

The Phases of Catholic Fundraising Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic

By Amanda Kepshire

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has created a new level of uncertainty for many. Given its uniqueness from crises and natural disasters of the past, its overall long-term impact on the Catholic Church, faith communities as a whole, and the broader economy will not be known for some time.

According to Nic Prenger, Founder and CEO of Prenger Solutions Group, the Catholic Church can anticipate three major fundraising phases they will experience before this crisis is behind us: the bump, the slump, and the surge.

The Bump

The Bump was the spike in emergency giving that many parishes, dioceses, and charities experienced at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. With major unanticipated shutdowns, people really stepped into the philanthropic mindset, sharing their generosity with organizations who were being impacted the most or are closest to the donor's heart.

The Slump

This is happening now. It's the time to expect giving levels to be below the norm and to focus on your top and loyal givers. Build donor relationships and over communicate to the faithful of your parishes and diocese. Say thank you and help them come to know and believe their support is crucial, especially if they don't already recognize their importance to the faith community. Keep ministering to those in need and share the good news without shying away from emphasizing the new or ongoing needs. The more communication and outreach, the better!

The Surge

Prenger predicts The Surge will show itself towards the end of the year with the help of major donors and year-end giving – and this is where the focus should be. Continue to share the story and appeal to your biggest supporters, now is not the time to put resources into capturing new donors. Your major donors are already in support of your mission and have made the decision to be apart of it, so tap into their passion and express the urgency for their additional or ongoing support.

Now What?

So how are parishes likely to end the year? Prenger reports that on average, parish offertory is down 20-30% from 2019. Parishes who are proactive should be okay and will likely achieve the same numbers they hit last year. However, those who do not act will continue to experience the 30-40% down trend. As the Catholic Church moves into the new normal, it's important to keep in mind that what is done during the crisis will directly impact the state of giving once the pandemic is behind us. For more data-driven insights on fundraising and revenue forecasting for the Catholic Church, visit <https://hello.blackbaud.com/CatholicForecasting.html> for the full webinar with Nic Prenger.

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