



## Ministering During COVID-19: A Conversation with Philadelphia Priests Friday, March 27, 2020

- On offering ways to view Mass remotely:
  - o Some livestream and others record ahead of time; some parishes have already been offering remote viewing options for Mass for some time
  - o Turnout has been generally good for livestreamed Masses
  - o Some parishes lack the ability to stream Mass or don't have WiFi in the church
  - o Recommend finding a platform that works best for the most people at your parish; maybe streaming isn't the best place to focus your time, if your parishioners would like to connect in a different way
  - o There are a number of daily and Sunday Masses available to view online, often of very high quality and production; pastors' time and resources may be better spent elsewhere
  - o This time is also an opportunity to remind people that Sunday Mass is only one way of connecting
- There are additional ways to leverage technology aside from livestreaming Mass
  - o Using FlockNote or some other communication method
  - o Using Facebook and Twitter for prayer requests and to stay in touch
  - o Set up a Daily conference call with a pre-recorded prayer and listing of intentions
- There's a general feeling that the situation has accelerated the need to get parishes up to speed on interaction with parishioners outside of traditional methods
- The situation has also brought to light some challenges and difficult situations regarding pastors using social media
  - o Some aren't as familiar with platforms and are missing out on some potentially useful functions
  - o Providing additional or seemingly unlimited access to the public can overwhelm pastors, e.g. how to respond to 1,000 new friend requests

- Maintaining personal boundaries can be difficult, especially for those new to social media. Assume every post is seen by everyone and nothing is private
- On financial impact
  - One pastor reached out to 80 of the top donors by phone to touch base and let them know how they can continue to support the parish
  - Giving from the weekly (non-electronic) collection basket is down more than 50% of normal (in some cases only 10-20% of normal)
  - Parishes using electronic giving have fared better than others so far, but still down 25-50%.
    - It's still too early to tell how big the impact will be long-term
  - Sending letters seems to be a common tactic
    - Asking for an email address, or if they have a relative with email they could use as a contact
    - Providing ways to contribute to the collection without being in church
      - Setting up an automatic check from the bank may work for those wary of online giving
  - St. Monica's has set up a way for people to both [offer](#) and [request](#) assistance
    - Parishioners have been enlisted to help manage and respond to these requests
  - While parishes are likely looking for ways to curb expenses, it might be worthwhile to invest in a suitable communication platform to address current needs; free services are often insufficient or limited
- On HR issues
  - Reallocation of duties for parish employees seems to be working in a number of places
  - Parishes with small staffs haven't been as affected; roles such as maintenance and music have been able to continue coming in for limited times
  - Be transparent with what may happen with the future; ask employees what they're able to handle as some may be able to handle a pay cut more easily than others
  - Parishes are using whatever emergency funds they have
    - This may be an opportunity to start looking toward the future and seeing the benefit of planning ahead
  - Utilizing parishioners with time and expertise can be extraordinarily beneficial – involve them in finding solutions to your problems

- Have employees working from home keep track of their hours (e.g. google time tracker); there may be a need to reassess working arrangements in the future and this will help guide decisions
- Staff meeting via Zoom are still possible daily, as are other meetings such as faith formation classes and youth groups

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