

July 2020



ENCOUNTER!
Meeting Jesus
on Higher Ground.

*Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy
(Matt. 5:7).*

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:

- * six ways to improve your website courtesy of **ACS Technologies**.
- * the importance of mastering your digital strategy during a crisis presented by **CCS**.
- * six tips to successful messaging compliments of **Diocesan**.
- * Recover, refresh, restart, renew from **OSV**.

Have you heard? ICSC is going virtual!

ICSC 58th Annual Conference

September 28 to October 9, 2020

*Location: **Your Office, Your Couch, Your Backyard***

Join the above strategic partners and others to hear their wisdom on how to "think outside the box" and move forward in this new world in which we find ourselves.

[REGISTER NOW AND JOIN US!](#)

Having a great website is a huge part of making guests want to visit your church. There are so many tools you can use to make your parish's website second to none. Create a sleek minimalist design but include all of the information your parishioners and visitors need.

HERE ARE SIX TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR PARISH'S WEBSITE:

1. Don't overcrowd your website with wording.

Let everyone know what is most important to your parish but don't use an excessive amount of words or images. It will overwhelm your visitors. You have about 15 seconds to convince that visitor to stay on your site to get more information. Make it short, sweet, and to the point. Use bullet points, numbered lists, bold text, images, and line breaks to show the visitor what they need to know.

2. Choose a color scheme.

Colors represent so much to people. When you see red and green together you think of Christmas. If you're from South Carolina, when you see orange and purple together you think of Clemson or when you see garnet and black you think of the University of South Carolina. Different colors bring out different feelings for people. Keep your color scheme simple. Before choosing your colors read through a color guide to learn about the emotions created by different colors.

3. Make sure your website is easy to use and understand.

Make your website as intuitive as possible. Use simple, short, easy-to-understand words and phrases along with easy navigation options. Sticking to a third-sixth grade reading level is best. Let your visitors know why they should check out your parish in an easy and understandable way.

4. Use no more than two different fonts on your webpage.

Using too many fonts on the webpage will make your webpage look incoherent. Be intentional about your choice of font. Don't make them distracting for the visitor. Keep it sleek and clean.

5. Make it unique.

Let visitors know why they want to visit your parish and not the one down the street. Highlight what sets you apart. Create a page to show your parish's views on discipleship. Make sure this page gives newcomers a reason to come and visit your parish.

6. Make sure your website is complete.

There are two separate ways to do this – make sure all landing pages have pertinent information on them and make sure all of your parish's information is on the website. When a visitor is trying to find out information about the small groups in your parish, you don't want them clicking on the link and seeing the words "More information coming soon." You want them to click on that link and get information about how joining a small group in your parish will lead them closer to God with a great community behind them. Also, make sure your parish's information like phone number, address, etc. is on the website in case the visitor has questions.

These 6 simple tips will help you create a website for your parish that visitors will love. Your website is a direct reflection of your parish so make sure it is a good one. Don't overcrowd it, choose a color scheme, make it easy to understand and use, don't use more than two fonts, make it unique, and make sure it is complete.

For more ministry resources go to ministry.acst.com



Effective Communications During a Crisis: Mastering Your Digital Strategy

By Dan Altano, Senior Director of Corporate Communications, CCS Fundraising — July 2020



COVID-19 is changing the way Parishes and Dioceses are communicating, so having a robust digital marketing strategy has never been more important. Digital is an ideal way to distribute communications—especially crisis messaging—both quickly and cost-effectively, while keeping your community actively engaged with your organization.

Solidify the Call-to-Action

The first question to consider as you think about your crisis communications is: *What do you want your recipients to do?* Do you want them to make a gift? Become a member? Provide feedback? Share a story? Identify your goal, and then tailor your communications to accomplish it. Whether you're sending an email to parishioners, adding new messaging to your website, or sharing content on social media during this crisis, you should always have a call-to-action in mind.

Engage with Purpose

Because so many of us are isolated right now, there is a clear longing for connection. But the members of your community are most likely inundated with messages from many different organizations trying to reach out during this time. So, it's important to ask: *How can you engage your parishioners and volunteers and support your community most meaningfully?* Think about how you can foster these relationships in a substantial way that rises above the clutter.

Utilize Your Channels

All your different channels should be activated to cast the widest net possible. If you already have stewardship and communications channels in place—such as email, website, and social media—now is the time to double down on these avenues. If you don't have a good digital infrastructure in place, invest some time into getting up to speed so you don't fall behind.

Key Recommendations for website and social media:

- *Use best-quality visuals to gain traction:* Visuals make things easy to spot while scrolling through busy social media newsfeeds.
- *Post updates as often as needed:* Be consistent and don't allow long stretches of time to go by without providing useful content to your audience.
- *Pin the most critical information:* Locking down your most valuable messaging on the top of your Facebook and Twitter profiles will allow this information to remain easy to access.
- *Use simple messaging:* Just like your website and email strategies, be clear, concise, and direct about your call-to-action.
- *Respond to comments:* Thank users regularly for their support, and be sure to respond to questions—as well as negative feedback. It's paramount to be a part of the conversation on social media (otherwise, the conversation will happen without your input).

It is important to remember—especially now—that your digital strategy can always change down the road. Try to think of this initial strategy in 15-, 30-, and 60-day increments. Consider your immediate needs and reinforce these messages across channels. Finally, remember to stay on message and on brand throughout. Stay true to your mission by sticking to the principles and behaviors that have already propelled your Catholic institution into prominence.

6 Tips to Successful Messaging

Below are 6 tips and tricks that have been tested to make sure that you are communicating in the most successful way possible.

