

March 2019



A Christian Steward is:

- one who receives God's gifts gratefully
- cherishes and tends them in a responsible and accountable manner
- shares them in justice and love with others
- returns them with increase to the Lord

WISDOM

from ICSC strategic partners

This month's contributions come from the following ICSC Strategic Partners:



DIOCESAN



Our Sunday Visitor

Each month ICSC sends you practical information, whitepapers, and tips, as well as other insightful information from our Strategic Partners to assist you with your responsibility as stewards of the Church. We are very grateful to our Strategic Partners for their partnership and commitment to ICSC, and their professional wisdom is a wonderful gift to ICSC members.

In this edition ICSC brings you:

- * ideas and steps to embrace technology for personal parish fundraising offered by **CCS**.
- * social media's do's and don'ts on ways to reach people with the good news of Christ courtesy of **Diocesan**.
- * reasons why spring cleaning your parish data is essential to a vibrant parish provided by **LPi**.
- * tips on recognizing and combating negativity and burnout presented by **Lynch Development Associates**.
- * ways to create a sense of belonging for your parishioners from **Our Sunday Visitor**.

For additional information and resources from our strategic partners visit the ICSC website at: [ICSC](http://www.catholicstewardship.com)

ICSC promotes and supports Catholic teaching on stewardship by providing education and resources for dioceses, parishes, and institutions of the Roman Catholic Church.

A photograph of an older Black man with a grey beard and glasses, and an older white woman, both smiling and looking at a tablet computer. The man is on the left, and the woman is on the right. The background is slightly blurred.

Embracing Technology for Personal Parish Fundraising

By Steven Picciano, Executive Director, CCS — March 2019



While many parishes are accustomed to working with limited and often antiquated resources, there are a variety of newer technologies available at relatively low cost that can dramatically enhance the effectiveness of parish communications, particularly during a fundraising campaign. As parish leaders take the first steps to implementing these programs, they should bear in mind that technology is not meant to supplant personal encounters; it is meant to facilitate them. By incorporating new tools into a parish's communications and fundraising plans, pastors and volunteers can reach out to a large audience of parishioners in ways that are both faster and more personal than previously imagined. When parish leaders consider the possibility of adopting new tools to engage parishioners, they generally focus on three challenges. Each of these challenges were addressed during a recent campaign for an East Coast parish.

1. How will we implement something new with our limited technological background?

During a campaign feasibility study, the parish staff collected thousands of email addresses and phone numbers from the parish database and through an in-pew update of contact information. With this list, the parish was well-prepared to implement some new communications vehicles, including an e-survey, personalized emails during the quiet phase of the campaign, text message reminders about pledge cards, and a pre-recorded voice message that was broadcasted to every parishioner's phone number.

2. Once we do set something up, who will manage the system?

By the close of the campaign, both the monsignor and two parish staff members were exceedingly more familiar with the technological resources available to them. This experience enabled them to engage more effectively a small committee of parishioners who had formed to focus on enhancing the parish's overall communications strategy. Partially inspired by the success of the campaign, the parish is now working to develop a new website and to expand its social media presence.

3. Will the results be worth the investment of time and money?

The use of new technologies during the campaign enabled the parish to communicate in a personal way to the vast majority of all 3,600 parish families. These new tools enabled the campaign to proceed with speed and precision, and they helped to keep excitement high during the public phase of the campaign. Ultimately, the parish exceeded its initial campaign goal by over \$1 million, raising over \$6 million on their \$5 million working goal.

First Steps for Any Parish

Even if a parish is not preparing to launch a fundraising campaign, implementing these tools can facilitate broader parishioner engagement and potentially lay the groundwork for more personalized campaign communications down the road. Here are three strategies that any parish with a list of phone numbers and email addresses can begin to implement immediately:

- Send a personalized email from the pastor or other parish leaders to all parishioners on a regular basis (weekly, biweekly, or monthly).
- Record a message of gratitude from the pastor around Thanksgiving or the parish's patronal feast and broadcast it to all parishioners' phone numbers.
- Send a text message announcement before a special event to parishioners' cell phone numbers. It might contain a reminder of the Christmas or Holy Week Mass schedule or encourage parishioners to attend a parish festival.

Social Media Do's and Dont's

As we try to reach every person with the good news of Christ it is crucial to be present on every communication channel, social media not excluded. Here are some tips to make this process easier and some things to avoid.

