

Learning Objective: Ourselves as witnesses.

Through our Baptism and Confirmation, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and are called to be people who spread the Easter message and to be witnesses in our present world. There are many ways of being a witness – by prayer, our words, our life and kind deeds.

Fr. Balashowry: Providing refuge.

Fr. Balashowry is the director of the Don Bosco Centre for street children in Hyderabad, India. The centre rescues children from the streets and provides counselling, food, clothing, medicine, education, recreation, and aims at eventually rehabilitating the children to their families. There are currently over 50 boys at the centre. Most of them will have been found by the staff, begging at the train and bus station. Over a third of them are orphans and the rest have run away from broken homes. Fr. Balashowry offers a loving home for them in which they can feel safe and regain hope for their future.

As well as funding the children's education, the centre has workshops where it provides training in trades like carpentry, tailoring, and engineering. They also have a bakery where a former resident of the shelter now teaches baking to the children. These classes all help to furnish the boys with the skills and motivation to find employment in the future. While the centre aims to rehabilitate children to their families, they are not forced back to their homes. The boys are encouraged to return to their families and spend some time with them, but they are welcome to return to the shelter and continue their studies. The boys need the stability and assurance that they will be supported and helped to finish their education. Fr. Balashowry is there for them until they are ready and able to move on.

The staff at the shelter have to be available at all hours of the day. Sometimes, there might be a knock at the door in the middle of the night, and someone needs to be ready to let the child in and look after them. The centre is open seven days a week and staff are always available. Fr. Balashowry and the staff need to provide care and guidance and show the children that they are loved. When told he was inspirational, Fr. Balashowry humbly responded, "It is God's work".

Sometimes, it is the small things that you do in your life, a kind word, a smile, lending a helping hand and perhaps doing something no one notices that is a real witness to the love of God and the power of the Holy Spirit.

In Paul's letter to the people living in Ephesus he writes:

God has made us what we are, and in our union with Christ Jesus he has created us for a life of good deeds, which he has already prepared for us to do.
Ephesians 2:10

Your Task: Do you know any modern witnesses e.g. family member, parishioner, celebrity? Write a report on their work and what makes them a modern witness. How are their actions shaping lives and helping other people?