

# *The Parish Website*

*An essential tool for ministry*

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In a national survey between November 30 and December 27, 2009, we find:

- 74% of US adults use the Internet.
- 60% of US adults have broadband at home.
- 70% of US adults in “rural areas” go online.

(Princeton Survey Research Associates International)

Ask yourself: What is the most important information for those coming to your website?  
If a visitor stumbled across your site, would he/she find an attractive, appealing resource?

## *Simple Domain Name*

✗ stjo-milton.org   ★ miltoncatholic.org  
✗ immaculateconceptionchurchdc.org   ★ icparish.com

✓ DivineSavior.com

✓ CathedralSacramento.org

✓ StJamesDavis.org   ↻ StJamesDavis.com

↻ SaintJamesDavis.org & .com

Avoid:

- Splash pages. Your URL (e.g. [www.mysite.com](http://www.mysite.com)) should immediately load your parish website. If your parish is connected with a parochial school, take your visitors to your parish website with a prominent link for the school’s website.

- Websites that demand the visitor use one particular type of browser. Your website should be cross-browser compatible.
- Background Music.
- Animated images that cause unnecessary distraction.

## Design

- The website must be easy to navigate.
  - We need intuitive, simple menus that are easy to use and navigate.
- The website must be pleasing to the eye.
  - We need beautiful websites with awesome design.

## Content

The home page should:

- (1) Give your parish location and a link to its location on Google Maps.
- (2) Say which [arch]diocese your parish is in.
- (3) Provide Sunday Mass times with a link to additional [daily] Mass times and sacramental information.
- (4) Give the main office telephone number, fax number, and email address.
- (5) Include a listing of upcoming events (keep it updated daily!)
- (6) Provide featured information that changes from day-to-day or week-to-week.

Essential features:

- (1) Calendar of events
- (2) Personnel information with contact information (including email addresses)
- (3) Parish organizations/groups/ministries with contact information
- (4) Parish news (in lieu of providing a downloadable PDF of the latest bulletin)
- (5) Parish mission statement and history
- (6) Interactive submission forms
  - a. Prayer request form
  - b. Parish registration form
  - c. Other information collecting forms
- (7) Downloadable forms that can be printed and mailed to the parish (in PDF format)
- (8) Optimized for search engines.

Bonus features:

- (1) Parish discussion board with forums
- (2) Embedded video
- (3) Photo Galleries
- (4) Integration with your parish Facebook page (embed a Facebook widget)
- (5) Pastor's blog (with a comments feature and an RSS feed)
- (6) Online contributions and payments
- (7) Password-protected "Members only" section for committee members to share information, post updates, and obtain needed feedback
- (8) Audio podcast of the Sunday homily

✓ You need a Content Management System (CMS) that allows for staff and volunteers to each have an account that gives them the ability to add/edit/delete/update the sections of the website relevant to their area of expertise or responsibility.

Where are we at?

- Our websites are very poorly designed and ugly
- They are difficult to navigate, making it hard to find information
- They miss essential and bonus features

Two proprietary solutions:

- (1) eCatholicChurches.com
- (2) SolutioSoftware.com

Where do we go from here?

- \* Evaluate your current situation.
- \* You may need to redesign your website from the ground up.
- \* Plan well before implementation.
- \* The best designed website running on a Content Management System (CMS) is worthless if you do not contribute content and update the website frequently.