

## Intermediate-level social media outreach for parishes during Covid-19 distancing



Roman Catholic  
Diocese of Winona-Rochester

Greetings in Christ to all of you. Under the worst of circumstances, we're creating a basic social media outreach primer during Covid-19, social distancing, and sheltering in place. This is not a substitute for reaching out to as many as you can by phone to see how they are doing. However, prior to this pandemic nearly 80% of the U.S. population is on facebook—and that has likely gone up. This is a simple way to stay in touch and give people Christ's outreach and hope in a scary time.

There is also a basic social media primer if you feel you need a review. I would recommend it, just in case; see it at <https://www.dowr.org/offices/missionary-discipleship/resources.html>.

I heard from a priest in another diocese earlier today: "We need to change how we view the Church: rather than the people of God coming to us daily and especially on Sundays, we need to get creative and figure out how to go to them in any way we can." Yes, we sure do! Social media is one piece of that outreach.

Facebook (and more), intermediate level: Masses

- 1) **Record Sunday/daily mass through Facebook live.** You will need someone to help you, most likely, holding a smartphone open to the parish facebook page. That phone needs to be on facebook through the page administrator's login. Once on the facebook parish page, see the button that says "Live." Click it and follow the instructions. This is worth a test run, but it is not complicated. Once the Mass has been offered, click the red "end Live" button. That's it. Remember that you do not need to be a user of facebook to view a video on a public page.
- 2) **You may prefer posting on the facebook page the DOWR TV mass**, available at [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCC\\_P1361uJTUHEzvfNyOiYg](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCC_P1361uJTUHEzvfNyOiYg). You could simply post the latest one on Saturday afternoon. You could go so far as create what is called a "Watch Party." Go to the page and go to create a post. Then click "watch party." Then you need to find the video—which can be tricky. But I wanted to mention that in case people wishes to try. The advantage of a watch party is the sense of community in one place.
- 3) **You can also record the Mass with a videocamera/smartphone and upload it to the Parish Youtube channel**, and then post the Mass on your parish webpage, facebook page, and link it to an email.

Facebook, intermediate level: Other gatherings

- 4) **Create online connection events.** There is a way to create events through your facebook page, and that event allows people to click and say "interested" or "going." Facebook then gives them a reminder of the event a few hours before it happens, and at the time it begins. The trick here is that the event page is simply an invitation page...a bit like an online calendar. Having said that, there are ways to use it. If you want your parish on facebook to join with Pop Francis' occasional calls for universal prayer (last week's 3pm rosary, this Wednesday's noon "Our Father"), you can use an event page for such a thing.

- 5) **All of the facebook live material above could be used for different devotions and prayers:** a rosary, the Angelus, the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, or any prayer you choose. It can be used for a pastor/priest/deacon/layperson's reflection. Ideally you will announce the time you (or someone at the parish) is leading it, but even spontaneous prayer is not bad. Whenever you use facebook.live, it pops up on user's screen...if people are online, it is hard to miss. People can also pray with the "replay," which stays on facebook.
- 6) This does not need to be video-based, but **a set time to "chat" with the pastor on facebook could be good.** Say, Tuesdays, 7pm. A "bring your questions" session. (Get a couple of people from the Church to begin with appropriate questions.) Or, a "How are we doing?" session. Or a "Brainstorming how to be Church in this moment" session. This could be advertised as an event, but the post (and resulting thread) would be on your parish facebook page.
- 7) If anyone in your parish is good at teaching, using facebook live for that would be an option. Keep it brief (hour long facebook lives need to be worth it!).
- 8) Consider **a Holy Week in-home online retreat**, led on facebook. Bring out your creative juices.

#### Facebook: Intermediate posting

- 9) Keep up your daily posting, but here is a way to make it easier: **schedule your posts.** If you are planning to post twice a day, but at least one of your posts is a "timeless" post, consider scheduling it for later in the day. Go the facebook page, and click on the create post. You should see an option to go to Publishing Tools. If not, look at the top of the page, above the facebook cover photo, and find Publishing Tools. It will then prompt you to create a post via Creator Studio. Go there by clicking yes. Then you simply create your post! When done, instead of clicking publish, click the arrow next to the publish button, and click on "schedule" when you see that. The rest of self-explanatory. This can save you a lot of time by doing many of your posts at once, and prevent you from sitting in front a computer all day.
- 10) As mentioned in the Basic training, **facebook favors posts that have a picture attached.** It's wise to do this most of the time. You can use pictures you have taken and upload them by clicking photo on the "create post," take a picture with your phone through the facebook app, or look for free-to-use photos online (for example, Pixabay and Unsplash have many free stock photos)—save many you like and use them.
- 11) **Learn to use Canva.** Canva is a free tool that allows you to create facebook sized post images easily, with texts and more. This is great for announcing events, but also good for an image with a scripture quoted, etc. You can save the image as a .jpg, .png, or load it directly to facebook.

#### Zoom: gathering as groups

- 12) **Try Zoom out.** In order to meet in groups of 4 or over for more than 40 minutes, you need a Pro account. It is \$15 a month, and worth the investment for this strange time. Zoom is the easier, more stable version of "Skype." You can set meetings and anyone with a smartphone or PC with camera and microphone can join in. Consider moving your small groups (bible studies? Pastoral council meetings? More?) to that platform, or creating small group meetings with it.

Advanced training coming soon! Please contact me with questions or corrections. —Susan Windley-Daoust, Director of Missionary Discipleship