

# Catholic Parish Social Media Presence: A Guide for the Coronavirus Pandemic



April 2020

## Purpose of this guide

This guide was written to help parish clergy, employees and volunteers to employ best practices when improving their church's social media presence. Once social distancing began in earnest in the United States in early March 2020, the Prenger Solutions Group (PSG) team consistently received four questions from parishes, which this guide will answer in turn:

1. How do I livestream Masses?
2. How can I promote my livestreamed Masses and other events?
3. How can I grow my parish's social media following?
4. How can I promote giving to the parish during this difficult time?

Also, note that while your parish may be utilizing multiple social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.), this guide is written with Facebook in mind. Facebook has 2.5 times more monthly active users than Instagram and 8.3 times more monthly active users than Twitter. Also, the neighborhood focus of its News Feed algorithm means that your parish's robust Facebook presence is much more likely to reach people in your area than other social media platforms.

## 1. How do I livestream Mass?

### Things you will need

- A parish account and a parish Facebook page
- A smartphone with Facebook app and a fully charged battery
- A strong Wi-Fi connection
- A tripod with smartphone mount (or steady hands)
- An online giving page for your parish
- An external microphone (optional, but recommended)



### People you will need

- A primary point person who has administrator rights to the parish Facebook page who can set up and record the live stream from his or her smartphone
- A "digital usher" who watches the stream via desktop and serves as both a host and a troubleshooter. Duties include:
  - Welcoming people and answering questions
  - Sharing key information with participants – like providing links to your online giving page during offertory

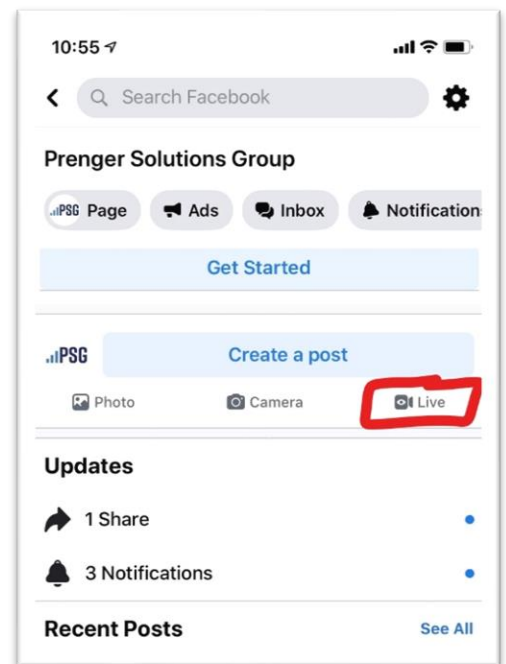
### Before you get started

1. **Watch this tutorial** Spirit Juice Studios created on livestreaming Mass from your phone: Watch it on Facebook [here](#) or watch it on LinkedIn [here](#).

2. **Figure out the best location and set up your tripod.** If possible, use the wide-angle lens on your phone. If you are not using an external microphone, make sure you are close enough to the altar for clear audio.
3. **Make sure you have proper lighting.** Your phone's camera does its best work when there is bright lighting.
4. **Test everything! And then test everything again!** The last thing you want to do is promote your online Mass to parishioners and then find out you have problems just as Mass begins. Start small, use the instructions below, and test everything internally first before going live.
5. Once you have tested your live stream and are confident you are ready to go public, do not forget to **promote it** ahead of time! Let your parishioners know that you plan to stream Mass at a specific time, so they will know it is available. **Ask your parishioners to share your posts with their friends.** If parishioners are already following your parish Facebook page, they will be alerted when you go live.

### Getting started

1. Open the Facebook mobile app and navigate to your parish page as if you were going to make a typical post.
2. Once you have arrived at your parish page, you will see the option to create a post with the 'Live' button available. Click on the 'Live' button and you are headed in the right direction.



- 1) If you need to flip your camera view, so you are not taking "selfies", the button is on the top left corner.

