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Secretariat for Evangelization

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Inviting Virtual Viewers to the “In Person” Life of Your Parish

Below are some suggested ways to invite those who have been live-streaming your parish Masses and events to connect to “in person” life in your parish. The focus is especially on those who may have been away from Mass previously:

Online Invitation to Encounter Jesus Christ: The decisive moment for anyone returning to the Church is a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. While nothing replaces the in person encounter with the Lord, the good news is that evangelization ministries such as ChristLife, Catholic Christian Outreach, the Augustine Institute and Evangelical Catholic have made their evangelization materials available for free online so that parishes can continue to help people encounter the Lord during the COVID crisis. Each of these ministries has a series that speaks directly to the hearts of those who have not yet had an encounter with Jesus. Consider offering one of these ministries *now* while restrictions are still in place and begin to lift. You can invite people to participate in these events at the end of your live-streamed Masses and other virtual events.

- For information about starting one of these ministries, contact Meghan Cokeley in the Office for the New Evangelization at mcokeley@archphila.org.

Parish video or slideshow: Create a short video (30-90 seconds) or slideshow that captures the beauty and vibrancy of your parish. Show this video/slideshow at the end of all of your parish live-streams, videos and/or virtual events. Be sure to include at the end of your video an invitation to “come home” and a way that people can sign up for your parish email lists or find information about parish events on your website. Good rule of thumb: always include a concrete action item at the end that indicates clearly how someone can connect with your parish.

- To see an example of a parish video like this, email Meghan at mcokeley@archphila.org.

Text to Join: Set up a text-to-join for your parish email list. At the end of your live-streamed Masses during the announcements at the end of Mass, invite people to join your parish email list using the simple text-to-join feature.

- Sample wording: “Many of you have been streaming Mass with us for quite some time now. We want to welcome you to our parish community no matter how long it has been since you’ve been to Mass. To find out what’s happening at our parish, especially as COVID restrictions lift and we are able to be together in person again, join our email lists. Text [your word] to [your ttj number].” (If you are able, run this information as a banner on screen once Mass has concluded.)

Parish website: Before Mass begins and/or at the end of live-streamed Mass, invite people to sign up for e-updates with your parish (see sample language above) by visiting your parish website. Be sure to have a sign-up form on the home page of your website so as soon as they reach your website they see the form and can sign up. Avoid making people search for a way to sign up for your email updates. You can also do this with any online offerings your parish is making available to people, such as videos, virtual events, etc....

Parish social: As your parish moves into the period when in person events are allowed, consider hosting a light-hearted social event such as a parish social, potluck, meet and greet, etc... and invite live-streamers to attend, emphasizing that they are welcome even if they are not a member of the parish or have not been to Mass in a long time. You may have to be creative about this given the limits on numbers of people that can gather during the transition period.

- *Further tips:* Keep the event light and non-committal to make it less intimidating for the person thinking about coming back. Focus on building relationships with newcomers (i.e. ask faithful parishioners to be attentive to newcomers at the event and be intentional about striking up a conversation with them). Relationship-building is the first stage of evangelization, called pre-evangelization.
- For more information about the stages of evangelization, visit phillyevang.org/disciples.

To share your own ideas or suggestions for helping inactive Catholics reconnect with your parish during the COVID crisis and transition period, send an email to Meghan at mcokeley@archphila.org.