

Credo: How does belief move me to give witness?

Disciples of Jesus are called to be courageous, humble, truthful, compassionate, and merciful. Authentic witness must emerge from *credo*, an unshakable confidence that moves us to live as active members in the world yet not of the world.

Yet our courage and boldness are rooted not in the false understanding of our own influence or the strength of our voice, but rather in the recognition of God's grace at work through us, we who are his humble servants and instruments. So it is not a matter of 'overwhelming' others but rather a powerful witness comes by way of steadfast, humble, compassionate adherence to what has been Revealed and handed down to us. "For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor. 4: 5)

And so authentic witness is not about 'volume' or 'influence.' I am reminded of an experience I would occasionally have while living in Rome. It was not uncommon to be in line and hear an American at the front trying to ask for something or explain something in English. When the Italian worker could not understand, the American would repeat a second time, only in a really loud voice, hoping that perhaps the volume would help them understand. Unfortunately, it doesn't work that way. Volume doesn't help understanding. Holy witness does. Witness is about the steady, truthful, loving, and courageous living of the Gospel, dying to ourselves and our passions, our sinfulness, our control, our pride, and living anew in Christ.

In his first encyclical letter (*Lumen Fidei*, the Light of Faith) by Pope Francis in 2013, he shared these words: "The word, once accepted, becomes a response, a confession of faith, that spreads to others and invites them to believe" (LF, 37) And he goes on to say: "For transmitting a purely doctrinal content, an idea might suffice or perhaps a book or the repetition of a spoken message. But what is communicated in the church, what is handed down in her living tradition, is the new light born of an encounter with the true God, a light that touches us at the core of our being and engages our minds, wills and emotions, opening us to relationships lived in communion" (LF, 40)

And in a moving homily by Origen assigned for the feast of Sts. Marcellinus and Peter, he says: "If passing from unbelief to faith means that we have passed from death to life, we should not be surprised to find that the world hates us. Now is the time for Christians to rejoice, since Scripture says that we should rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering trains us to endure with patience, patient endurance makes us pleasing to God, and being pleasing to God gives us ground for a hope that will not be disappointed. Only let the love of God be poured forth in our hearts through the Holy Spirit."

The less I believe, the more I put my whole self into the world, into the temporal things of this life to the exclusion of growing in holiness and virtue. Living the *credo* may make us counter cultural, but we ought never fear. "Do not be anxious about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you" (Matt. 10: 19). On the contrary, the more I believe, the more deeply the words of Martha can resonate within my heart: "Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world" and the more fully I can love and adore the Lord in the Eucharist.

Reflection Questions

- 1 Who has been an authentic Christian witness in my own life and how did they transform my understanding of the love of Jesus Christ?
- 2 What are some ways you witness to the Gospel in your own life?
- 3 Describe a “Martha Moment” where you proclaimed or heard a powerful truth about Jesus Christ. How was it received?

Resources

For additional reading, please see Sacramentum Caritatis (the sacrament of love) an exhortation written by Pope Benedict XVI in 2007 on the Eucharist. In paragraph 85 he writes:

“The first and fundamental mission that we receive from the sacred mysteries we celebrate is that of bearing witness by our lives. The wonder we experience at the gift God has made to us in Christ gives new impulse to our lives and commits us to becoming witnesses of his love. We become witnesses when, through our actions, words and way of being, Another makes himself present. Witness could be described as the means by which the truth of God's love comes to men and women in history, inviting them to accept freely this radical newness. Through witness, God lays himself open, one might say, to the risk of human freedom. Jesus himself is the faithful and true witness (cf. Rev 1:5; 3:14), the one who came to testify to the truth (cf. Jn 18:37). Today too, the Church does not lack martyrs who offer the supreme witness to God's love. Even if the test of martyrdom is not asked of us, we know that worship pleasing to God demands that we should be inwardly prepared for it. (237) Such worship culminates in the joyful and convincing testimony of a consistent Christian life, wherever the Lord calls us to be his witnesses.

CREDO SECTION CHALLENGE

Read the Nicene Creed and pray with each of the “I believe” statements. Are there some faith statements easier for you to believe than others.

What is one concrete thing you can do to encounter, grow or witness to Jesus Christ in what you believe and how you live it? Here are some suggestions.

Encounter: make prayer a regular part of your day, go to adoration, make a commitment to go to Mass

Grow: join a small group, bible study

Witness: change life habits, speak about the faith