1

DO USE ONE OR TWO CHANNELS WELL

There are many ministries, groups, and organizations out there that sign up for every social media channel imaginable. This seems like a good idea at first but they quickly realize they only have time to do one or two well. This makes for neglected accounts. We tell people that a neglected account on social media is worse than no account at all, because if it is up people expect it to be active. Pick one or two channels and do them well. We recommend starting with Facebook and Twitter.

2

DON'T JUST ASSUME YOU ARE REACHING PEOPLE

Facebook and most social media channels use an algorithm to decide who sees your content. If you post on your newsfeed it will typically be seen by people who are interacting with your page on a regular basis. This is why you always want to encourage people to like and comment because then Facebook sees that they are interested in your content and shows it to them more often. Some other helpful tips to be seen more are using photos, facebook live, videos, and asking questions to engage your audience.

3

DO USE THE EXTRA FEATURES

A common mistake with parishes is solely using social media as another bulletin board where you can post events. We encourage learning about how to use the extra features to promote events and keep the feed for inspirational content. Facebook events is a great way to promote because it ensures that the people on your list get an invitation and will see the information.

Most of these tips work across all social media channels, but again, pick one or two and use them really well. Once you have those going then start to add the others. From all of us here at Diocesan, God Bless!



| DATABASE SPRING CLEANING

This time of year tends to get a lot of attention for spring cleaning. As people begin the satisfying process of sorting and purging unwanted clothes, boxes of old bank statements and bills, and miscellaneous home goods, the time feels right for parishes to begin looking at their collection of parishioner data and digital files.

While database maintenance should be a “more than once a year” priority, it rarely — if ever — is. And who can really blame them? There aren’t really any catastrophic results that come from not updating your parish member contact list or tracking down missing information on a regular basis. If anything, all you really have are computer folders full of old drafts, ministry minutes, and electronic copies of flyers from years ago. But that should be the point of this whole conversation — do we know what we have, can we easily find it, and is there a benefit to using it?

Read on for reasons why cleaning and updating your parish data is essential to maintaining your vibrant parish.

KNOW WHAT YOU HAVE

As a parish, you’re bound to have countless documents on the computer filled with all sorts of information. Census data, sacramental dates, parishioner contacts, financial reports, order forms, payroll, checks — the list goes on. In order to correctly utilize this information, parishes need to filter through all the files and eliminate what’s necessary and keep what’s most important.

Do you have numerous parishioner contact lists? If so, decide which one is the most current, and keep it as a working file that can be added to or edited by

those who need access to it. A great program to take advantage of is Google Docs, which allows you to write, edit, and collaborate from any computer with an internet connection and offers a full-featured web browser — plus, it’s completely free!

KNOW WHAT YOU NEED - AND WHAT YOU DON'T

Now that you have your list of necessary documents, it’s time to start purging — seriously! This may take some courage for many tasked with doing so. But ask yourself, do you really need to keep a copy of the parish fish fry flyer from five years ago? If there’s no reason to keep it, then just press delete and move on.

KEEP IT SECURE, KEEP IT SAFE

With the documents that you’ve deemed important, it’s essential that you keep them safe. The only way to prepare for the unexpected is to have a good backup strategy in place. There are many different ways to back up your computers, and using multiple forms of backup will minimize the risk of ever losing your valuable files.

USE IT

Now that you’ve spent a good amount of time deciding what to keep, what to delete, and how to store it safely and securely, you’ve got to start using it. Have a meeting to discuss with your staff expectations moving forward. Come up with a file naming system so certain documents can easily be found and discuss a schedule of when to go through and purge files, determining which files are essential to keeping and assigning roles on who is in charge of what.

Focus on the Good!

TIPS TO STAYING POSITIVE

It can sometimes feel like every time we turn around there is an article, post or news report highlighting wrongdoings or transgressions by some in our Church. Certainly with the rapid rate at which news travels, the multitude of news platforms and the fact that we are virtually "connected" 24/7, we can allow ourselves to be continuously bombarded. Before long, we can become overwhelmed and even burnt-out from the negativity that surrounds us. This is not only unhealthy for us, but for those we minister to and with as well.

