

October 2020



ENCOUNTER!
Meeting Jesus
on Higher Ground.

Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
(Matt. 5:10).

WISDOM

from ICSC strategic partners

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



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:



- * overcoming Mass live stream fatigue provided by **Guidance In Giving**.
- * cómo evitar la fatiga que surge al enseñar misa en línea provista por **Guidance In Giving**.
- * finding ways to rebuild that missing sense of community presented by **J.S. Paluch**.
- * weathering your parish through any crisis from **LPi**.
- * eight ways to refresh your annual appeal materials compliments of **Suttle-Straus**.

Did you know there's still time to register for the
ICSC 2020 Virtual Conference

The parish track is happening this week. Click below to register and view the topics that will help keep your parishioners engaged.

[CLICK HERE for Registration and Information](#)

If you are interested in the diocesan, foundation and school topics you can still view them as all were recorded.

Overcoming Mass Live Stream Fatigue

Parishioners have become less inclined to attend Mass while in their own homes. Guidance In Giving has a few ideas to help keep your parishioners engaged!

Mass Guide

Every Friday, send your parishioners a worship aide with readings and hymns so they can follow along at home and be more engaged



Limit Options

Offer only a few streaming options to increase attendance and have more of your families worshipping together



Personalized Mass Intentions

Ask your parishioners to email you intentions to be included during certain Masses



Get Ministries Involved

Have your ministries take turns "filling the pews" to have presence during your livestream



Religious Education Students

Have your Religious Education students lead hymns to encourage younger families to participate



Get Outside

Try holding a service outside enforcing social distancing guidelines. Parishioners can bring their own chairs or even make it a drive in event



Make the Ask

Acknowledge that livestream Mass attendance is down, and personally invite parishioners back



GUIDANCE IN GIVING, INC.
Stewardship, Development & Campaign Consultants

Cómo evitar la fatiga que surge al enseñar misa en línea

Las misas en línea han perdido su encanto inicial. Para evitar el cansancio que experimentan nuestros feligreses con lo repetitivo y aumentar la participación; Guidance In Giving quisiera compartir las siguientes ideas.

Guía para la misa

Cada viernes envíe a sus feligreses información sobre las lecturas y los himnos para que puedan participar desde su hogar.



Limitar las opciones

Ofrezca sólo unas pocas opciones para la transmisión de las misas. Así podrán aumentar la asistencia y participación de las familias.



Intenciones personalizadas para las misas

Invite a sus feligreses a enviar un mensaje de texto o un email a la parroquia con sus intenciones personalizadas para ser incluidas en las misas.



Involucrar a los grupos y ministerios parroquiales

Deje que sus grupos y ministerios parroquiales tomen turnos para estar presentes durante misa.



Estudiantes de Educación Religiosa

Los estudiantes de educación religiosa pueden ser los primeros en cantar los himnos; animando a las familias jóvenes a participar.



Disfrutar del aire libre

Ofrezca las misas al aire libre, teniendo en cuenta las reglas de distanciamiento social. Los feligreses pueden traer sus propias sillas o permanecer en sus vehículos.



Intentar hacer que regresen

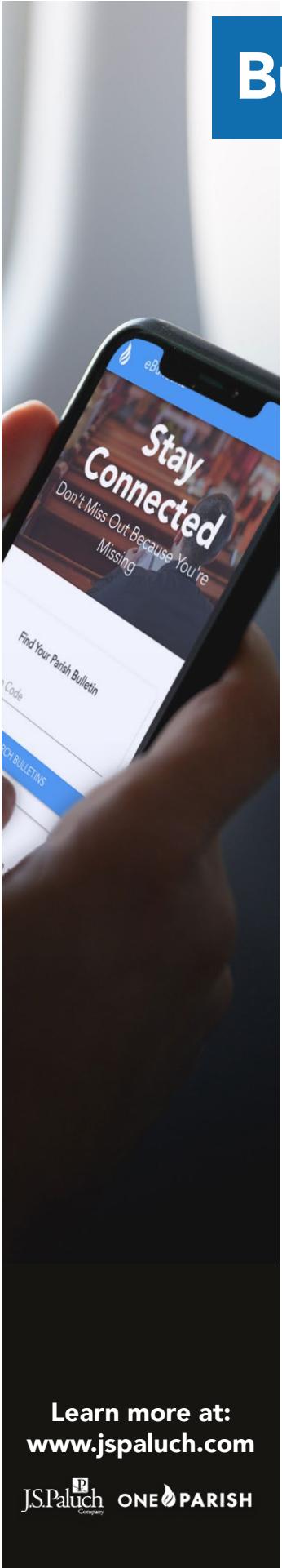
Recuerde a las familias que estamos llamados a orar juntos como comunidad parroquial, encontrarnos con Cristo en Su Palabra y recibir una comunión espiritual. Jesús aún nos espera.



