

As the next natural step in the evolution of offertory, *Faith Direct* has demonstrated that a successful long term electronic giving program is about more than just processing electronic transactions. Rather, the skill and experience with which the program is administered is frequently the difference between a successful program and one which falls short of its potential. We hope this issue of *Inspire* will inspire you to learn more about our program now being used in 36 dioceses across the country!

AMERICA'S FIRST PARISH • Putting "Faith" in Technology

As pastor of the Cathedral Basilica of St. Augustine, Fr. Tom Willis speaks from the heart about "America's first



parish." Founded in 1565, the Cathedral's traditional beauty serves as a spiritual home not only to its

2,000 parish families but also to the thousands of Catholics who visit annually. In addition to the historical significance of the Cathedral in St. Augustine, FL and throughout the Catholic community, Fr. Tom is blessed

with an even greater fondness for this parish. As a young boy, he attended the Cathedral school. Uniquely he also received the sacraments of Baptism, first Penance, first Holy Communion, Confirmation, and Ordination to the Priesthood here as well. Truly, Fr. Tom can call the Cathedral home!

While Fr. Tom observes that many Cathedral parishioners and visitors are drawn to its traditions and history, he is excited about the modern technological advances that this parish community is embracing today. This year, the Cathedral implemented *Faith Direct* and its electronic contribution program as a

means for parishioners and visitors to contribute their sacrificial giving. Initially, it was Fr. Tom's personal use of the internet, online banking and placing orders online that resulted in his potential interest to utilize online giving at the Cathedral. After learning more about the concept, he was convinced that it was the ideal time to offer this option to his parish families. However, he wanted to be sure that both liturgical and secular considerations were respected prior to implementing

"FIRST PARISH" continues on back



"I strongly recommend the Faith Direct electronic-stewardship program to parishes who are looking to increase stewardship participation of their members."

Msgr. Joseph Simon • Queen of All Saints • St. Louis, MO

THE ECONOMICS OF OFFERTORY ENVELOPES

The use of offertory envelopes is a long standing tradition in Catholic parishes having replaced the older practices of in-kind gifts of produce or livestock. Today, offertory envelopes are generally regarded as a convenience for parishioners, an accounting device for the parish office and, most importantly, a sign of witness during the Mass. However, much like telephone books or print newspapers, this form of giving is evolving into the next phase of the offertory collection: electronic giving.

It is commonly accepted in church development circles that 50% of registered Catholic households provide no financial support to their parish, 20% give occasionally and the remaining 30% provide the vast majority of financial support. However, even the most faithful parishioners attend their home parish only 40 times per year after considering vacations and out of town travel. Most of these parishioners do not make up their gifts on the weekends they are absent. Consequently, the majority of parish income is provided by relatively few giving transactions and even fewer donating parishioners. Yet believing that the additional cost is offset by the additional income, many parishes opt to send offertory envelopes to all registered families, rather than just to those most likely to give.

Let's take a look at the numbers behind the envelope program at a parish of 1,150 families. The annual cost of the envelope program for this parish, including bi-monthly postage, is \$6,800, or \$5.91 per registered family per year.

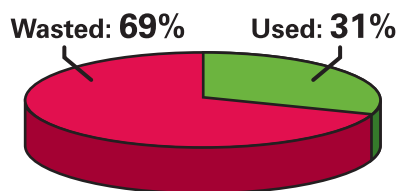
Since half of those families will never use their envelopes, the cost per using family jumps to \$11.83. Looking at this another way, only 29,015, or less than 1/3 of envelopes mailed, are actually used. The balance, 65,284 envelopes annually, is never used. So, while the purchase cost per envelope is only about \$.07, the actual cost per envelope used is closer to \$.23. That is a hefty price considering envelopes are only used once and then discarded. Considering also that the equivalent of 13.4 trees were destroyed to produce envelopes for this parish, and the envelope program is not only costly, but wasteful.

But the costs do not stop with printing and mailing. There is also the internal staff time to record donations, if not done by volunteers, and to post as many as 2,790 giving transactions to parishioner contribution records each month. Also, consider that cash and loose checks are among the least secure methods of giving and that the manual posting process is prone to error. It is not hard to see that the envelope offertory process is one of the last vestiges of a bygone era.

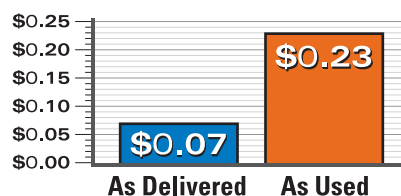
Based on a Federal Reserve study, as soon as next year, only 1 out of every 5 non-cash transactions is expected to be settled with a paper check, yet checks and envelopes represent 90% of Catholic church offertory income. Is it any wonder that the traditional church giving program is in jeopardy?