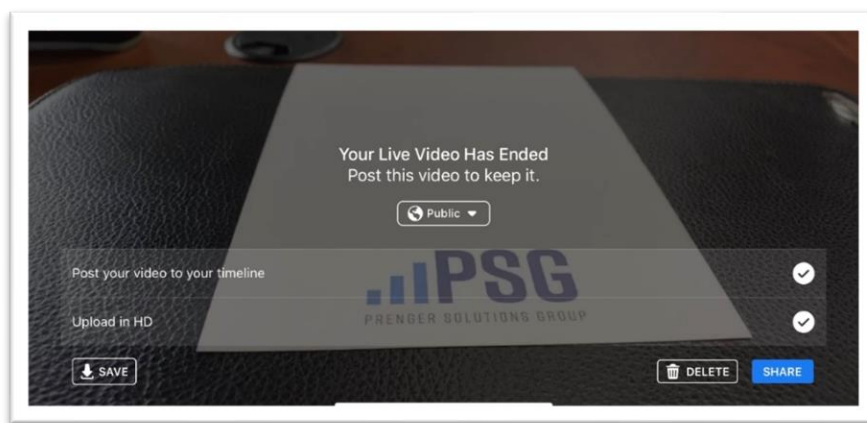


- 2) Before you start your live broadcast, add a description to your video. Something like “March 15 - 9 a.m. Mass.” Be sure to add your location as well.



- 3) **IMPORTANT** – Make sure to turn your cell phone to shoot in horizontal (wide screen) mode. You cannot rotate your phone once you’ve started your live broadcast. While many parishioners will join via phone, many will also join from their desktops. The viewing experience is better for everyone when a live stream is shot in the horizontal (wide screen) format.
- 4) When everything is ready and your phone is horizontally set up on the tripod, simply click ‘Start Live Video’ or the blue box with the camera in it (as it appears when you’re in horizontal mode) to begin your live stream. We recommend going live approximately five minutes before Mass begins. Your primary point person should stay near the broadcasting device throughout the Mass.
- 5) Once the event has gone live, have your “digital usher” welcome everyone in the comments section and set expectations for their online Mass experience. It would be a good idea for the usher to remind everyone now this is your first time streaming a Mass and ask for everyone’s patience as you get the hang of it. More details on this later.

- 6) Make sure to have the digital usher **share a link to your online giving page** at the start of your livestream, during the offertory, and after the livestream. Most parishes already have some system in place (likely through Vanco, eCatholic payments, ParishSoft ConnectNow, PDS Realm, Faith Direct or some other provider).
- 7) Once Mass has ended, you can end the live stream, or post the video to your timeline so parishioners may have access later. You can also save the video. NOTE: emphasize the importance of parishioners and friends to watch the livestream in real time. We feel it is important to have a specific time for parishioners to gather – even virtually – to share in the liturgy.



### Frequently asked questions

*Do the primary point person and digital usher need to be Facebook admins on the parish page?*

The primary point person DOES need to be a Facebook admin on your parish page. The digital usher does not need to be an admin, but if you're going to utilize the same person for Mass each week, it would make sense to [add them](#).

*What exactly is a digital usher?*

Think of your digital usher as your virtual greeter or host. Here are a few suggestions for things they can be doing before and during the Mass:

1. Welcome attendees:
  - a. *"Welcome to the 9 am Mass at St. Margaret Mary's. Mass will begin in five minutes."*
  - b. *"Hello everyone, my name is...and I will be serving as your digital usher today. If you're having any problems with your stream or any questions, please feel free to reach out here in the chat."*
2. Forecast the virtual offertory
  - a. *"Throughout the livestream and during the offertory, I'll be posting a link for parishioners to donate online. You can find this link in the comments section. Thank you in advance for continuing to support our parish and ministries during this time!"*
3. Provide a link to your online giving page (you can post the URL in the comments section – post the link multiple times throughout Mass so the link is not lost in the comments):

- a. *“For those of us who are attending Mass virtually, here is a link to support our parish and our ministries. Your gifts help us continue to serve parishioners during this time of uncertainty. Please donate at [www.churchname.com/donate](http://www.churchname.com/donate).”*
4. Share important parish information:
    - a. *“I want to remind everyone to like and follow the parish Facebook page for the latest updates regarding the coronavirus. We’ll always post info as soon as we have it regarding any news from the diocese, Mass times or other important information.”*
  5. Invite viewers to “Like” the parish Facebook page:
    - a. Your digital usher should revisit the parish’s livestream post and click on the number of people who like the post. This will bring up a list of the people who liked the post and shows whether they are currently following your parish’s page. For those who are not following the parish’s page, the digital usher can click on the “invite” button to send a request to “like” your page.

