

**Areté**   
CENTRE FOR MISSIONARY LEADERSHIP  
A work of the Missionaries of God's Love

Testimony

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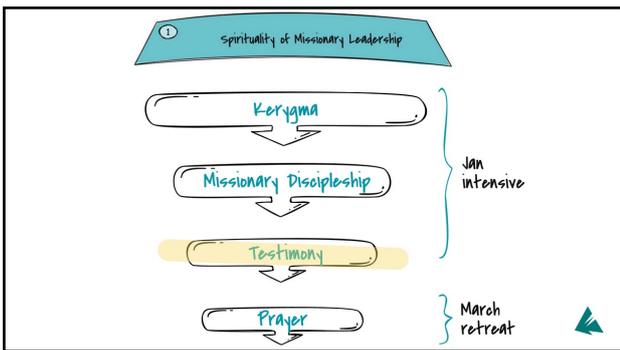
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"Be ready to give a reason for the hope that you have"  
1 Peter 3:15  
The basis of apologetics? Or a more personal word?



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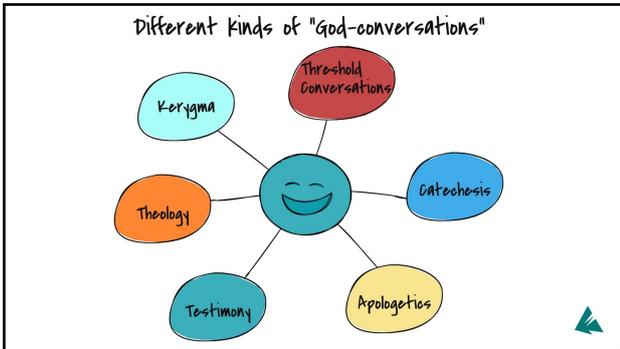
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**What is Testimony? An initial definition**

A personal account of the Lord's work in your life

An exemplary narrative

a model of 'living one's self-story within the interpretive landscape of the Christian narrative world'. (Frank Rogers)

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**Why testify?**

- Why would you share something of your story of what God's been doing in and through you?
- "Preach the Gospel at all times, and if necessary, use words"
  - attr. to St Francis of Assisi
- "Testimony is never a mere matter of words ... Christianity, then, propagates itself not only by explicit or verbal testimony, but even more by implicit, or factual, testimony - that is, by the testimony of transformed lives"
  - Cardinal Avery Dulles SJ
- So is testimony necessary then?

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Paul VI on Witness

Above all the Gospel must be proclaimed by witness.

Take a Christian or a handful of Christians who, in the midst of their own community, show their capacity for understanding and acceptance, their sharing of life and destiny with other people, their solidarity with the efforts of all for whatever is noble and good.

Let us suppose that, in addition, they radiate in an altogether simple and unaffected way their faith in values that go beyond current values, and their hope in something that is not seen and that one would not dare to imagine.



Seven horizontal lines for writing.

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Paul VI on witness

Through this wordless witness these Christians stir up irresistible questions in the hearts of those who see how they live:

Why are they like this?

Why do they live in this way?

What or who is it that inspires them?

Why are they in our midst?

Such a witness is already a silent proclamation of the Good News and a very powerful and effective one.

Here we have an initial act of evangelization.



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Paul VI on witness

The above questions will ask, whether they are people to whom Christ has never been proclaimed, or baptized people who do not practice, or people who live as nominal Christians but according to principles that are in no way Christian, or people who are seeking, and not without suffering, something or someone whom they sense but cannot name.



Seven horizontal lines for writing.

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### Paul VI on Witness

Other questions will arise, deeper and more demanding ones, questions evoked by this witness which involves presence, sharing, solidarity, and which is an essential element, and generally the first one, in evangelisation."

Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 21



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### Paul VI on the need to speak

Nevertheless this always remains insufficient, because even the finest witness will prove ineffective in the long run if it is not explained, justified – what Peter called always having "your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you all have" – and made explicit by a clear and unequivocal proclamation (kerygma) of the Lord Jesus.



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### Paul VI on the need to speak

The Good News proclaimed by the witness of life sooner or later has to be proclaimed by the word of life. There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed.

Paul VI, EN 22



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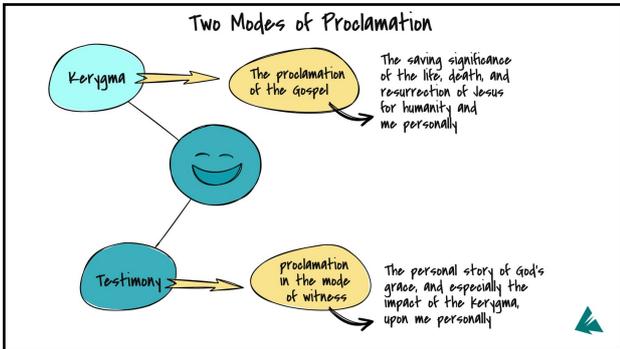
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**The "fundamental message":**

"the personal love of God who became man, who gave himself up for us, who is living and who offers us his salvation and his friendship"

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 128

- This may be **announced** – the kerygma
- Or its **personal impact** may be **shared** - testimony

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**The Foundational Testimony**

- The women at the tomb
- Testimony is bearing witness to the Risen Jesus present among his people by the power of his Holy Spirit.

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### Testimony is not only for others

- It does something to the one testifying
- It is not simply describing, but is also constructing
- "That which remains unspoken is often murky, opaque and of little significance to our everyday lives"  
Amanda Drury
- "Saying things aloud is part of how we come to believe. We talk our way toward belief, talk our way from tentative belief through doubt to firmer belief, talk our way toward believing more fully, more clearly, more deeply".  
Thomas Long



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### Settings for Testimony

Formal	e.g. sharing at an event	sharing at an event with no prior warning (!)
	"giving your testimony" to a friend over coffee	sharing about what the Lord is doing over coffee
Informal	Prepared	Spontaneous



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### Testimonies in the Midst of Conversation

- We tend to think of testimony as happening in a formal and prepared way – at an event like this, for example.
- But the informal opportunities – for both prepared and spontaneous testimony are so so important.
- These are a "daily responsibility":  
"This is the *informal* preaching which takes place *in the middle of a conversation*, something along the lines of what a missionary does when visiting a home. Being a disciple means being constantly ready to bring the love of Jesus to others, and this can happen unexpectedly and in any place" (EG 127).



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### Two Kinds of Testimony

#### Conversion Stories

- How have you responded to the kerygma?
- What were the circumstances, before, during, and after, by which you came to an initial (or personally appropriated) faith in Jesus
- Need not be dramatic

#### Stories of Grace

- Not about initial conversion per se.
- About a particular event or experience in which you experienced the Lord's action (grace) in your life
- e.g. my sister




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### Stories of Grace ...

Are "humbler" [than conversion stories] – they are those "shorter , oftentimes simple, intentionally contained stories of particular experiences, relationships, obstacles, sufferings, joys, and even epiphanies by which those whom the Lord has looked upon have begun learning to see themselves - and, in some way, the world, in God's light"

Leonard DeLorenzo, *Witness: Learning to Tell the Stories of Grace that Illumine our Lives*, p3




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### Underneath a Story of Grace ...

- Is the opportunity to reflect upon how we think about **grace**
- How does God act in the world?
  - Watchmaker
  - Divine Butler
  - Cosmic Therapist
- **Sacramental view of the world**
  - How is God at work in the world and in our lives?
  - Makes us more fully human – grace observes, confirms, and elevates human nature
  - Still in the light of the kerygma




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### The Exercise: Crafting Testimonies

- Conversion Stories
- Stories of Grace



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