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Stewardship, Development & Campaign Consultants

Build a Parish Message Board

Michael Novak



As we all know too well, one of the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic has been to create major dislocations in the lives of just about everyone. Orders to shelter in place and limit the size of gatherings have greatly diminished the amount of social interaction that we encounter every day. Parish communities have been affected by these restrictions as well. Even with churches cautiously reopening, many parishioners are staying away from public worship out of concern for their own health as well as the safety of others. While many parishes have been able to provide online streaming of their Masses, these are not a substitute for the direct personal experience of gathering with the other members of your community on a regular basis. In response to this situation, parish communities have had to be creative in finding ways to rebuild that missing sense of community.

The Inspiration

One parish has come up with the idea of using the parish bulletin as a kind of parish message board. They admit that the idea was inspired by the message board at a local bar, where a patron can buy a beer for someone who isn't there at the time and leave that person's name on the board. When that other lucky patron arrives, they can check the message board, go to the bar, and enjoy the beer purchased for them perhaps days earlier. The parish staff reasoned that blank space going to waste in the parish bulletin could be used in a similar way to supply the missing sense of community because of the pandemic.

The Idea

Here's how the idea can work. Most parishes have an agreement with their bulletin provider for a set number of pages in the weekly Sunday bulletin. With parish activities greatly diminished, there is the possibility of bulletin space going unused every week. This parish message board idea would use that space to allow parishioners to send messages to each other, or to the parish at large, as a way of making up for the lacking daily, Sunday morning, and weeknight interactions. The message could be a simple "We miss the cheerful greeting of Doris who sat behind us in the fourth pew at the 10 a.m. Mass." Or maybe "How is Mr. Johnson doing after his surgery? Contact us at 555-1212." Maybe it's the announcement of a birth or a special birthday. Or just saying how much you miss Deacon Larry's homilies. The possibilities are endless.

The Setup

It might take a while to set up. A volunteer or someone on the parish staff could be designated to moderate the submissions for privacy issues and to keep the content appropriate. Announcements promoting the project could be made in the bulletin and during the streaming Masses. Maybe a special email address could be created just for the message board, or parishioners could phone in their messages to voicemail. Some parishioners could volunteer to send the first messages to get the ball rolling. Each parish can develop its own approach and refine it over time. The result will be that parishioners can read messages from their neighbors in printed or online versions of their parish bulletin, and get at least a little sense of life in their parish home.

The Payoff

During these difficult times, human contact with our fellow parishioners is priceless. Why not give something like this a try in your parish? And when you can finally gather again, you'll be able to continue building on the sense of community you've maintained during the long absence by means of this simple parish message board.

Learn more at:
www.jspaluch.com

J.S.Paluch Company
ONE PARISH

WEATHERING YOUR PARISH THROUGH ANY CRISIS

Months ago, no one could have predicted what COVID-19 would do to our communities, much less our parishes. Even leaders of our strongest faith communities had to scramble when they were advised to shut their doors and cancel public Masses to slow the virus. However, by utilizing resources available online, as well as calling on parishioners to volunteer for some much-needed assistance, many parishes have proven that Church really isn't a place ... it's who we are as people of God.

Fr. Charlie Garza is the pastor of St. Albert the Great Catholic Church in Austin, Texas.