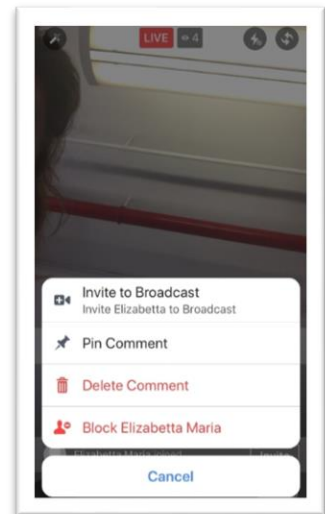
*Where should the digital usher be located?*

Anywhere they have a strong internet connection – whether that is the parish office (if open) or in their own home – a virtual host can perform their duties anywhere.

*What if someone is making rude comments during our live stream?*

Only the primary point person (the person running the livestream) can delete unwanted comments and block users.

To delete a comment or block a use, the primary point person simply needs to click on the user who made the comment he or she will have the options to delete or block (see illustration on the right).



*Do we need a music license to live stream Mass?*

[Yes, if you plan on using music.](#) (Our friends at eCatholic provided this great blog post with more details.)

1. ONE LICENSE is currently offering [discounted rates](#). They have also provided [creative solutions](#) for Masses during the COVID-19 restrictions.
2. OCP is also offering discounted rates. They ask that you *“post the copyright lines for any OCP songs included in the streamed celebrations on the website which streams the service”*.

### **Additional Resources**

1. Mobile Phone Tripods (with mounts)
  - a. [Joby GorillaPods](#) – The unofficial tripod of PSG. It allows us to utilize the standard tripod position alongside the flexibility of leg stands.
  - b. [Medium.com’s Top Three Tripods for Smartphones](#)
  - c. [Gearhungry.com’s 10 Best Smartphone Tripods](#)



## 2. External Microphones

Audio is a critical component of the live stream. It is MORE important than the video quality. If you have a great picture, but no one can understand a word of the homily, you'll quickly lose your audience. PSG encourages you to utilize an external microphone for a live stream via your smartphone. Keep in mind the proximity of your phone to the pulpit when you consider which microphone to purchase. A wireless lapel option is likely your best bet. Here are some good options PSG recommends:

- a. [Comica CVM-WS50\(C\)](#) – Wireless. Lapel. Impressive range. Really everything you could want in an external microphone. Bonus – it comes with a tripod and phone mount.
- b. [FerBuee UHF Lapel Microphone](#) – Wireless and light weight, so you won't weigh down a pastor who may already have another lapel mic on.
- c. [Best Wireless Lavalier \(Lapel\) Mics for Smartphones](#)
- d. [Best Wireless Microphones for iPhones](#) (some of these listed also work with other phone brands)

### Want to take it to the next level?

If your parish is blessed to have technologically savvy parishioners and staff, consider live streaming your Mass through an external camera and laptop. You can learn more about how to do so [here](#).

## 2. How can I promote my livestreamed Masses and other events?

### Things you will need

- All the items and permissions mentioned in Part 1 of this guide
- Administrator rights to your parish's Facebook page

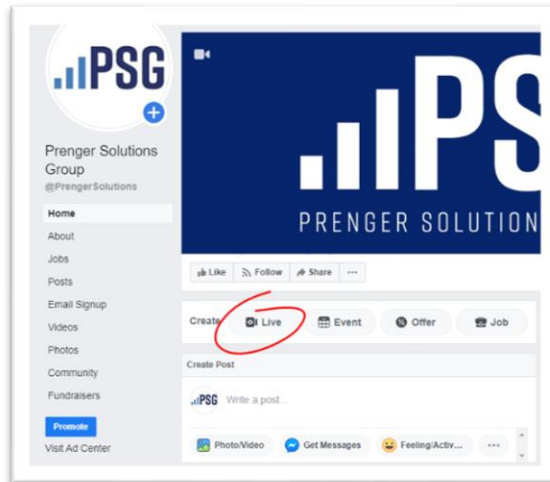
### Reasons for setting up your Facebook livestream as an event

