-hand information about a specific effort.
- Show how supporting this effort is an investment in the future, of the parish, and/or the local Catholic Church.

This presentation for ***Faith, Hope & Courage*** must be given by an individual or couple with personal experience. The presenter should relate to how the parish was able to respond during the pandemic timeframe thanks to those who were able to keep giving. This means this individual or couple may:

- Have **been served** by parish outreach and ministry
- Have **been working** with a particular outreach or ministry
- **Serve in a staff role** affected by the shutdown

The timing of the presentation depends on the preference of parish leadership. It is recommended that this presentation for ***Faith, Hope & Courage*** take place after a short homily at each Mass.

Tips for Presenters

Before developing your talk, presenters are encouraged to:

- Watch the example video
- Learn more about the purpose of your presentation by speaking with your pastor. Why is **Faith, Hope & Courage** needed? How are parishioners being asked to participate? Why should they do it?
- Review the “Dos” and “Don’ts” listed below.

Please do:

- ✓ *Write out your talk, send it to your pastor and practice ahead of time.* Plan on 3 to 5 minutes maximum and remember: “practice makes perfect”. Practice and rehearse your talk so you are comfortable with it and you know it falls within the 3 to 5 minute timeframe. If possible, practice it in the church when only the pastor is there and use the sound system. Your pastor can provide positive feedback and help you “tweak” the presentation. You can also ask someone who has served as a lay witness in the past to review your talk with you. They have literally been in your situation, and they will have helpful hints that can assist you in making your presentation.
- ✓ *Grab attention early.* A famous quote, an unexpected anecdote, or a funny story at the very beginning of your talk can grab the attention of your audience and get them to focus on what is coming.
- ✓ *Expect large and small Masses.* Some Masses will have less attendees than others, which means that you will need to adjust your style. In a smaller group, you must make eye contact and directly engage the attendees. Engaging a larger group is easier – you can look out over the group (just a bit above their heads) and to them it seems you are looking AT them. Be prepared to make these adjustments immediately prior to Mass.
- ✓ *Be positive and enthusiastic.* You are an official representative of your parish! Enjoy this opportunity to tell others about our good works in ministry and service.
- ✓ *Be honest! Be yourself! Be sincere!* Your presentation should tell YOUR story and testimony in YOUR voice, not someone else’s. Your belief and support will convince others of the importance of supporting the cause.
- ✓ *Be an ADVOCATE, not a collector.* A collector is just there to ask for money. An advocate will champion the cause.
- ✓ *Say a short prayer before you make your presentation.* “Lord, be present in my presentation with my fellow brothers and sisters as I continue to do my part in building Your Kingdom.”
- ✓ *Pay attention to non-verbal responses from the audience.* Unless you are engaging the audience visually, it is difficult to catch non-verbal clues, which can help you in gauging the effectiveness of your message. Things like head nods, smiles, and head tilts all point to a positive reaction from the audience. And of course, laughter response to light-hearted comments is always positive feedback!

Please don't:

- *Stress church “needs” or “budgets” as a reason to give.* People give to people, people give to causes, people give because it is the right thing to do. And keep in mind, your pastor reviewed the financials the week before and revisiting them isn't needed.
- *Talk in dollar or time amounts that “everyone can give”.* We aren't talking about equal giving, but sacrificial giving. Every gift isn't going to be equal because everyone's level of sacrifice is different, especially now as a large percentage of our population is experiencing loss of employment.
- *Use threats of possible consequences.* No one responds well to negative reinforcement or threats.
- *Suggest that participation is an obligation.* Stewardship is a choice, a journey, and a process each individual must travel at their own pace. We should be inspiring people to think about where they are in their process, and how they can take steps on their journey. We should teach about giving back because it is the right thing to do, it is what God asks us to do.

Words of Inspiration (Quotables)

“Give something, however small, to the one in need. For it is not small to one who has nothing. Neither is it small to God, if we have given what we could.” – St. Gregory Nazianzen

“Life is not given to us to be jealously guarded for ourselves, but is given to us so that we may give it in turn.” – Pope Francis, to an audience on April 24, 2013

“Let us protect with love all that God has given us!” – Pope Francis, March 19, 2013

“In the end, everything has been entrusted to our protection, and all of us are responsible for it. Be protectors of God’s gifts!” – Pope Francis, March 19, 2013

“It means protecting people, showing loving concern for each and every person, especially children, the elderly, those in need, who are often the last we think about.” – Pope Francis, March 19, 2013

“Let us never forget that authentic power is service.” – Pope Francis, March 19, 2013 - Easter Urbi et orbi message

“Above all, the desert within, when we have no love for God or neighbour, when we fail to realize that we are guardians of all that the Creator has given us and continues to give us. God’s mercy can make even the driest land become a garden, can restore life to dry bones (cf. Ez 37:1-14).” – Pope Francis, March 19, 2013 – Easter Urbi et orbi message

Scriptural References

John 14:12 “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works that I do”

Mark 9:36-37 “He then took a little child whom he set among them and embraced, and he said to them, ‘Anyone who welcomes a little child such as this in my name, welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me, welcomes not me but the one who sent me.’”

1 Chronicles 29:14-16 “For everything is from you, and we only give you what we have received from you.”

Deuteronomy 16:10, 16-17 “No one shall appear before the Lord empty-handed, but each of you with as much as he can give, in proportion to the blessings which the Lord, God has bestowed on you.”

Proverbs 11:25 “He who confers benefits will be amply enriched, and he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.”

Sirach 35:7-10 “Give to the Most High as He has given to you, generously, according to your means.”

Acts 20:35 “And keep in mind the words of the Lord Jesus who himself said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

1 Corinthians 12:4-7 "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."

2 Corinthians 8:12 "For if eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has-not according to what one does not have."

2 Corinthians 9:6-9 "The one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. As it is written, "He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."

Hebrews 13:16 "Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have: God is pleased by sacrifices of that kind."

Luke 6:38 "Give and gifts will be given to you."

Luke 6:38 "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"

Luke 12:48 "From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded."

Mathew 10:37-42 "Whoever gives only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones, will surely not lose his reward."

Matthew 10:8 "You received without payment; give without payment."

1 Peter 4:10 "As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace."

Presentation Outline

Introduction

Briefly describe your family, the number of years you have been members of the parish.

Share a personal story or experience

- How are you involved in ministry yourself?
- Have you witnessed lives being changed more specifically in these hectic times?
- How does this make you feel?
- What stories can you share?

Thank everyone for what they have done in the past to make ministry possible at your parish

*Tell them why **Faith, Hope & Courage** is important*

- Many are experiencing changes, and it is important for us to realize as a parish family that individual changes can and will affect parish life.
- If we are truly in this together, we need to plan together for continued ministry and outreach to effectively adjust if needed, and to ensure the overall health of the parish.
- Most have taken time to evaluate their household budgets. This parish family is being responsible in doing the same.
- It is important for parishioners to know where the parish stands financially and have time to discern in what ways they can commit to support its mission.
- It is also important for parishioners to feel they can share if they need assistance.

*Invite fellow parishioners to make a commitment to **Faith, Hope & Courage***

- Invite all to join you in committing or recommitting.
- Ask them to look at what they have been given, and to make a response of gratitude. Ask them to make their commitment intentionally, with purpose, and live out their call as disciples.

Thank them, and let them know you will be in the back of the church/outside the main entry/specific location if they would like to speak with you after Mass.