

## The Echo

*Presented by Margi Lash at Rochester School of Leaders 1/21/21*

The “echo” is given **immediately** following the witness talk by Cursillistas who briefly provide an “echo” about the **message** contained in the witness talk.

The “echo” should be brief, about **2-3 minutes**. Less than a minute is too brief.

Echos are presented by **2-3 Cursillistas**...

The **purpose** is not to criticize the talk, but to “echo” or communicate briefly and precisely, **“this is how I live it.”**

The “echo” is **not** about the person presenting the witness, it **is** about the **“content”** of the witness.

- **What is the witness doing to become closer to Jesus?**
- **How can I use the information in my life?**

The “echo” can be either an **“affirmation”** or a **“conformation.”**

An **“affirmation”** is an account of how the echo speaker plans *to apply the message of the witness* to his or her own life.

A **“conformation”** is an *example from the life of the person who is doing the echo*, it is an **experience** from the speaker’s life experiences.

It is important to be **diverse**, to call on men and women, young and adult, of different social or cultural situations, so that the universality of what is evangelical will shine.

Ideally the “echo” is **prepared in advance** of the School of Leaders. The witness should provide a copy of the rollo (or topic) to **those doing the “echo,”** and the **spiritual advisor**, so they can pray and prepare ahead of time.

**Source:** Leaders Manual, pp 140-141. Note: Echo is sometimes referred to a “resonance” and Witness as “testimony” in the literature.

# EXAMPLES OF WITNESS & ECHO

Rochester Grand Ultreya      Zoom    Jerry Casillo Sept 26, 2020

Witness: Evangelizing in my one square meter

Prayer

I recently took a part time job with the census bureau as an enumerator. The job entails going to residential structures (houses, apartment complexes, multiple unit buildings, trailer parks, apartments above restaurants and bars, etc). these are addresses where no census information was previously submitted. These are the people who did not send their census questionnaires back. On a typical day I would visit 30 – 50 addresses.

I wore a Census Bureau Badge with my name and photo. I wore a mask, carried a Census shoulder bag with supplies and a smart phone where I would enter all the pertinent census data: how many people lived in the building on April 1, 2020, what are their names, birth dates, marital status, relationship to the respondent, sex, race and ethnicity.

I met all kinds of people. All of these people were strangers to me. Some were pleasant and would dutifully answer the questions as best they could. Some were rude and nasty. Many were reluctant to give out any personal information. Many were nervous about talking to a stranger for fear of catching the China virus. One guy refused to talk to me and said if I wanted to know who lived there to Google it!

At each address, after I announced who I was and what I was there for, I would engage in a little friendly conversation to put them at ease and gain acceptance. Frequently I would look for an opportunity to do a little evangelization since I had stepped into their one square meter and had their attention. If they willingly gave me the information I was looking for, I would say Thank you, God Bless you. A good number of them said “God Bless you” back to me. I would leave those houses with a smile.

I’ll mention 3 specific cases.

This was a gentleman named Jerry in his late 40’s who lived by himself in a modest single-family house. I found out during my introductory small talk that he worked in a local grocery store. He worked with a fellow I know who is the husband of a recent Cursillista. So I mentioned Cursillo and asked him if he was Catholic. Mind you I have no fear of catching the virus or getting fired for bringing up religion while on official federal government business. He said he was but hasn’t practiced his faith in a long time. So I gently told him how much the Catholic faith meant to me and all the blessings I have received from it. He listened respectfully and nodded his head in agreement throughout my witness. I told him it’s never too late to return.

I didn’t get fired so he must not have called the government to complain. Say a prayer for Jerry.

The next was an elderly lady in a multi resident apartment building. I could tell she was lonely and enjoyed having someone to talk with. She pretty much told me her whole life story and I listened willingly. She grew up in Buffalo but moved to Jacksonville Florida a few years ago. She said she never felt comfortable there and was not welcome as a Yankee in this southern town so she moved back home.

I asked her what church she belonged to. Like Jerry she said she stopped going to church years ago. I told her about my parish; St Jude the Apostle. I told her what a welcoming place it was with many ministries that she could get involved in. She would quickly make friends there. I gave her the mass times and told her which mass I generally go to and that I would introduce her to the priest and other parishioners.

I don't remember her name and I have not seen her at mass. I hope that she may be going to one of the other 4 masses. Say a prayer for her also.

This last case is not related to evangelizing but it was impressionable on me and I would just like to talk about it.

