

September 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



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:

- * the benefits of an increased offertory program in place of a capital campaign compliments of **CCS**.
- * three of the top functions to look for in a good communication platform courtesy of **Diocesan**.
- * ways to design your bulletin to attract and inspire your community provided by **LPI**.
- * three simple ways for parishes to show people you care from **OSV**.

Click [here](#) to learn about the sessions our strategic partners will be presenting at the 2019 Chicago conference in October.

For additional information and resources from our strategic partners visit the ICSC website at: [ICSC](#)

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



An Increased Offertory Program in Place of a Capital Campaign



By Erik Kiernan, CCS Fundraising — September 2019

Many parishes opt for a campaign when considering capital projects or debt reduction, but often become intimidated by the tremendous needs and the equally tremendous goals associated with such an endeavor. Like most charities, operational funding in churches often comes from annual giving. To keep up with inflation and growing expenses, such as maintenance, compensation, and benefits, it is vital that churches also grow donor giving over time. An increased offertory campaign can help begin that process.

Whether considering or planning an increased offertory program, it is important to have a very clear sense of what you hope to achieve. In addition to increased financial support, an increased offertory program should focus on achieving the following key objectives for the parish:

- Educating parishioners on the need to be responsible stewards of the gift that is their church
- Commencing discussions regarding the importance of increasing giving annually to keep up with growing expenses
- Getting more parishioners involved as volunteers
- Starting a pattern of written commitments that can aid in real-time budgeting
- Addressing real financial needs in a fair approach that doesn't negatively impact a parish's ability to run a campaign at a later date

These programs are easier to run than a traditional capital campaign, and can often be completed in a period of seven weeks. They have also proven to be very effective. Tailored increased offertory programs can elevate parish giving as much as 25% with sustained levels of increased giving during the years that follow. When combined with broad implementation of electronic giving by parishioners, these increases can be "locked in" and generate a steady stream of additional revenue for the parish.

Just as important as the results, however, is the cost. Most of these increased offertory campaigns saw a complete return on their investment after just five weeks of increased collections.

The key to generating the highest response and keeping the costs low is volunteers. A well run program will take advantage of every communication channel a parish has to offer: the bulletin, the pulpit, mail, email, social media, and the personal contacts made by parishioners. These contacts need not be solicitations, but rather a personal reminder to respond and a testimonial about why the parish is so important to them. These personal contacts help reduce the number of mailings needed in the program and have been proven to generate higher rates of commitment.

In the end, the objective of an increased offertory program is changing the pattern of giving, which is only possible through regular attention and communication. It takes some work, but as any "stewardship parish" will attest, the process becomes automatic and expected by parishioners after a few years.

As an additional benefit, conducting an increased offertory program will not impact your parish's ability to conduct a capital campaign in the near future — in fact, the process may help get you closer to campaign readiness.

The Correct Software For You

The market for communications, much like that of databases, has become increasingly more saturated. There are many different options that help, and it can be hard to sift through the various functions and features. We are here to help with three of the top functions to look for in a good communication platform.

1 Multi-Channel Capabilities

We all know we are living in an information age. Every day, companies are vying for our attention. When searching for a communication platform as a diocese or parish, you want to be sure that it covers most channels of communication. This would include email, text, web, apps, and social media. If you look at analytics for these channels, you will see that every channel gets a certain number of parishioners, but rarely all of them. Catholics are on all different forms of communication, and we should be too if we want to reach our audience.

2 Flat-rate Pricing

If the goal is to message more people with the importance of stewardship, then make sure you find a software that does not penalize you for using it well. Most mainstream communication software options have scaled pricing, meaning it will cost you more per member or message. This promotes the idea that you should be stingy with messaging if you don't want to drive the cost up. Try to find a software that conforms with your mission of messaging as many people as possible.

3 Church Speak

As Catholics, we have our own language. There are certain things that Catholics just get, and your communication platform should reflect that. Most communication platforms are not built specifically for Catholics in mind. Imagine software that reminds you when a holy day is coming up and gives you a message to send for parishioners. Or a template you can use as a diocese for the capital campaign. Secular software simply cannot provide the Catholic touch that is so important with communication.

