

What Type of Social Media Posts Work Best?

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In addition to posting at the right times and following the 8:1 rule, another way to think about driving engagement and reach is the different post choices you can make on social media. At the end of the day, there are six ways to engage your audience. Of these six methods, three tend to lead to aboveaverage engagement and reach (see below).

This does not mean that you should always avoid status updates, links, and events! However, by surrounding them with more photos, videos, and questions, you'll have an engaged community that is active enough to properly receive them.

Think of the following example: You have a large parish festival coming up. It is your parish's top community-building event for the year, but you don't have enough volunteers. Is it better to a) Send volunteer requests every few days, with increasingly desperate language and passive-aggressive reminders that everyone needs to do their part and volunteer? or b) Build excitement for the event and energize your community with photos, videos, and testimonials and THEN ask for help?

The answer is clearly "b." The best parishes use social media to engage and excite parishioners and build momentum for their activities. Then, once they have people's attention, they use social media as part of a multi-channel approach to securing volunteers.

| BELOW AVERAGE REACH & ENGAGEMENT | | | ABOVE AVERAGE REACH & ENGAGEMENT | | |
|---|--|--|---|---|--|
| EVENT INVITATIONS  | STATUS UPDATES  | LINKS TO OUTSIDE SOURCES  | PHOTOS  | QUESTIONS  | VIDEOS  |

Since 2019, we have shepherded hundreds of parishes through the Catholic Social Media free trial, and we've run a number of detailed research projects with dioceses across the United States and Canada. Here's what we learned.

1. **Photos:** Any post with an image attached still ranks #1
2. **Videos:** Remember you want to caption these because 80% of viewers start the video with the sound off
3. **Questions:** Asking a question about people's lives or Catholic trivia can boost engagement in a big way.
4. **Status Updates:** That's right, just a bit of informal text from your pastor or staff.
5. **Links to articles or national sources for Catholic content:** Most people who want to engage with national ministries are already doing so. Don't waste your parishioner's attention by constantly posting content that sends them to third-party ministries and programs. Eventually, they'll skip your parish altogether and engage directly with those other organizations you've been promoting time and time again. Use your social media feed to keep the parish as the primary source of bite-sized catechesis and evangelization.
6. **Events:** Sure you want people to come to things, but flooding your page with invitations is not going to do you any favors.

TAKE ACTION

Examine the next month of parish events. What one event do you want to lift up by surrounding it with eye-catching, engaging content? Plan your best posts leading up to your event announcement.