According to him, St. Albert was one of the poorest prepared parishes to take on COVID-19 in so many ways. However, by following the principals of a growing organization that helps pastors and their leadership teams with a goal of helping the group discover ways to take their parish leadership practices from the level of mundane to truly spiritual, they were able to adapt quickly to the circumstances and come out stronger on the other side.

When news came out that all parishes had to close due to the coronavirus, Fr. Garza

knew that his parish couldn't just stop all ministry and wait for the virus to end. He and his leadership team had to find a way to continue the mission of Christ in a new way.

"On hearing the news, we immediately began brainstorming ways to get creative. As a team, we were committed to the idea that we were not going to say 'no,' but rather that we were going to say 'yes' in a creative way under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit," he explains. "We each had to surrender to the idea that we could not do certain things as usual. We had to ask the Holy Spirit in prayer to show us a new way."



DIGITAL MINISTRY AS A WAY OF LIFE

Fr. Garza says that his congregation's reaction to canceling public Masses was one of sadness but compassion, as well.

"Some were upset that Bishop Joe Vásquez did not cancel Masses sooner and thought that decision should have happened earlier," he remembers. "On the other hand, some were upset that the bishop cancelled public Masses in the first place. The majority, however, were understanding and felt the decision and timetable were correct."

Knowing that time was of the essence, the parish quickly shifted focus to digital ministry.

"This is where having a leadership team was key to our quick pivoting," Fr. Garza explains. "We were just as unprepared as any parish out there for this, especially for livestreaming. However, we responded very quickly because each leadership team member responded to a key area.

"One team member handled the electronic giving aspect, another the livestreaming, another the digital pastoral care aspect, another the social media communication. Within a few days, we were livestreaming and pushing things out on social media and our podcast site," he adds. "It was a growing process, and we made mistakes, but as a team we improved our digital outreach over time."



TITHING A "WAY OF INVITATION"

Focusing on keeping donations steady through all of this has been key, explains Fr. Garza, although asking for money was a little difficult for him in the beginning.

"It was once hard for me to ask for money, but now I see it as inviting people into mission with us," he says. "We made a big push once COVID-19 started to increase our electronic giving. Today, about 60-65% of our total offertory now comes from online donations.

"Our weekend offertories took a dip in the first couple weeks after the suspension of public Masses, but we recovered quickly as the

message of giving was heard by our parishioners." Today, the parish is back to pre-COVID-19 offertory numbers and giving has increased by four-times to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, as more requests for financial assistance came pouring in as jobs were lost and families struggled.

The key to the offertory "push" was using a variety of communications and consistency in messaging, according to Fr. Garza.

"We sent out physical and social media mail-outs very quickly that explained our three giving options," he says. Electronic giving was the most stressed method, mail-in giving was mainly for the envelope users, and the parish's outside drop-off box was geared toward cash givers.

"Our parish is very diverse, and so we recognized the need for diverse giving methods. In every weekend livestreamed Mass, we stressed our three giving methods during the offertory time period. We also maintained momentum by sharing success stories of how our parish's generosity is making a difference, while highlighting specific needs that came up."



A MORE EFFECTIVE WAY OF DOING THINGS

While the world waits in anticipation for things to go back to normal, Fr. Garza believes that some aspects of the Church will keep new ways. In fact, some of it needs to change because it's just a more effective way of doing things.

While he is now back to celebrating public Mass, Fr. Garza says that many of his parishioners are reluctant to come back regardless of the precautions the church is taking, so they will continue to offer livestream Masses for spiritual communion. His ministry team also continues to emphasize the importance of supporting the parish through recurring giving, especially through online donations.

"We have maintained our same electronic giving percentage even as some people come back to public Masses," he added. "Our hope is that we have successfully shifted our parish so that the majority will continue giving online."



BECAUSE VIBRANT CHURCHES MATTER

Looking to amplify your online giving message but don't have the time or the resources? Sign up for the **Weshare Engagement Campaign** — a FREE service for parishes — and watch how a few simple steps from your parish can translate into big results for your community.