Here are a few tips on recognizing and combating negativity and burnout:

RECOGNIZING BURNOUT

- Burnout results from prolonged stress, overextension and hurriedness.
- A kind of tired that a little (*or a lot of*) rest does not cure; a constant state of exhaustion.
- There's a lack of care, an avoidance of work, even in what used to be enjoyable.
- Cannot recover from work or find the motivation to take on new tasks or, even to get enough rest.
- A feeling of "so what?" causing mediocre work or a sense of worthlessness.
- Developing a sense that the ministry that you participate in will cease without your participation.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

- **Begin and end all things with prayer.** Let God perform the work, using us as the instruments.
- **Rest, renew and remember why we do what we do.** The ministry that we participate in is not about building our own kingdom, but that of God. When it becomes about us, it is no longer ministry.
- **Give something up before taking on something new.** We can only spin so many plates in the air before they come crashing down.
- **Learn to say "No."** Be realistic and responsible with what you can manage and do well.
- **Listen to your body's stress warning signals**, such as headaches, backaches, dizziness, insomnia, and unexplainable fatigue.
- **Focus on the GOOD!!** Don't get pulled down by the negative. Allow yourself to be lifted up by the positive! Share the good news you receive! For example, below is an excerpt from an email one of our directors just received from a major campaign donor.

Remember why we do what we do and, focus on the good!

"After praying about your request, we wanted to let you know that we will be pledging at the level you invited us to. Your personal invitation to pledge at this level made us realize this amount, though sacrificial, is in fact possible for us, and we were quickly at peace with the decision. The Gospel passage that came to mind as we were praying about this was that of the rich man, whom Jesus looked at with love, inviting him to sell everything and follow him. We both had a sense that if we didn't accept this invitation, we, like that man, would go away sad. Sad at our decision to trust in ourselves rather than in God, to cling to material wants rather than to the Lord, and failure to accept the invitation to rely on Him to provide. Too often, it seems, when people complain that they don't see God at work in their lives, it is partially because they have trusted entirely in themselves and failed to even give God the opportunity to work. Thanks for the opportunity to meet with you, and the invitation to give to our faith community and deepen our trust in God."

Parishioners, Stillwater, MN

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HELLO
MY NAME IS

To be known by name.

Katie Herzing, Parish Coach

I saw [this twitter thread](#) shared a few weeks ago from Katie Prejean McGrady (@KatiePrejean) that resonated with me. The thread is quite a few tweets long beginning with an encounter she had with Chili's in the Airport. A thread a few items down says:

He looked past me & said, "I used to be Catholic, but I never really felt like I fit." I nodded my head, not sure what to say back. But he continued talking, with no prompting. "I went to a bunch of different parishes when I moved, but no one ever even asked me my name."

We long to be known, it is one of our deepest needs. To be known for who we are! This begins with something as simple as someone knowing your name, it's the first step to being known.

Most Catholics sit in the same seats every week for years and see the same people. They know things about them like "their kid smiles a lot" or "this kid cries every week" or "she is always off key and off beat and too loud."

But we don't really know them, those are just our sometimes annoyed observations of our neighbors (or are those just mine).

A few weeks ago I was at a Diocesan meeting in the southwest and one of the participants shared that she has taken it upon herself to officially meet and learn the names of the people who sit near her at Mass. She said she's only been doing it a few weeks, but now the people she's gotten to know also want to know each other. She's creating community.

As one of the commenters in the thread points out later "Church isn't a social activity and Churches aren't social halls," but we do attend Mass to worship the Lord as a community. If we could do the same thing at home as individuals, then my Sunday mornings would involve a lot more sleeping in. We are the body of Christ, as Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12, "the body is not a single part" or a collection of separate parts.

We are a community, the Body of Christ, a parish family ... and family members should know each other's names, especially when they see each other every week. It creates a sense of belonging and fulfills our innate need to be known.

What can your parish do to ensure both visitors and parishioners are known?

- **Name Tag Sunday:** Hand out name tags before Mass so both fellow parishioners and clergy can greet people by name.
- **Greeting Before Mass:** At my parish we greet one another before Mass to say "good morning." What if we all said "Good Morning, I'm Katie*", nice to see you again this morning" to everyone rather than a cursory "morning"? (*of course, insert your name!)
- **Team of Greeters:** Establish a team of greeters before Mass to welcome people and introduce themselves to visitors. Unfortunately most visitors tend to stick out since they might not be familiar with the particulars of your church building ... this will help with your introductions.

The point of the Mass is not to get to know one another, but if we can fulfill our neighbor's innate need to be known, then they might be more open to encountering the Lord while at Mass. We learn how God loves us by being loved by others ... so if others don't care about even something as simple as our name, how will we learn that God wants to know us infinitely more?

Want more great ideas like this delivered right to your inbox a couple times a month? Join me at <http://transformyourparish.com> for great ideas to create a vision plan to promote stewardship at your parish!