- Followers will receive an event invitation and are able to mark that they wish to receive an event reminder (see Option A below) or RSVP (see Option B)
- Once a follower RSVPs for your event, their friends will see that they are attending an event at your church and can join themselves. This can greatly boost attendance and serve as a form of "soft" evangelization.
- Soon before your event begins, anyone who has chosen "Get Reminder" or RSVPed will receive a notification that they have an event happening soon
- It is important to keep in mind that not every livestream requires an event to be created for it. Daily Mass, for example, is probably not crucial. However, Sunday Mass is.
- Moreover, if you don't want to utilize a livestream for evangelization purposes, don't create an event for it.
- Likewise, a private meeting, such as a grief group or RCIA class, is better conducted as a private Zoom or Facebook Messenger meeting than as a livestream.

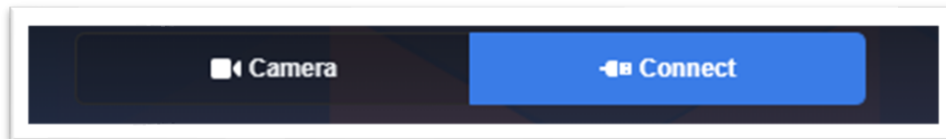
### Option A: Schedule your livestream as an *official livestream event*

Utilize this option if you are primarily seeking to notify current Facebook followers that you plan to go live with a Mass or other event no more than seven days from today. Parishioners will not RSVP, but they will receive a notification when you go live.

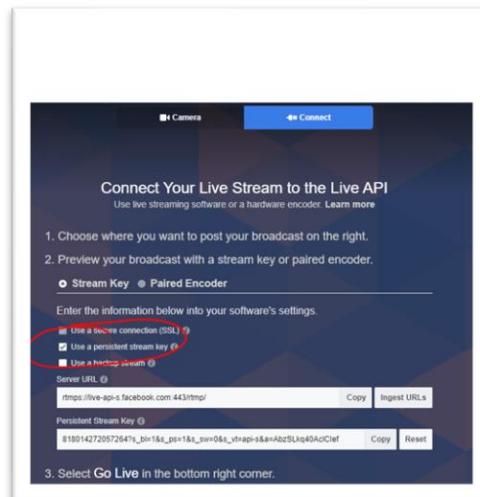
1. Go to your parish Facebook page and select the LIVE button in the “Create” menu.



2. Select CONNECT at the top of the page.



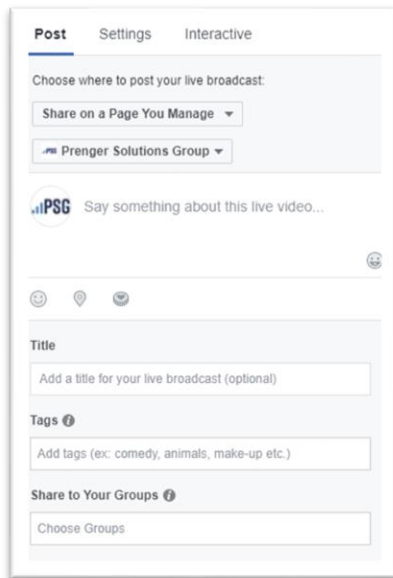
3. By selecting CONNECT, you will be presented with options to schedule your event for a date within the next seven days. Selecting CONNECT will also allow you to choose the hardware & external elements you will be utilizing to livestream. For detailed instructions on how to use external elements to livestream, visit [this link](#).



