

Why Parishioners Aren't Using

YOUR ONLINE GIVING PLATFORM





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After months of research, focus groups, planning, and finally implementing, your parish has entered the 21st century and now offers online giving. You made the announcement at the pulpit and added a blurb in the bulletin with the URL. Easy, right? Not really, you discover. After three months, online giving is barely utilized by eight percent of your donors. Wait – what happened?

Even though online giving — and more specifically recurring online giving — is becoming more mainstream and expected these days by parishes and parishioners alike, it's not always highly utilized. Here are five reasons why your parishioners aren't giving to the parish using your online giving platform.

1 It's Hard to Use

Not all online giving sites are created equal. Some are relatively easy to use, while others have multiple steps that cause confusion to novices. If you're finding that not many parishioners have signed up, you may need to revisit your website to see whether the steps to set up an account and add financial information are easier said than done.

Is your website responsive and easy to view on mobile devices or tablets? Does your online giving platform take forever to load, or show an error message when someone tries to add their information? Does it take more than five steps to set up an account and recurring payment option?

Not only are these legitimate questions to ask – they are also common problems in the world of online parish giving. And it's not always the fault of the developer. Technology moves at an incredible pace but implementing it into a program takes time. When both facts aren't taken into consideration, programs will fail.

If you have yet to do so, ask around at your parish about whether the online giving platform truly is as “easy as 1-2-3.” A simple focus group is also incredibly helpful when testing out new products (although this should be done before anything is purchased or added to your website).

2 They Can't Find It On Your Website

If your website is like a lot of parishes out there, navigation is a problem. You either have everything you could possibly have listed on your homepage or, the exact opposite, only one or two things. Either way, the links on your homepage need to be what you consider to be the most vital — and that would include how to give to your parish.

Did you know? Fifty-five percent of visitors spend fewer than 15 seconds on your website, according to Chartbeat. With that in mind, we need to put ourselves in the shoes of our members and visitors, and think about why they're on our website in the first place. Are they coming to learn about the Catechism of the Catholic Church? When the festival is taking place next year? What the Prayer Shawl Ministry is up to? It's safe to say that no, that's not why they're on there.

Visitors come to your website to find out when your Mass takes place, and what time you hold confession. Parishioners come online if there is a resource they need, such as an application for Baptism, the parish office's phone number, or to make an account for recurring giving to the parish. Be prepared by using a limited menu navigation and buttons going to only the most important information.

3 They Think Others Won't Think They're Actually Giving

There is something very satisfying about dropping an envelope or cash into the collection basket as it goes by. No matter what you end up donating, people can see that you're contributing and supporting your parish. But when you decide to give online, that collection basket (for many) because a bit of an issue.

Now when the basket goes by, you feel the need to whisper to the usher that yes, you still support the parish, but just through a different means. Maybe you worry that others in the pew might be judging you for the apparent lack of giving, or you have a young family and now no longer have that teaching moment where you hand them the envelope or bit of cash to give.

In order to combat this issue, many parishes have chosen to provide their parishioners with slips of paper they can slip into the collection basket, such as "We give online!" or "Please add my prayer intention to the parish's Book of Prayers." Whatever you end up using, parishioners who give online can still have that same satisfying moment of putting something in the basket.

4 You Only Told Them Once

Just because online giving is so beneficial to the parish, doesn't mean that your parishioners feel the same way. What does this mean? That while it may be on your mind often, more likely it hasn't crossed theirs since the announcement was made in church weeks ago. And that's a problem.

Have you heard of the "Rule of 7"? It's a simple concept that says people need to hear or see a marketing message at least seven times before it really sinks in. So, while you may have told them through the pulpit, in the bulletin, and perhaps sent a letter to their home



address, they still need to be reminded that it's out there.

5 They're Afraid It's Not Safe

While most people these days have no problem going online to conduct their banking, or order from their favorite store rather than make a visit, there are still some people out there who prefer to keep their financial activity off the internet. They don't feel it's secure, or they're afraid of hackers and phishing scams.

While it's not necessary for everyone in the parish to give online (envelopes are always welcome!) it is a good idea to inform everyone of the steps that your parish and your online giving provider take to keep all information safe and secure.

Consider adding links to your website about financial safety on the internet. The Federal Trade Commission has great resources for online security that you can direct parishioners to. Whether they are new to online giving or are seasoned veterans, everyone can benefit from a refresher course.

WeShare helps regularly promote your online giving platform to help you exceed your parish financial goals. Learn more by visiting www.WeShareGiving.com or call 877.316.0260.

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