Learn more at www.4LPi.com/weshare-engagement



8 WAYS TO REFRESH YOUR ANNUAL APPEAL MATERIALS

Are you getting the maximum amount of donations from your diocese's fundraising campaigns? Here are eight pieces of advice to ensure your annual appeal materials deliver the best results.

1. CONTENT

The text should connect with the reader and entice them to make a donation. Use emotion to connect to people on a personal level and outline the benefits the donations will provide to the community. Do not try to cram too much information into a single piece, be succinct. You can always link to your website for additional information and to donate.

2. READABILITY

Design your materials for optimal readability. Keep the length of copy lines in mind, because if they are too long it can tire the eyes, making it hard for the reader to want to continue. Break up your copy into smaller chunks. The less copy you have, the larger the text can be, making it easier to read. A reader is also more likely to read short bulleted copy than long paragraphs.

3. RELATEABLE

Using images of your own churches, parishes, priests and parishioners helps the reader connect and relate to your materials, more than if stock photography is used. The images can be from community events, local photography of your area, baptisms, weddings, or Works of Mercy through the church.

4. ORGANIZATION

The way your content is organized can make a big difference. For a better user experience, have your materials tell a story through the flow of the content, through folds or a sense of hierarchy. Think about what you want them to see first to establish priority.

5. CONSOLIDATE

By consolidating pieces, you are able to save expenses as well as the number of pieces. Adding a simple perforation to a panel in your brochure is a great example of incorporating a prayer card into a brochure.

6. FORMAT

If you have always used the same format for a brochure or mailing piece, think about turning the orientation from vertical to horizontal, or changing the overall size to help your piece feel new.

7. CONSISTENCY

Ensure your campaign is recognized and remembered by keeping the brand consistent across all pieces, from brochure to poster to tabloid to in-pew envelopes! The more consistency your campaign has, the better the results will be.

8. VISUAL APPEAL

There are graphic design and printing techniques that offer ways to help your pieces stand apart and get noticed. Using bright, pleasing, relevant colors helps attract readers. Think about adding a gloss and/or dull varnish to your printed piece to protect the piece and give it a textural feel. If you're mailing, try sending your brochure in a clear envelope, it's sure to stand out among the rest!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Theresa Aide has almost 30 years of experience in print and mail services, and coordinates large personalized diocesan appeal projects. She enjoys the process of taking a project from concept through to completion. Her previous role as a customer service representative means she has a detailed knowledge of best practices and can offer consultations and recommendations to deliver the best results. She can be reached at 608-850-2930 or theresa.aide@suttle-straus.com.

Keep Parishioners Engaged!



The reopening of many parishes has seen a significant drop in the number of people attending Mass and being involved in the various ministries and other parish activities because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Of course, parishioners have become accustomed to viewing Masses from home and, quite understandably, have disengaged from parish life. Because of this, it is critical that we keep parishioners engaged in our parishes physically and digitally. How can we find ways to spiritually support and engage our parishioners during this time of fear and uncertainty?

At its 2020 virtual conference, the ICSC family is offering solutions through its virtual sessions to help you keep your parishioners more engaged and ultimately to feel the love, care and concern of the parish community as they are invited to serve Christ's faithful and embrace a more profound spiritual life that transcends themselves.



Topics of interest will include:

- Revealing new strategies for enhancing parish engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Using digital communications to inspire parishioner engagement
- Keeping young adults active in parish ministries
- Building and stewarding “Intentional Families” in the parish
- Taking parish ministries to the living rooms of parishioners
- Using social media to engage parishioners
- Maximizing the parish database for increasing engagement

A promotional graphic for the ICSC 2020 Virtual Conference. It features a woman smiling on the left, a purple banner in the center with the word "ENCOUNTER!" in large letters, and a religious painting on the right. The banner text reads: "Meeting Jesus on Higher Ground.", "THE VIRTUAL CONFERENCE", "2020", and "September 28 - October 9". The religious painting on the right depicts Jesus on a mountain, preaching to a group of people.

Join us for ICSC's 58th annual stewardship conference gone virtual and see for yourself how you can be enriched and better informed to enhance the spiritual life of your parish.