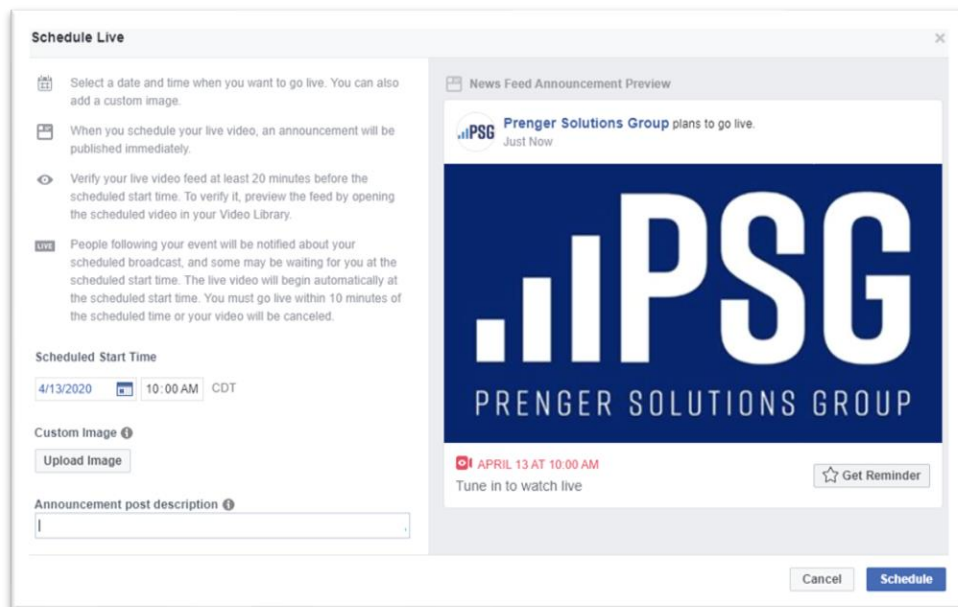
Tip: if you want to have the same livestream each time you broadcast, choose the “persistent stream key” option.

4. Before selecting SCHEDULE in the bottom right corner, complete the details of the video, including a title for the video, i.e. – 10 a.m. Mass.





5. Select the SCHEDULE button in the lower right corner to populate the screen which will allow you to select the date and time of your live event, upload a cover photo (optional) and add an announcement description if you so choose.

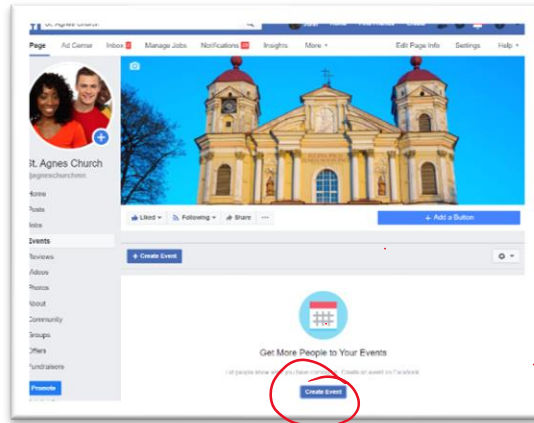


6. At this point, all your followers will receive a notice stating that you plan to go live at a certain date and time. Anyone who clicks “Get Reminder” will receive a notice before your scheduled event goes live.
7. On the day of the event, [connect your encoder](#).
8. Once your source is successfully connected, the [Go Live button will become action ready](#).
9. View Facebook’s own [Live Video Broadcast](#) tips for more.

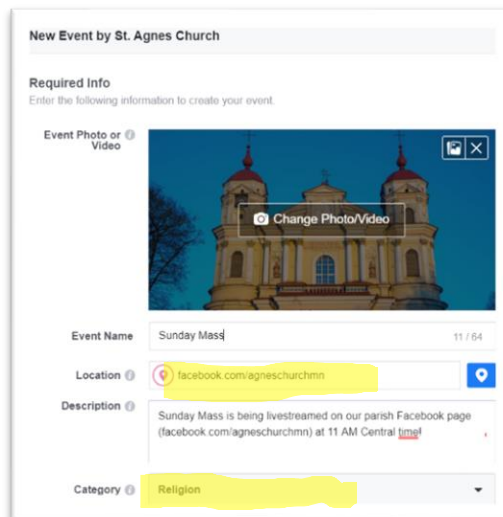
### Option B: Set up your livestream as a typical Facebook event

Utilize this option if you want to achieve a balance between telling your current followers that you plan to go live, *and* you want people to RSVP so that they help spread the word among your parish.

1. Go to the Event portion of your parish's Facebook page. This is typically done by navigating to your parish Facebook page and choosing "Events" on the left-hand side.



2. As you move through the "Create Event" prompts, make sure the event location and description clearly display the URL for your parish's Facebook page. This is where the livestream will appear, so you want to be clear about where the event is taking place! While you're there, also be sure to mark your event as being in the Religion category.



3. Make the event recurring if necessary. This ensures you do not have to go through these steps each time you want to set up a typical Sunday Mass event.

4. Complete the Details section. You can tag the event with the “Christianity” keyword and mark that it is kid friendly, so it is easier for non-followers to discover the event.

### 3. How can I grow my parish’s social media following?

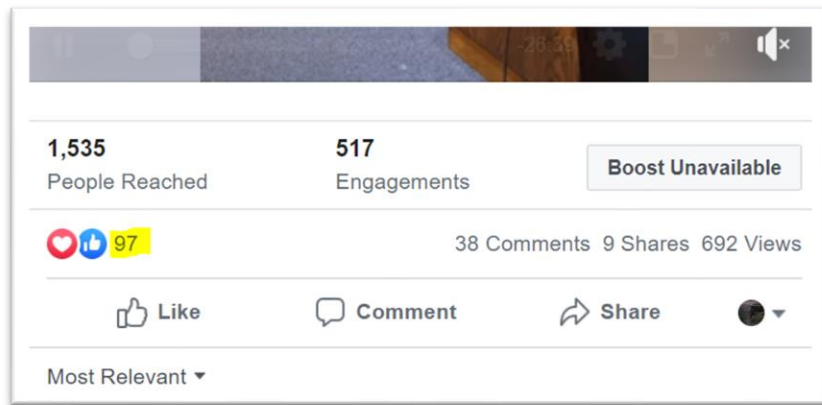
#### What has been happening on parish Facebook pages

As social distancing and shelter-in-place orders began to take effect across North America, our analytics team looked at traffic on parish Facebook pages. The week over week numbers from March 10-16 vs. March 3-9 astounded us:

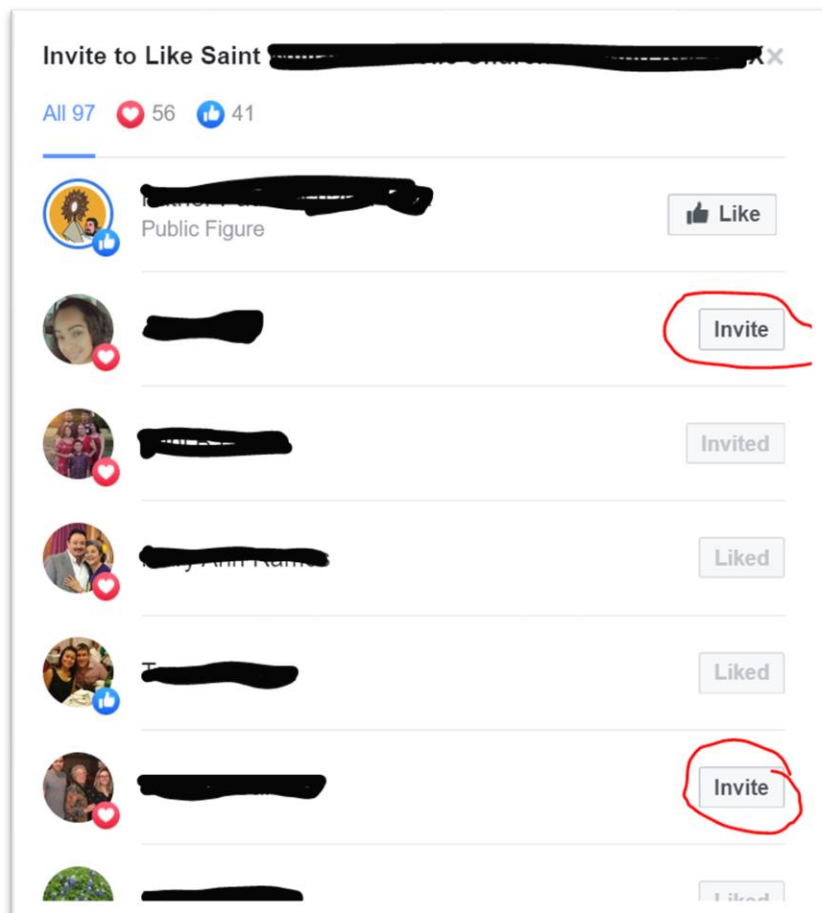
- Average 834% increase in page views
- 162% increase in number of people reached
- 402% in post engagement
- 996% increase in video views

