

The image features a large, solid red speech bubble centered on a white background. The speech bubble has a pointed bottom edge. Inside the bubble, the text "Ourselves as Witnesses" is written in a clean, white, sans-serif font. The background is decorated with faint, light gray concentric circles and curved lines, some of which are dashed, creating a subtle, abstract pattern.

Ourselves as Witnesses

Witness

- 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.
- Read this story of Father Blashowry, a priest in India.

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".

Local Witnesses

- You will find that, in your local area, there are many Christians inspired by the Holy Spirit who witness to the love of God by their care for those in need. They may visit the sick in hospital or at home, provide food and shelter for the homeless like The Mother of Mercy Society in Liverpool.



- 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.

Letter from Paul

- 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

Local Witnesses

- Think about the work of a local charity, feeding the homeless, hostels, the Samaritans, the hospice movement, the work of the Salvation Army, charity shops etc. Whilst some groups like the Samaritans are not necessarily explicitly Christian, they have a Christian foundation and inspiration and attract a number of Christian volunteers.



East Durham Trust
Moving our community forward



SOME KEY QUESTIONS

- What do you think of Fr. Balashowry and his staff ?
- What would you find challenging about his mission?
- Why is their work so necessary?
- What inspires Fr. Balashowry to think of others first?
- How are you a witness in your local area? (Think about the ways in which they show kindness and care for others.)
- How does your local chosen charity witness to care for others?
- What can you do as a school, class or individual to witness to God's love?

Tasks

- **Task 1**

Write a profile leaflet for a local charity. Find out who founded it and why? What was their inspiration, how do they help people and why do volunteers give their time to help others? Explain what a difference it makes.

And/or

- **Task 2**

Write a report on how you are a living witness at school with others, at home with family and friends and individually. Describe your actions and give reasons why you do them. Say how your actions are shaping your life and others around you.