It was in a 6 street trailer park with close to 100 permanent mobile homes. If we visit an address 3 times and no one answers then we have to visit up to 3 neighbors, as proxies, to get information about who may be living there. So I was looking for a proxy and went to the trailer across the street from the "no answer" trailer. A young woman came out along with two young girls. She was very reluctant to talk to me about her neighbors. I did the small talk thing and kept prodding her. I explained how it was to our communities' benefit that we at least find out how many people lived there because it affects how many federal and state dollars come into our community as well as legislative representation. After I schmoozed her for a while she relaxed and started giving me the information I needed.

Just then her husband pulled up right next to me in his car. He jumped out and was visibly angry that she was talking to me. He asked what I was doing there. I calmly explained my purpose which only made him madder. He started quizzing her about what information she gave me about the neighbors. He said she had no right to give personal information about someone else to the government. I tried to defuse the situation by saying I was only collecting statistical data and that no personal information was given. That was a lie. We were trained in these situations to just leave and not make things worse. So, I left it at that and walked back to my car.

As he and the girls went into the trailer I could see a scarred look on her face. I got in my car and sat there for 10 minutes listening for any sounds of altercation inside. I didn't hear anything but I prayed the whole while for her and the girls. That was a very unsettling experience. I felt really bad for getting her in trouble. Please say a prayer for that young mother.

Ultreya!

## Echo by Mary Ellen Darling

I am doing a confirmation . Another example.

I was at my church and former rectory the other day and a census taker stopped by. She asked if anyone lived in th former rectory ~ told her no. She asked a few more questions about the house which I answered.

Then she turned to St Francis church and asked who lived there. I looked at her to see if she was serious. She seemed so.

I told her that Jesus Christ did. She seemed confused by my answer . I gave her a minute to process and she seemed embarrassed. I asked her if she would like to go into the church. She said no ~ told her the church is always open and she would be welcome anytime.

She thanked me and said she needed to keep going. I thanked her for working on the census. Sometimes we just get so involved in our projects we forget what we are doing and God is always there for us.

The flip side of the witness.

Thx Father

Witness by Margaret Costello  
Fairport Ultreya  
September 12, 2020

Hi Everyone. Thank you for inviting me here tonight. Shall we pray...Come Holy Spirit...

When our newly ordained priest arrived last year, I quickly realized that Father Walter had a very strong devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mary was a part of many of his homilies. In one particular homily, he said he prayed every day that we would develop a strong relationship with the Blessed Mother. His homily that Sunday really hit home with me.

At the time, I didn't have a strong devotion to the Blessed Mother. I would recite my rosary occasionally and I had statues of Mary around my home, but that was all. It was at my Women's 88 Cursillo that my deep desire to establish a relationship with Mary truly began.

I heard my fellow cursillistas speak so glowingly of Mary's love and guidance, her protection, and the prayers answered through the intercession of her Son. Following my cursillo, I listened to my fellow cursillistas in group describe their beautiful relationship with the Blessed Mother. It was at that time I became determined to strengthen my devotion to Mary, and I began to say a daily rosary and include more Marian prayers in my daily prayer life.

Then one day early this past spring, I was taking a walk in the village with my daughter when we saw the most beautiful statue of the Blessed Mother in a garden. We just stopped and stared at its beauty for a while. Suddenly it occurred to me that I could make something similar in my yard. It would be a perfect way to honor Mary and combine it with my love of gardening.

So I started reading about how to make a Mary Garden and how certain flowers are associated with Mary. For example, white roses represent Mary's purity so I chose to put a white rose bush in my garden. I chose orange marigolds because they are referred to as "Mary's Gold." I planted a lavender plant because it is said that Mary laid Jesus's washed swaddling clothes on the lavender plant for them to dry and to absorb the beautiful fragrance from its flowers.

I included pansies because their three colors represent the Trinity and I chose zinnias for Mary's virginity. I planted red geraniums because they were my father's favorite flower and he had a lifelong devotion to the Blessed Mother. I planted sweet alyssum for the flower of the cross and a blue hydrangea as a reminder of Ave Maria.

Because of the joy Mary brought to the world by saying "Yes" to being the mother of God's son, I planted two sunflower plants, one on each side of Mary. As the summer progressed, I couldn't understand why these towering plants weren't developing a sunflower until I realized they weren't sunflowers at all. I had started many of my flowers and vegetable plants from seed and somehow mixed up the sunflowers with the kale. The results were two giant kale plants next to Mary and two large sunflower plants standing tall in the vegetable garden midst the lettuce and spinach! I'm sure Mary got a chuckle out of that!

