

Faith Direct

Dear Brethren,

We already have about twenty parishioners who contribute to the parish by other means than writing a check or putting in cash, but give electronically so to speak. On the advice of Mr. Bryant, the auditor of the parish, and on the advice of the Finance Office of the Archdiocese, I've authorized a program which will become effective in January. The parish finance council also approved of this initiative.

It's called Faith Direct (FD), which is currently it is being used in 45 dioceses, by about 300 parishes. The only product the company makes is this one. Only five parishes are using it at present in the Archdiocese of Denver. Each of these parishes is so far quite satisfied with it, and even report an increase of donations, though that is not its main purpose.

FD offers personalized letters to donating households, email announcements and enrollments. It is compatible with all major mobile devices. It offers 24/7 website enrollment and online account access. This offers an easy way for the pastor to contact parishioners for a quick message, such as a cancellation of some event.

I think it will handle second collections better. We simply choose which collections we want, and what rationale the pastor wants to attach to the collection. This will lessen the pulpit announcements and communicate the rationale for the collection more effectively. It also means less work for the priests and the bookkeeper.

It offers account management, where a

parishioner can view his contributions at any time, and download his tax statements and giving history. The tax statement is ready on January 1st, and can be downloaded at any time starting at that date. I think this will be a real service to all those who give. Many is the time when parishioners want their statements on or about that time, and rarely are we able to meet that demand.

Also, at the end of the year there are discrepancies in what is recorded, with parishioners sure that they have donated more than the amount we put in the letters (or less for that matter). With this system every parishioner can check their donations on a regular basis, and I think that will alleviate the above problem. It will mean less work for the secretary and bookkeeper too, and will increase the accuracy of our records of your donations.

I should say at this point that FD allows the parishioner to give online or by several paper-based options. We have parishioners who do not want to use the computer for this (and who might not even have a computer), so the options for giving through writing a check or giving by cash should meet every need in that matter.

FD has a toll free number or email parishioner support. It gives ongoing audit and reconciliation, plus declined transactions and expired accounts.

It can accept monthly debit, ACH or four major credit cards for payment. A parishioner can donate at any time, even as a last minute donation before the end of the year for tax purposes. We've not had that service before, and I know that some parishioners search for

other means to accomplish this, so it should be of real service for those who need this option.

It has high security; it is Level 1 PCI certified. It serves as the Merchant of Record, so in case of theft, errors or omissions, the mistake is on Faith Direct and not on the parish.

There is a fee, but I think it is minimal, given what is offered.

The service includes all bookkeeping, mailing costs, postage, paper and all transaction fees. Their fees are fixed and will never increase. Our practice of buying envelopes from a company, assigning the boxes to each registered parishioner, placing the boxes out for pick up, and then having to contact many parishioners to pick theirs up or having to mail the boxes, is very time consuming, and not very effective. FD mails direct to each household which requests a paper option.

If we don't like this new service, we can cancel with a month's notice.

Lastly, FD claims that there will be an increase of donations due to the service they provide. I'm a bit skeptical of this claim, though if it were true that would certainly be an advantage! But I'm choosing it mainly for the various services it provides the parishioners, and for a reduction of labor in the office.