BE AUTHENTIC

People are searching for the truth and they know when they have found it and when they have not. So don't be afraid to be yourself. People appreciate authenticity.

BE IMPORTANT

Don't just send a message to meet your message quota for the week. It's better to wait to send a message until you have something important to say.

BE FUN

Some of the most successful messages are those that are lighthearted. Throw a joke in every once in awhile. People respond to fun messages.

BE QUICK

I don't know if you remember Vine, but it stopped being used because even 7 second videos proved too long for people to watch. Engage your audience fast and keep the message short.

BE RELATABLE

It's so important that you know what your audience likes and dislikes. The more aware you are of your audiences' needs, the more likely it is that they will respond.

BE AWARE

Who is your audience? Try to figure out when the best time is to send a message to your audience. Keeping this step will ensure that the great messages you are sending are actually being seen.



RECOVER. REFRESH. RESTART. RENEW.

BY JIM WEIGERT, CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER

This year has presented us with many challenges. The Church is no exception. And while states are reopening and people are returning to their jobs, to public places and to their churches, it is proving to be a slow and unpredictable path. However, as we have faced challenges in the past, we will overcome. Pope Francis reminds us that “There are difficult moments in life, but with hope the soul goes forward and looks ahead to what awaits us.” We can look at what we don’t have, but we are called to look at what we can do now. We can use this as an opportunity to restart and renew. To reach out to our parishioners in new ways. People who are looking for support, community and meaning. With the increased need for online and digital communication, it is an opportunity for every parish

to look at how they engage and communicate with their parishioners. With increased needs in the community, it is an opportunity to evaluate how you serve your community.

And programs that engage your parishioners in new ways. Create new experiences and connections that have digital elements. More than streaming mass online. Create opportunities for you to connect and speak with your parishioners beyond the mass. Connect your community with programs like book clubs, prayer groups, service projects. Go beyond bible studies and do all of these with digital experience in mind. It can ensure that your parishioners know how you are supporting them. Reinforce community.

PEOPLE WILL GIVE, BUT YOU HAVE TO ASK

People will give even in uncertain and challenging times. While unemployment levels that are similar to those during the Great Depression, even in the Great Depression, giving was at 3.3% of income, higher than it was recently before this year’s pandemic. So hard times doesn’t always mean people can’t give. You have to ask. We work with many

parishes who have asked their parishioners for help and have received it – with campaigns that are even over the targeted goals. However, parishes need to think short term and long term. Programs that can help you get back on your feet and those that will help you stabilize.

RECOVERY...AND PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Organizations need to look for short term programs that can infuse your parish with the resources to re-open in new ways, to continue to support your mission and reach those in need. Those programs might be programs focused on offertory recovery, capital infusion, or even a school annual fund program that replaces school fundraisers that have been cancelled or cannot continue under social distancing guidelines. Regardless of how you decide to ask for support, it is recommended you have your mission and your vision clearly defined. You should be able to articulate your value statement and how you are serving the Church and its

people. If you have one, it may be time to refresh and update as the ways all organizations are serving their communities and their people have changed. If you don’t have that mission and vision clearly defined, get some help to create it with a program focused on strategic vision planning which can help you detail your messaging in a way that makes your value clear and understandable. Then any future efforts – short term recovery programs or ongoing increased offertory programs and capital campaigns – will be much more effective. People want to understand where their donations are focused.

DIGITAL GIVING OPTIONS ARE NOW ESSENTIAL

It is essential that you have solutions for giving online. Sixty percent of church goers will give to their church digitally if asked and given the opportunity. And when a church implements an online giving solution and continues to

promote enrollment and usage, we see up to a 32% increase in donations. Online giving is no longer an option especially now and into 2021 as your parish plans for the future.

The new world has proven challenging, but has forced every organization to evaluate how they reach their members. Our founder, Father John Francis Noll, developed solutions that met the challenges of the Church starting over a hundred years ago. He reminds us that “The Catholic Church is a religion of joy”. If we approach the current situation with new hope and joy, we can create connections with our parishioners that are even stronger, welcome new parishioners and build a solid foundation for the future.

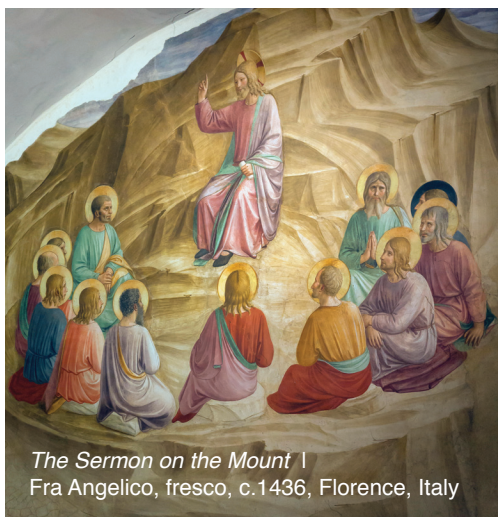
THE VIRTUAL CONFERENCE 2020

September 28 - October 9



1-2 people **\$299** per person
3-4 people **\$249** per person
5+ people **\$229** per person

ENCOUNTER! *Meeting Jesus on Higher Ground*



The Sermon on the Mount |
Fra Angelico, fresco, c.1436, Florence, Italy

The 58th Annual Conference will feature a new and exciting virtual experience!

- More than 100 sessions spread out over 10 days
- Unlimited access to recorded sessions
- Liturgies and devotions from around the world
- Virtual Exhibit Hall
- Virtual rooms for making strategic connections
- Enhanced networking opportunities
- Concerts, tours and much, much more