

Do Parishes Need Hashtags?

08/14/2023 2:47 pm CDT

We get this question a lot – “The church down the street has its own hashtag. It seems to be everywhere. Should we be doing the same?”

In short...yes! Like a parish mission statement, logo, website address, or Facebook vanity URL, a parish hashtag can help show the world who you are. Here are a few do's and don'ts for choosing a parish hashtag:

- *Pick one that fits your parish:* #saintjoseph or #BVMChurch won't cut it. Use a geographic indicator such as your state or city to differentiate yourself (#saintjosephMN, #BVMChurchMaplewood) or turn your hashtag into a phrase (#BVMChurchCares or #saintjosephserves).
- *Be consistent:* If this is going to be a part of your parish identity, it needs to be present on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, your website, your Flocknote messages...basically, in every part of your parish's digital space.
- *Do your research:* There's nothing worse than crafting a perfect hashtag and using it for a month, only to realize you're confusing your community with eight other communities. Once that's done, test out the hashtag by sharing it with several trusted parishioners. Get their immediate feedback to ensure what you've chosen is easily understood and not confused with some other organization, a cultural touchstone, or slang.
- *Don't overdo it:* For a time, there was a tendency, specifically on Instagram, to string together 10+ hashtags in one message to “reach more people.” The end result? Lots of folks just got annoyed. If you're going to celebrate World Mission Sunday at #BVMChurchMaplewood, maybe tag it #worldmissionsunday2020, but not #gospel #popefrancis #catholic #help #grace #mercy and so on. Pick two or three per message and leave it at that.

A parish hashtag is just one more tool for you to build community identity and promote your church, but it is an important one. Keep at it, and you'll find it becomes a common part of your church culture.