Finding the right statue of Mary was the hardest part of all because her face had to be how I envision her .....beautiful, serene, and loving. I was thrilled when I found the perfect statue and so happy when I placed Mary in the center of her garden.

As all gardeners do, I spend quite a bit of time in my gardens watering, weeding and trimming, so I visit Mary's garden often. When I look at her flowers, I often think of their meaning as it relates to Mary and they remind me of her virtues that I should strive for.

In the morning I say my Marian prayers with Mary and throughout the day I pause for a quick prayer as I pass by. In the evening I say my rosary with her. The mysteries of the rosary have become more real to me as I

look into Mary's eyes and imagine her anguish over the sorrowful mysteries...but also her joy at seeing Jesus again when she is assumed into heaven.

Lastly, one of the best things to come from Mary's Garden is I can use it to teach my grandchildren about Mary, Jesus and our faith. They are very young, only three and four years old, but when they come over to my house we take a moment to "...go say hi to Mary." We make the sign of the cross, hold hands and say a Hail Mary and thank her for being Jesus's mother. Once, we picked some dandelions and put them in a small vase in front of Mary.

I look forward to next May when Christian and Angelica can join me for Mary's Crowning in her garden. With God's grace and Mary's help, I pray the seed of Christian faith will grow and bloom inside their hearts and remain with them forever.

I know my devotion to Mary and Jesus is still in its infancy, but with God's grace, through Mary, I believe it will grow and become stronger. Thanks be to God!

DeColores!

## **Echo for Margaret Costello Witness**

Webster Ultreya, Sept 12, 2020

by Bobbi LaVoie, Rochester W71

I was blessed to hear Margaret's witness several weeks ago at the Geneva Ultreya. It really struck a cord with me since I too have struggled with a relationship with Mary. Many of you know that my real name is Annmarie, yes, I am a namesake of our Virgin and her mother. Yet, for many years, Mary seemed to elude me. I always prayed to Jesus, and I could feel Jesus with me. When I said the rosary, it felt like rote prayers. But that changed in 2017. I was honored to attend the Cursillo Pilgrimage through Europe on route to the World Ultreya. During these 18 days, Mary was constantly called upon.

We prayed to her on the bus saying the rosary. We even had a beautiful girl sing the rosary!

We visited her shrines:

Our Lady of Lluch in Majorca

Montserrat and the statue of the Black Virgin in Spain

Holy Family in Barcelona

Lourdes in France

and Fatima in Portugal

During the visit to Lourdes, as we sat on the benches waiting for our turn to enter the baths, I prayed, I actually begged, for our mother to reveal herself to me so I could love her as I love her son. Like Margaret, I felt I was missing something. Here I am on a journey with 99 other Cursillistas who all seem to know Mary, and I was blind. Then, as I was dipped in the water of the bath, I felt Mary's beautiful embrace. As I stood up, the aides were saying something to me in French... I was too stunned, too amazed to even question the ladies, I just let them remove the wet sheet and wrap me in a dry sheet then I left. The question has haunted me to this day, "what were those women saying to me?" Were they reacting to my breast cancer surgery scars or did they know that the Mother made herself present that day. I realize that I don't need to know because that water wrapped around me in a caress like a mother embraces her child. Now, when I pray to the virgin, I experience the mysteries with her. I understand the depth of her love, her ability to intercede for us. Since that day, I carry a rosary with me always.

Back in July, after I heard Margaret's talk for the first time, I looked around my house and realized that I didn't have a statue of Mary on display. Then I remembered I had my mother's treasure in my curio cabinet, a signed Llardo Virgin Mary. There, through the glass, she sits, holding a beautiful bouquet of pure white flowers, watching over me, ever present in my life. Thank you, Margaret for helping to find Mary in my life in a different way than prayer, in her presence.

DeColores

Echo for Margaret Costello

Margi Lash Rochester Women's #11

09/12/20

When I asked Margaret to witness at our Ultreya, she had a message from the heart. She wanted to get closer to Our Blessed Mother and so prayed and planned a "Mary Garden." Each flower had a special meaning. She purchased a statue, carefully preparing the ground and sowing the seeds. I loved her relating the mixed-up of kale and sunflowers (kale in the Mary garden and sunflowers in the vegetable garden). I didn't feel so bad after backing my car over the statue of Mary in my own garden and killing most of the flowers!