Here at Diocesan, we have been in the communication business for over 60 years. We would love to help you find the right communication software for you. Feel free to reach out and get a free consultation of what you are currently using and how we could help you reach more people. From all of us here at Diocesan, God Bless!



DESIGN YOUR BULLETIN TO ATTRACT & INSPIRE YOUR COMMUNITY

The bulletin has been a cornerstone of parish communication for generations. While the digital age has transformed how we share and receive information, the print medium still remains unique. People shopping for a parish might not visit your social media pages, but every person in the pews will leave with a bulletin in hand. What do you want them to see?

When you approach an update or redesign of your bulletin, it's about more than rearranging content. Creating a bulletin that engages everyone can be challenging.

Jesus had a communication strategy that appealed to everyone. By the beauty of his actions of love, he attracted new visitors. By the goodness in his teaching and stories, he inspired the crowds to conversion. By communicating the truth of his teachings, he informed disciples and equipped them to change the world.

If we consider our bulletin through the lens of Jesus' communication strategy, we can identify a few different areas of approach.

ATTRACTING THE VISITOR

You've heard the phrase "a picture is worth a thousand words." Much of our in-person communication is non-verbal. What we see matters! Attractive bulletins feature beautiful imagery that draws in the reader. They are neatly laid out with complementary colors and fonts.

INSPIRING THE CROWD

People are drawn to new ideas by the power of story. Inspirational content can include parishioner profiles, stewardship testimonials, and brief articles about past events in the parish. It can also provide parishioners with information on inspirational events, like faith-sharing groups and parish missions.

INFORMING THE DISCIPLE

Every parish has formational programming. A large part of most parish bulletins consists of announcements of their details. What about using the bulletin as a vehicle for formation? Designate some space for stories of saints with feast days that week or a Catholic Q & A. Even the pastor letter often falls into this category.

To learn more about LPI's bulletin services, including printing, redesign, and art & content resources, visit www.4LPi.com.





KNOWING YOU CARE

BY KATIE HERZING, OSV SENIOR PARISH COACH



When I was a youth, we spent a lot of time in youth ministry learning the answers to the big questions Catholics are asked. Things like, “Why do Catholics worship Mary?” and “Why can’t the Pope make mistakes?” These truths helped me understand the faith that I’d had since childhood, but they weren’t very effective in converting people I spoke to or helping nominal Catholics grow deeper in their faith. These conversations were necessary, they just weren’t a very good beginning.

So you’re asking, “What’s a better beginning?” I’m reminded of a famous Theodore Roosevelt quote, *“People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.”*

When I’m working with parishes they want to know how they can bring more people in and how they can help nominal Catholics become strong Catholics – walking with them along their journey. Showing them you care about their needs, not just what they can do for you.

HERE ARE 3 SIMPLE WAYS TO SHOW PEOPLE YOU CARE:

1. MEAL TRAIN MINISTRY

Start a ministry at your parish to take meals to families and singles in times of need or celebration. Establish a coordinator that would be contacted with the family’s information (this could be someone in the office or a volunteer), dietary restrictions or allergies, and dates they want meals. You could have a standard such as: meals twice a week for eight weeks. Then share the online calendar with an email list, in the bulletin, or on social media depending on the wishes of the parishioner in need. The first few might need a little special attention to set up, but after that it should roll out easily when a need arises. There are a few free websites that can help you keep this organized. ([Click to read more.](#))

2. PRAYER PARTNERS

Many parishes have attendees turn to one another and greet each other before Mass. One parish takes this further and asks people to share their intention for the week with their neighbor. Parishioners commit to holding each other in prayer throughout the week. ([Click to read more.](#))

3. KNOWING PEOPLE’S NAMES

People who care about me, call me by name; it’s as simple as that. When we care about someone, we make an effort to call them by their name. As a parish this can be hard, especially if you’re a large parish, but no one needs to know everyone’s name, we can be known by just a few people. If everyone just learned the names of the three to five people who sit next to them at Mass, then everyone would be known by more than one person. ([Click to read more.](#))

Read more about any of these ideas, and more, at transformyourparish.com or click the read more links in the article above.