If you would like a comparison of the cost of your parish's envelope program to *Faith Direct's* paperless giving program, call us (toll-free) at 1-866-507-8757. ★

Envelopes – Used vs. Wasted



Envelope Cost per Piece



“FIRST PARISH” continued...

a program.

As Director of Liturgy to the Diocese of St. Augustine, it comes as no surprise that this “new way of giving” in the Church and its part in the liturgy is a priority to Fr. Tom. “As Catholics, we use and rely on tangible signs and symbols during the liturgy. The act of wrapping our gifts in envelopes and offering them to God has been an essential part of the Mass for many years. It is critical that this ritual continues with the evolution of electronic giving” explains Fr. Tom. As a donor to the Cathedral through *Faith Direct*, Fr. Tom is pleased to be able to continue demonstrating his commitment of treasure by using the “offertory cards” that *Faith Direct* provides to all enrollees. As a pastor, he has always made a point to participate just as parishioners do in placing his offering envelope in the collection plate during Mass. Now, as an electronic donor, *Faith Direct’s* personalized offertory cards allow him to continue this tradition.

There is an additional meaning to Fr. Tom with regards to “going away” from

use of offertory envelopes as well. He believes that electronic payments have demonstrated the benefit of bettering ecology and the environment by essentially being paperless. The gradual reduction in the number of envelopes the Cathedral will mail to parish families who favor *Faith Direct* as their means to contribute to the Cathedral will impact the environment. In the future, both the Cathedral and *Faith Direct* can serve to represent “green technology”: less consumption of envelopes thus improving the environment.

Fr. Tom also recognizes the convenience and ease of use that electronic payments serve in today’s consumer world and why this is a likely fit for many of the faithful to contribute to their parish. It is the safety, security and confidentiality of how these payments are handled that was the biggest concern to him in considering offering electronic giving at the Cathedral. He observes that there is so much emphasis and importance placed on security measures for electronic payments and online banking today.

This emphasis should follow suit in the Church and not be overlooked at how parishes elect to offer electronic donations as well. The fact that *Faith Direct* is certified as a Level 1 PCI compliant service provider was proof to Fr. Tom of *Faith Direct’s* commitment to serving Catholic parishes with the highest level of security available. Whether it is confidential maintenance of enrollee information or the secure process of electronically debiting and transferring contributions, the Cathedral is assured of strict adherence to all compliance regulations through *Faith Direct*.

Fr. Tom looks forward to witnessing how the faithful at the Cathedral Basilica of St. Augustine and throughout the Church continue to live out their commitment to stewardship of treasure. He knows that in today’s world of technological advances that *Faith Direct* will support his parish community in doing so. ★

More information about the Cathedral Basilica of St. Augustine can be found at www.thefirstparish.org.

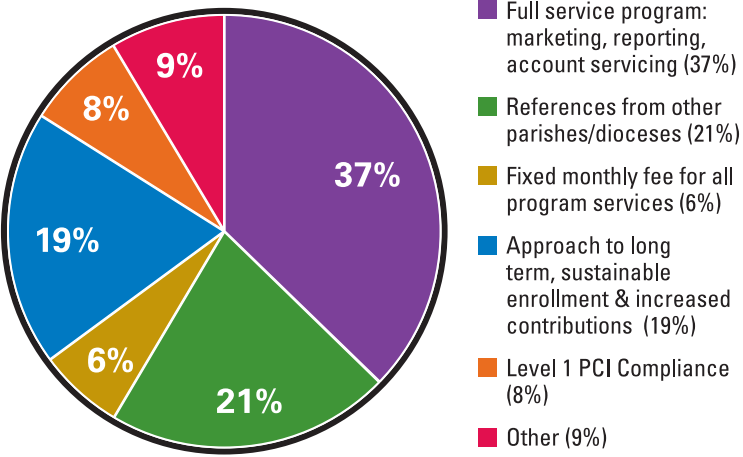
THE RESULTS ARE IN!

Faith Direct recently surveyed pastors at participating parishes in an effort to ensure that all aspects of the *Faith Direct* program adhere to expectations and are in the best interests of both our existing client parishes and those with whom we will partner in the future.

100% of pastors who responded confirmed that they **would recommend *Faith Direct* to another parish.**

Of the many reasons for choosing *Faith Direct* over other service providers, our pastors found that *Faith Direct’s* “Full Service” program most strongly affected their decision. Respondents also cited references from other parishes/dioceses and *Faith Direct’s* approach to long term, sustainable enrollment and increased contributions as contributing factors in their decision to choose *Faith Direct*. ★

Why did your parish select Faith Direct over other service providers?



(as of September 2009)

“Excellent Program.” – Rev. Msgr. James T. Beattie • St. Bartholomew’s Church • Bethesda, MD



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TO: