

Our Sunday Visitor

Enriching Parishes...Enhancing Community

www.osvoffertory.com

November 12th, 2009

OUR SUNDAY VISITOR OFFERS INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS TO CHALLENGES FACING CATHOLIC CHURCHES

As the first decade of the new millennium comes to a close, the Catholic Church in America is facing the challenges of parish consolidation, a lingering economic recession, a shortage of priests, and a declining membership. With nearly 68 million members in the U.S. alone, what can the largest denomination do to tackle the issues?

One company's mission is to assist the Church in overcoming many of the obstacles it faces today. Our Sunday Visitor (OSV) has been working with parishes and dioceses for nearly a century to solve the concerns of the faithful so the church can remain a vital part of parishioner life and community strength. This company, founded by Father John Francis Noll as an attempt to provide accurate information about the Catholic faith, has grown from its small roots to become one of the largest providers of products and services designed to revitalize parishes and dioceses through its unique publications and innovative offertory solutions.

As a not-for-profit organization, OSV returns a portion of its net earnings back to the Catholic community through the OSV Institute. The company's Offertory Solutions Division provides complete offertory and stewardship solutions for parishes, missions, dioceses and other Catholic organizations.

Because OSV product and service offerings combine the use of technology with envelope and communications programs, parishes, dioceses and other groups are able to adapt them to specific needs.

According to Terry Poplava, OSV director of marketing and sales, the sales and customer service staff are in touch with what parishes and dioceses need. "We work closely with our customers to make sure the products and services we develop and implement can be truly useful in overcoming challenges," he explains.

A wide variety of tools

Any message is important, but it must be received to make an impact. OSV excels at helping parishes and dioceses stay in touch with members. In addition to standard boxed set envelopes, OSV offers a mailing program that enables pastors to reach out on a regular schedule. These mailings serve as reminders and add a personal touch when used to invite and welcome parishioners to upcoming events, services, or activities.

Because it's difficult to ask for financial support in demanding economic times, OSV partnered with Father Daniel Mahan, executive director of the Marian College of Catholic Stewardship, to develop *Loaves + Fishes™: A Process for Offertory Enhancement*. This step-by-step guide includes materials necessary to examine all aspects of parish life.

The results of the OSV offertory enhancement program speak for themselves. Ana Mostarac of St. Matthias Roman Catholic Church, Ridgewood, NY, says, "Since implementing this process, we have enjoyed a sustained growth in our weekly offertory of more than 25%. This helped us provide for the daily needs of our vibrant parish and it has allowed us to focus on furthering our mission through youth development and community outreach.

"What we loved about Our Sunday Visitor's offertory enhancement was the total stewardship approach. Our parishioners were challenged with all aspects of stewardship and learned a lot about what it means to be a steward of the gifts God has given us."

The digital age

As the Internet becomes more readily available via free WIFI networks and lower costs for broadband access, it is now feasible to invest in Web-based applications.

Over the last two years, the Offertory Solutions Division revamped its own website and began working on electronic offertory solutions. The Online Giving option enables parishioners to make and track online donations.

Customers are also able to log on to the OSV portal to re-order products, view billing, and manage other day-to-day functions. This streamlined way of doing business has enabled church and school staff members to work from home or on the road, improving productivity and cutting down on administrative overhead.

One of OSV's more popular electronic solutions is Online List Manager (OLM), a free service for OSV customers. This online database keeps parishioner records up-to-date while maintaining address information. Because changes are real-time, scheduling, sorting, ordering products, and other administrative tasks are streamlined. The bottom line: less time on the phone and improved, accurate communication with parishioners.

Judy Brauns of St. Pius Tenth Catholic Church says OLM helps the parish save time and money, a necessity in the current economic climate. "At any time I can look at the list and compare it to our parish list. I can print it off to make sure there are no discrepancies," she says. "And, it's really easy to use! [OLM] also saves us postage. We used to get back an average of 30 to 40 returned envelopes. Now I only get back two or three."

OSV recently introduced Address Data Services, a mailing process designed to improve data quality, lower mailing costs, and increase overall delivery accuracy. OSV uses several tools to scan, cleanse and modify address information into a format acceptable by the U.S. Postal Service.

Our Sunday Visitor

Enriching Parishes...Enhancing Community

www.osvoffertory.com

800-348-2886

Address Data Services is standard for current customers, but due to rising postage costs and changing postal regulations, OSV now offers the solution to any parish, diocese, or organization that needs to improve mailing strategies.

For the not-so-technically-savvy, OSV continues to offer printed products, envelopes, pamphlets and newsletters (although some are electronic) all designed to help stay in contact with the people in the pews.

The future of the church

Most priests and clergy agree that the future of the church rests on the shoulders of the youth. They understand that it is vital to the strength of a community to involve the youth in ministry as well as stewardship.

For decades, OSV has understood the need to introduce the concept of stewardship to young Catholics. There are numerous options for youth and teen envelopes, including one of the most popular: the Patron Saint Series.

St. Joseph Parish in Cottleville, MO., began receiving comments within two months of implementing the Patron Saints envelopes. "They have been very well received by the parents and the children. Today I gave out two sets to boys who were in the office while their mother registered them as a new family in the parish. The eight-year-olds comment upon opening the box was 'cool!' This is indeed high praise for an eight-year-old boy," says Robert BuBray.

Prayer cards and other products are also available for children and teens, all designed to help them focus on ways they can share time, talent, and treasure.

Vibrant parishes

Pastors and parish staff understand that consistent, open communications is the foundation of creating and maintaining a vibrant parish community. All OSV offertory products and services are designed to reach parishioners on a personal level.

OSV has several plans to bring communities together using education programs (including Vacation Bible School), and other pertinent materials that can highlight volunteer opportunities and an environment of inclusion.

In 2009, OSV introduced *Inform!*, a newsletter design, print and mail service that makes it easy to stay in touch with parishioners. Churches that use *Inform!* are able to effectively keep active and inactive members informed of parish life activities, reinforce Mass messages and educate parishioners about ministries, parish finances, special programs, outreach, and upcoming events.

Diocesan reach

Numerous parishes take advantage of OSV's unique position in the envelope industry. Over the last few decades, OSV has extended its reach to assist dioceses in their quest for communicating to large numbers of people for various reasons. Not only can OSV provide the materials and services to launch a program, such as an annual appeal, stewardship, or offertory enhancement program, they also print and assemble the materials including posters, books, pamphlets, and other non-printed materials into packages for mailing to individual locations.

Because the company is so well versed in address management processes, OSV can remove that stress from diocesan staff. Additionally, OSV can provide the following services:

- Sourcing, printing, picking, packing and shipping materials to parishes
- Mailing envelopes, pledge cards and letters to parishes and individuals
- Collecting data and reporting on individual and parish pledge status

Over the last several years, the Diocese of Bridgeport, Conn., has undergone a transformation. By applying best practices to its financial processes, the 87 parishes and 39 schools are all standardized on the same accounting platform and use the same vendors for their offertory and reporting processes.

According to Deacon Bill Koniers, who also serves as the diocese's financial director, it made perfect sense for the church to leverage its purchasing power to minimize cost, provide transparency for financial data, and maximize productivity. Part of the process, however, involved finding suppliers who could become partners in their success.

"When we started looking at our cost structure, we found that we had many

different envelope suppliers," Koniers explains. "We worked to find the best one and we selected Our Sunday Visitor."

Part of the OSV solution involves ParishSoft data management software. OSV and ParishSoft are partners in providing this information system and platform that allows parish staff to easily maintain, sort and update its census data. By improving staff productivity, the churches are more able to deliver important services to their respective communities.

"We're now able to focus more on providing the sacraments and religious education, instead of worrying about whether we have the right information on where to mail a letter," the deacon says. "Our integration of OSV has helped us change the way we communicate at the parish and diocesan level."

Koniers calls OSV a very forward-thinking company. "They have practical tools to make mailing more cost effective. We consider them to be a strategic partner, not a vendor."

The bottom line

Whatever challenges a church, parish, or other organization is facing can be helped with timely communication. OSV excels at delivering technologically advanced, well thought out solutions to bring churches and their communication efforts to the next level in a way that saves time and money.

For more information, contact OSV toll-free, 800-348-2886, or visit us online at www.osvoffertory.com.