Margaret's witness touched many lives and I got requests for the meaning of her flowers. As I thought about her desire to get closer through her Marian devotions, I thought about how isolated I felt, being choked by the weeds of Covid. I missed the personal contact with my brothers and sisters in Christ. While I thanked God for Zoom, I felt inadequate with this new technology. I got mad...at the enemy who was trying to destroy my joy. I, like Margaret, prayed! Then I went to U-tube to bone up on video conferencing. I knew the Virtual Encounter was coming up and I wanted to be prepared. I put Mary Ellen and Bobbi on speed dial. I ordered my first smartphone and watched more u-tube videos. I put this new technology at the service of Christ.

The Virtual Encounter was like Miracle Grow for my soul. I reconnected with our friends from all over the world. Bobbi told me about NACG, the North American, Caribbean and Canadian Ultreya every Wednesday night at 9 pm via Zoom where there is a Witness, Echos and a Spiritual presentation by a Priest, followed by Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament. And, a Sabatina each Saturday morning at 11 am with prayers to Our Blessed Mother. Again, Cursillistas from all over the world participate. We get to greet each other and pray for each other's intentions. Visiting Ultreyas in our diocese provides more nutrients to my soul and allows me to share their "good news" with others.

My garden is blooming now with weekly visits with my brothers and sisters in Christ. The seeds of Margaret's witness have been transported to me on the breath of the Holy Spirit, and I am blessed with bouquets of joy. Life is once again De Colores!

## **Cursillo NACG Ultreya Witness, January 2021**

Bobbi LaVoie  
Region III Coordinator  
Diocese of Rochester NY

Good evening, I am honored to be asked to witness at this virtual Ultreya.

Many of you heard my witness last summer during the National Encounter. Today, I would like to share what has happened since last August,

For those of you who did not hear that witness, I will quickly summarize!

Although you call me Bobbi, my real name is Annmarie. I was named after our lady, Virgin Mary, and her mother, St. Anne, in honor of a miracle granted to my brother in 1953 at St. Anne de Beaupre in Quebec Canada.

My devotion to St. Anne really started when I journeyed to the basilica for her intercession when I was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. I had been bitten in the face by a dog and my family and I prayed that the surgery to remove the scars would be successful.

That was the beginning of my burden. One after another, the Lord gave me a burden to carry. Once the scars were gone, while I was in college, I discovered I was going deaf. I prayed St. Anne be with me. I remember having her medal around my neck to hold while I prayed. I remember being guided to “just act normal” and accept my deafness.

In my mid-30's, my life was good! I had met the man of my dreams. I was praying for marriage and family to come soon. But, due to complications with my ear structure, I got dizzy and fell, injuring my spine. Two operations followed, one to fix my ear. Yeah, with an implanted prosthetic in my left ear, I was able to hear again. Amazing. Thank you, Lord!

The other surgery was to fix my back... with prayers I able to walk out of the hospital. But the surgery triggered a rare immune system disorder. For nineteen years, I was allergic to being touched. This illness put me through many years of confusion as my hopes of marriage and children disappeared.

Eventually, I was put on disability and moved to New York for a special treatment of drugs that allowed me to function on most days. I was gifted my old job in Hawaii to work from my home in New York. I tried to put on the “act normal” façade, but I told no one how lost and confused I felt. I didn't understand why all these things were happening to me.

On the day, I was moving to Webster and driving to the apartment I had found online, while stopped at a traffic light, I saw a steeple ahead. Instead of turning left, I went straight and found Holy Trinity. It was walking distance to my new home. I sought refuge in that church, and soon met my Cursillo sponsor, a fellow parishioner. In 2002, I lived my Cursillo weekend.

During my weekend, on Saturday night, I found a letter on my pillow from my brother-in-law. The words confused and deeply hurt me. I realized that my family did not know who I was. We had lived in different states for over ten years, and the distance was more than miles. For a moment, I felt like I was totally alone. I had moved to this area for the support of family, but I felt I had nothing.

Through Cursillo, I discovered everything I was missing. God gave me a family in Cursillo with my new friends in group reunion and Ultreya. God sustained me through offering apostolic actions in my community. God gave me back my family as well through prayer and sharing HIS love.

Then in 2014, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. I had treatment and beat it. Praise the Lord. And in 2016, we realized that my immune system disorder had miraculously disappeared. Hug me hard!!! However, Colon surgery was offered for the salvation of souls.

Another burden arrived in October 2019, as my left hand was numb and tingling. In spite of surgery in February 2020, the problem continued and only got worse. And that is the story I witnessed this past summer to you, my Cursillo brothers and sisters. I know that many Cursillistas prayed for me. I prayed to St. Ann for her guidance.

