

Witness Presentation 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 talk) 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.”

Why should we include witness presentations in our *Catholic Ministry Appeal* effort?

Each witness 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 why supporting the appeal is important, is an investment in the future of the parish, local community, larger ministry, and/or our diocesan Church.

Who would make a strong witness?

A witness presentation for the *Catholic Ministry Appeal* at a parish in the Active Phase should be given by an individual or couple with personal experience and currently support/have given to the appeal. The presenter should relate to why they give and why this new appeal is so exciting for ministry. This means the presenter may:

- Have **been served** by diocesan outreach and ministry
- Have **been working** with a particular outreach or ministry
- Have **been giving** to a particular outreach or ministry
- **Serve in a staff role** that works with diocesan outreach and ministry

While it isn’t necessary for a presenter to have formal training, it is important for presenters to be relatable to those receiving the message. Is this a fellow parishioner, someone working in their parish? Is this someone who has benefited from their past support of larger ministry and they want to offer thanks and share a wonderful testimonial of how ministry makes a difference? Is this a diocesan minister who has personal and professional experience they can share to help parishioners understand how ministry makes a difference?

When should the presentation take place?

When the presentation takes place depends on the preference of parish leadership. While some parish leadership prefer a pre-Mass presentation, or a presentation after Mass, it is recommended that it take place after a short homily at each Mass.

Why after a short homily?

We know a certain percentage of attendees arrive late, and some leave early. However, everyone is present for the homily and remains through Communion.

Tips for Presenters:

- Watch the example video.
- Learn more about the purpose of your presentation by speaking with your pastor. Review the FAQ about the appeal (found on the parish resource page at www.dosp.org/catholicministryappeal/2024parishresources/) to find out:
- Review these “Dos” and “Don’ts”:

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.
- *Offer/suggest 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 stewardship process, and that giving back by supporting larger ministry is the right thing to do, it is what God asks us to do.

Presentation Outline:

Introduction

Briefly describe you – your role, your association with the parish and/or larger church ministry

Thank everyone for what they have done in the past to make ministry possible at your parish, and to make larger ministry possible for our larger Church

Share a personal story or experience that connects you to larger ministry

- Have you been a recipient of diocesan ministry through Catholic Charities?
- Have you experienced training, support or assistance from diocesan ministry that helped you in your ministry to your parish (such as training from Youth and Young Adult Ministry, or working with the Vocations Office to promote vocations in your parish?)
- Have you witnessed lives being changed?
- How does this make you feel? What stories can you share?

Tell them why the Catholic Ministry Appeal is important

- Only larger ministry and outreach are funded through direct donations to the *Catholic Ministry Appeal*.
- Supporting our larger ministry and outreach through the *Catholic Ministry Appeal* is something we can work together on to change thousands of lives each year all over our five-county diocese.
- We all have the opportunity to participate – all parishioners in all parishes and missions in our diocese - so we can grow and serve even more people for Christ.

Invite parishioners to make a commitment to the Catholic Ministry Appeal

- Invite all to join you in committing.
- 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.

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 4:8-10 "As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace."