



Parish Resources

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SOCIAL & WEBSITE

If someone isn't complaining about how much communication you disseminate, then you are not communicating enough. Of course, we jest, but there is some truth to the power of over-communication in ensuring you've cast a wide enough net to reach as many people as you can. Communication is best when multi-pronged. In today's world, there is no one way of sharing your message. When crafting communications or messages to share with your Parish, think of how these will look in email, social media, bulletin notices, website, pulpit announcements, and (when possible) physical mailings.



Parish Examples

Corpus Christi Catholic Community - Lawrence, KS

In addition to its website and other social media platforms, the parish hosts a "What's Up Wednesday" on their YouTube channel to keep parishioners informed. Featuring their pastor and different guests, the "show" speaks to what is going on in the parish to keep individuals up to date, while also discussing different items going on in the Church year.

Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament - Sacramento, CA

In addition to a "Friday Flocknote", the Cathedral parish has a "Let's Talk Parish" podcast on Anchor by Spotify, with the goal of fostering connection and a greater sense of community. Each episode features a different parish staff member or parishioner in casual discussion. The podcast includes a phone number, so parishioners can offer comments.

What People Are Saying

In a recent Fall River Diocese survey of laity, individuals ranked the parish bulletin (83%), email (73%), and parish website (54%) as their top 3 preferred ways of finding parish information.

Findings reported by Forbes and Travel Professional News shared that millennials (those currently between 25-40 years old) prefer text-based communications (between 68-72%), while email remains a popular form of communication, with approximately 74% of millennials reviewing or replying to emails during all waking hours.

SOCIAL & WEBSITE

Checklist

Below is a checklist of items parishes are encouraged to have in terms of web and social media presence. Doing so widens a parish's ability to reach their target audience(s), make it easy for newcomers to discover them, and keep their community connected. Ensure that there is a point person overseeing this work, whether staff, volunteer, or team of volunteers.

- ☐ **Parish Website**
- ☐ **Website Updated Weekly (at minimum)**
- ☐ **Website Landing Page Includes:**
 - Contact Information
 - How to Access Sacraments
 - Mass and Confession Times
 - Welcome from Pastor
 - Upcoming Events and Activities
- ☐ **Bulletin Online**
- ☐ **Online Giving Set Up**
- ☐ **Ways to be Involved and Contact Information**
- ☐ **Facebook Page (Evangelization and Outreach)**
 - Includes Parish Contact Information
 - Includes Mass Times
 - Post Inspirational Material
 - Keep People Updated on Parish Happenings
 - Family Friendly, Positive, Encouraging
- ☐ **Facebook Group (Parish Communication)**
 - Eucharistic Ministers, Altar Servers, and Lectors included for scheduling
 - Faith Formation Office uses to share information
 - Allow prayer requests
 - If Parish has Eucharistic Adoration, invite adorers to group for scheduling
- ☐ **Instagram Account**
 - Share Special Events - both to encourage attendance and to share pictures from
 - Share Special Feasts, Solemnities, and Parish Masses
- ☐ **Social Media updated regularly (at least weekly)**
- ☐ **Create a Social Media Team made up of parish staff and volunteers**
 - Social Media Team received guidelines to posting
 - Social Media Team received Best Use Practices training

SAMPLE COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

WEEK

1. Welcome Back Pastor Letter (physical mail and/or email blast).
 - a. Don't assume because you are already open or the general dispensation from the obligation of Catholics to attend Mass has been lifted that it is too late to welcome people back. There are still many of your pre-pandemic parishioners unsure when or if they will return. They need to know they are missed, wanted, and welcomed.
2. Share letter in Parish bulletin.
3. Post on Parish website and link to it on all social media platforms.

WEEK

1. Time to share hopes, dreams, and plans for your parish, and extend invitations to be a part of it all — as participants and volunteers. Host a welcome back informational night.
2. Share the information in the bulletin. Be specific. The more people know of expectations for the meeting and the events going forward, the more willing they may be to participate or get involved.
3. Share the information on your website, social media, and via email.
4. In person invitations are always the most effective way to communicate this type of information. Share from the pulpit, include in Mass announcements, and encourage those already on board, to reach out and invite others.

GOING FORWARD — *Every Week*

1. Share what's happening in the Parish. Publicize activities and events by continuing to share everything on your website (*think front page-make this information super easy to find), on your social media platforms (*don't have any-we can support you in launching Facebook and/or Instagram), in the Parish bulletin, and include in your Mass announcements.
2. Make sure to have up to date information about ministries and ways to volunteer on your website and social media platforms
3. Have a way for individuals to share their email address with you or sign up to receive e-communications, both on your website and on social media.
4. Remember: when posting to Instagram and Facebook, focus on "visuals" more so than extensive text.

Need Help with your Communications?

We can help! From social media and website training, to designing posts, email dcarvalho@dioc-fr.org or lcarrillo@dioc-fr.org to start a conversation on how your communications can be evangelization.



SAMPLE "WELCOME BACK" LETTER

<DATE>
<ADDRESSEE>
<ADDRESS>
<CITY>, <STATE> <ZIP>

Dear <NAME>,

The purpose of my letter today is to look to the future and the blessings to come as our world moves with hope, post-pandemic. However, first I would be remiss not to acknowledge the past 15 months have been full of pain.

Some of the pain has been direct – the pain of illness or of losing a loved one. Or the pain of losing a job or dealing with a major economic setback. Some of the pain has been indirect. Like the pain of living, day after day, with a general sense that things aren't quite right. Or the pain of losing the things we took for granted or were looking forward to doing.

I think you also experienced the pain from being away from Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. For some of you, that pain was obvious. For others, it was more subtle. Maybe you didn't even notice it until now, as you read this letter. I want you to take a moment right now and think of our quiet church, with the altar, the tabernacle, the crucifix, and the candles—remember the smell of incense and the feeling of peace that washes over you when you're deep in prayer. Do that, and I think you might start to realize just how much you've been missing our parish community.

Hopefully, the pain of this past year helped to focus your attention on what is important in life. Faith. Family. Health. Friendship. Kindness. Community.

We praise God as we begin to turn the corner on the pandemic. Vaccines are being distributed to those who need them. Businesses, schools, and hospitals are settling into a rhythm. It will take time to return to normal, but we know the day is coming.

SAMPLE "WELCOME BACK" LETTER

And I want you to know that our parish is ready. We are here to welcome you – and all your friends, neighbors, and fellow parishioners – with open arms. To that end, our parish has established a team to not only welcome you back but also keep us moving forward with faith-filled, family-friendly parish activities and events. We hope to create four subcommittees to work in the following areas: Summer Activities, Welcome Back Celebration Event, Parish Participation Activity, and Post-Celebration Activities. All wonderful ways for us to come together as a parish community once again, volunteers will be the heart of the success of each, and we hope you will prayerfully consider joining one.

More on those as they are developed, please prayerfully discern working alongside of us. For now, I am focused, grateful and excited for everything that lies ahead of us in 2021 and to being a worshipping community with all of you once again.

God has done so many good things in the last year. I see his hand at work – especially now! Here's what I know today:

1. We are coming back from this, and our parish will be stronger because of it.
2. We are going to celebrate our return to the Eucharist and our parish “re-opening” in a big way. I think we could all use a celebration this year, and I personally can't wait. Stay tuned for more details.
3. As things return to normal, we will cherish every moment of community and fellowship and take nothing for granted.

I hope you know that I never take you for granted either. Your support of our parish means the world to me, and I appreciate all that you do. You and your family are in my prayers, and I hope that I am in yours.

Gratefully in Christ,

HOSPITALITY

Community (*koinonia* in the Greek) has always been an important part of our faith since the early Church. The initial opening of the "shutdown" made us consider how to welcome individuals back safely. Now, we consider how to invite individuals back to parish life. When those who haven't already returned do (assuming they do), what will they be returning to? And can this be an opportunity to draw in *new* individuals? By considering how we can best engage in hospitality, we help our parish be a center of evangelization, greeting people and inviting them to relationship with Christ and the Church.



Parish Examples

Resurrection Catholic Parish - Tualatin, OR

In addition to offering coffee and doughnuts after Mass, and wine and cheese once a month, the parish organizes a ministry called "Breaking Bread". Parishioners sign up and are randomly assigned to a group of 6-8 individuals, who then have a casual meal as a way to come to know others in the parish.

Ascension Catholic Church - Boca Raton, FL

Just as parishes schedule lectors, Ascension schedules not only greeters for Masses, but assigns them to specific entrances. Their parking ministry includes volunteers who help direct cars in the parking lot. Additionally, they welcome Mass goers to their "Holy Grounds Cafe" after Mass for fellowship.

St Teresa of Avila Catholic Church - Summit, NJ

In addition to having Mass captains and an information desk, the parish utilizes its outdoor plaza to hold social events and hospitality, including a St Anthony's Day bread sale. Individuals can come, sell bread, similar to a farmers market, with part of the proceeds benefiting their food pantry.

What People Are Saying

From a recent Fall River Diocese survey, lay people suggested personal invitation, outreach, addressing safety and offering warm greetings as ways to bring people back.

"When I do go back, I would just want a 'Hello, how are you?' or a 'Let's go downstairs for a cup of coffee and catch up.'"

"Greeters at all doors before and after Mass. Letter from pastors inviting person by name."

"Start having functions like we use to have like summer picnic, BBQ, etc."

"Reassure them they are safe. Allow them to sit where they will be most comfortable."

HOSPITALITY

Checklist

Below is a checklist of items parishes can do to be more welcoming to visitors and regular attendees alike. As you look through this list, consider: how can you use the hospitality measures already in place due to the pandemic to form a more formal hospitality effort moving forward?

☐ **Greeters/Ushers who:**

- Welcome and provide direction to attendees
- Are assigned to each entrance
- Help identify newcomers and direct to welcome station
- Can help individuals in finding seating

☐ **Welcome Station that is:**

- Staffed by a volunteer who can answer different inquiries
- Is in a noticeable location and properly distinguishable

☐ **Church is clean and safe**

- What previous sanitation norms should remain (such as hand sanitizer stations)?
- Bathrooms are regularly cleaned, restocked, and functional, especially for families with infants/children

☐ **Church is handicap accessible**

☐ **Attendees can hear/see what is occurring during Mass**

☐ **Proper signage on campus offering direction for:**

- Newcomers who may not know where to go
- Areas on your campus or in buildings that are difficult to find
- Multiple languages in your community

☐ **Parking with:**

- Clear directions
- A greeter(s) welcoming, directing traffic, or helping locate spots
- Proper handicap spots, and even spots for needy populations, such as expectant moms/families with infants or newcomers

☐ **Ways for Individuals to connect/learn more:**

- Bulletin, Parish FAQ, or "Welcome to our Church" brochures
- QR codes individuals can scan with smart phones
- Parishioner registration materials
- Ways to give/tithe
- Evangelization/formative materials
- Welcome bags or family "Mass kits" for those with children

☐ **Space for fellowship after Mass**

- Consider using outdoor spaces during Summer/Fall and move your Welcome Station outside



HOSPITALITY

Getting Started

As you look to build hospitality at Mass, consider the following:

1

Start with One Mass

Perhaps you have everything in place to start a robust hospitality effort, or perhaps you don't. Start small. Pick one Mass to focus on and invest in and start building your hospitality presence there.

2

Use Volunteers Already in Place

During the pandemic, you may have used volunteers to help sanitize the Church after each Mass, manage check-in, or seat people. Use these individuals to form a more permanent hospitality team at the Mass(es) they were already serving at during the pandemic.

3

Form Mass Teams & Captains

Form leadership so that you can delegate the work that needs to be done. Assign someone to be the Mass Captain: responsible for the hospitality team for that Mass, ensuring that there are sufficient liturgical ministers, and taking the pressure off the celebrant so they can focus on celebrating the Mass.

4

Train a Hospitality Team

When forming any team it is important to train them. That way, not only are they equipped to provide the proper experience you are looking for at your parish, but so that they also build a sense of investment in their role. Hospitality is more than saying hello or handing out bulletins; it's an intentional ministry of evangelization.

Need Help with Hospitality training?

We can help! From starting a greeters ministry, to how to be a more welcoming parish, email dcarvalho@dioc-fr.org or lcarrillo@dioc-fr.org to start a conversation.



HOSPITALITY

Sample Duties for...



Welcome Station volunteer

- Be present at the Welcome Station and wear a nametag.
- Be a resource to the greeters, who can direct inquiries or newcomers to the Welcome Station for more information.
- Ready to explain parish information, including:
 - How to register new parishioners
 - Direct inquiries parishioners or newcomers may have to the proper sources.
- Ensure that Welcome Station is stocked with appropriate program information and/or evangelization materials.
- Be available 30 min before Mass and remain at the station until the start of Mass.
- Return to the station before the last hymn and remain until attendees have left.

Greeters/Ushers

- Stationed at all major entrances (including side entrances).
- Wear a name tag and a smile.
- Be in place 30-15 minutes before assigned Mass.
- If using a Mass Captain, Greeters check in with the Mass Captain/head Greeter.
- Stay at the station until Liturgy of the Word, in case of latecomers.
- Usher individuals to their seats (if needed).
- Usher individuals at communion (if needed).
- Return to station at final blessing.



Fellowship volunteer

- Coordinates food and drink hospitality after Mass, either with a team or through sign-ups for parishioner donations.
- Sets up fellowship space/cafe, coffee/drink stations, and any food items/snacks with the necessary materials.
- Maintains cleanliness and sanitation during fellowship.
- Replenishes hospitality items during fellowship as needed.
- Cleans up fellowship area after individuals have left, or resets for next Mass (if applicable).