In September, my doctor sent me to PT. The physical therapist during the assessment realized it was not my elbow causing the problem on which they operated to release the nerve. But it was scar tissue in my underarm from the breast cancer surgery that was pinching the nerve. Massage and exercise have greatly improved my hand and arm. WOW. Prayers do get answered. And I am so grateful to all my Cursillo friends for their support and prayers after the National Encounter. I truly know that the Lord heard all of your prayers and with the intercession of his grandmother St. Anne, He guided me to the right person who recognized my problem.

I finished PT in mid-December with a list of home exercises. On new year's day, I realized I was being lazy about my exercises. I was using the holidays as an excuse... just too busy. I asked myself why do I want my hand to get numb again? I stood up. Stopped what I was doing. Then went and sat in prayer and contemplation. Suddenly I realized that I was afraid of the next burden. If my arm got better what would God give me next? I was trying to drag out my arm issues so I wouldn't have to face the next challenge God is going to give me. I was stunned, I thought I was stronger than that! Am I really questioning what God has prepared for me?

Didn't matter... on Saturday, January 2<sup>nd</sup>, I had a horrible stomachache! Is my colon acting up again? Well, the answer is yes! I finished the antibiotics on Monday and a special diet is the current regime. Still my tummy is not quite right. Funny what happens when you try to trick God! These past weeks have been a humbling experience. At first, I had felt pulled away and then immediately drawn closer to the Lord. I have to say that through the pandemic I have stayed loyal to the Cursillo virtual offerings. My local Ultreya, the National Saturday Sabatina, and this, the NACG Ultreya. These virtual meetings have been my lifeline to stay connected to God through you my friends.

I thank Cursillo for giving me the ability to recognize the love of the Lord. I needed a little push to continue to listen to those words from St. Anne so many years ago, "just act normal." I need to strive once again to not let these burdens get in the way of living the life the Lord has called me to.

When I recognize my pain, discomfort, I thank the Lord for the gifts I have and offer my ails for the souls in purgatory! And when the burden gets heavy, I have learned to trust in my Cursillo friends to hold me up through my trial. Every day I thank the Lord for giving me the gift of Cursillo.

My burdens may seem heavy to someone, yet light compared to another person's challenges. I realize that we all have trials and tribulations in life. I know that you all have your own burdens that God has asked you to carry.

In conclusion, let us bow our heads in prayer to St. Anne for our own healing.

**"O glorious St. Anne, you are filled with compassion for those who invoke you, and with love for those who suffer. Heavily burdened with the weight of my troubles, I cast myself at your feet and humbly beg of you to take the present intention, which I recommend to you in your special care. Please recommend to your daughter, the blessed Virgin Mary, and lay it before the throne of Jesus, so that He may bring it to a happy issue. Continue to intercede for me until my request is granted. But above all obtain for me the grace one day to see my God face to face, and with you and Mary and all the saints to praise and bless him for all eternity. Amen.**

DeColores

By Doreen Gala-Hebert

Echo for Bobbi LaVoie Jan, 2021 NACG

First of all, I want to say how honored I am to be invited to be an echo tonight for Bobbi. I truly feel blessed to do so for my friend, sister and sponsor.

My journey to Cursillo began with Bobbi. I received Communion from Bobbi many times and was always struck by the way she looks through the host at me. For lack of a better word, it makes it an even more "beautiful" experience. A feeling of deep spirituality exudes from her. One day I approached her about this. She told me it comes from Cursillo. I thought, "I want and need this!" She offered to sponsor me and did so.

I made my Cursillo weekend almost 2 years ago. I have made so many friends since then. The biggest one has been Bobbi. My youngest daughter (Jenny) loves her so much, she asked "Miss Bobbi" to be her confirmation sponsor. While doing the paperwork, we started to see that divine intervention put her in my path. It started with her given name, Annmarie, named for our Lady and her mother. Jenny took Anne as her confirmation name. My late sister, Diana, was a 1954 miracle of St. Anne de Beaupre who's intercession led to a cure of a cancer no child ever survived before. Every 4 years we made our pilgrimage to Quebec in thanksgiving. We both are breast cancer survivors. We both have our health burdens. Coincidence I think not.

I have learned to depend on my Cursillo family for prayers and help. Cursillo has helped me to learn that I am loved by Christ. To me, she is proof that God puts people in your path. I am so blessed that God put Bobbi in mine and that she has made me a part of our Cursillo family.