What’s most important right now is that all these visitors to your parish Facebook page become *followers*. It’s simple:

1. Choose a high-engagement post, one that has a lot of likes and shares. Then click the number next to the reaction icons. (In this example, this is a livestreamed Mass that is now complete.)



2. This will open a screen showing everyone who reacted. Many will have a "liked" or "following" button next to their name, indicating they are already keeping close tabs on your parish. But some will have an "invite" button next to their name. Click that button and you'll invite that person to like your page!



You can see in this first screen alone there are two people who are not followers of the page that can be invited.

3. Set a reminder to do this on a regular basis and watch your parish's Facebook following explode. Day by day, week by week you'll be gaining followers - folks who will see your content as they log in to Facebook, folks who are likely to click "share" and get your parish better known in the newsfeeds of people in your neighborhood.

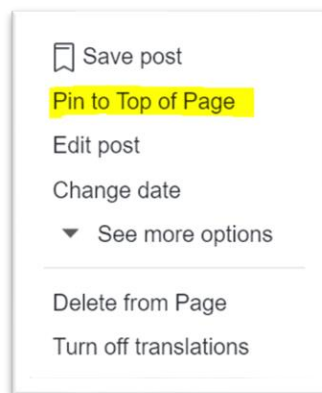
## 4. How can I use my social media presence to promote giving to the parish during this difficult time?

### The need is great

With public Masses suspended across the United States, charitable contributions are in freefall at many parishes. The churches that are thriving right now are doing triage quickly, using various digital techniques and tools. Since the Sunday plate no longer suffices, it's time to ask everyone to move to online giving. This will not only broaden your base of supporting households, but every recurring gift has implications for months and years to come.

Here are three ways you can highlight online giving on your parish's Facebook page:

1. **Conduct a digital offertory during livestreamed or recorded Masses.** Make sure to have the digital usher share a link to your online giving page at the start of your livestream, during the offertory, and after the livestream. Most parishes already have some system in place (likely through Vanco, eCatholic payments, ParishSoft ConnectNow, PDS Realm, Faith Direct or some other provider). It is also crucial that during this time, the celebrant gives attendees the time to complete the online giving form. Have a staff member or volunteer time how long it takes to make a gift online and then make sure the celebrant takes at least that much time when preparing the gifts.
2. **Create a Facebook post about the importance of online giving and pin it to the top of your page.** Be sure to include a striking picture or graphic and a link to your giving page. Publish the post, then pin that post to the top of your parish Facebook page by clicking the three dots in the upper right-hand corner of the post and choosing "Pin to Page." This will keep the post at the top of your page until you unpin it. Look for this menu:



If you do not have a graphic, please feel free to use [this sample graphic](#).

Include text such as: *During this time of worldwide upheaval, thank you for your support of <INSERT PARISH NAME>. You can make a sustaining gift to our parish here: <INSERT LINK TO GIVING PAGE> to help us continue to minister. God bless you! #supportourparishes*

3. **Use Facebook profile frames to spread the word about the need.** Our team created four frames you can use, or you can make your own. All you must do is share one or more of these links with your parishioners, and Facebook will help them do the rest. Any friends of a follower who uses one of these frames will see the change in his or her News Feed and can also utilize the frame:

- I Tithe Online Cursive: <https://bit.ly/tithe-cursive>
- I Give Online Cursive: <https://bit.ly/give-cursive>
- I Tithe Online Square: <https://bit.ly/tithe-square>
- I Give Online Square: <https://bit.ly/give-square>