

Verso Ministries

Fundraising Kit



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About Verso Ministries

Verso Ministries is a team of experts in Catholic pilgrimages and global travel. We help people explore the world and discover what God has in store for them. We do so in the spirit of our patron saint, Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati. Nearly 100 years ago, Frassati wrote the words “Verso l’alto” on a now iconic picture of him as he scales the side of a cliff. Literally, the words mean “to the top” or “towards the heights.”

To help our fellow pilgrims reach the heights of their spirituality, we provide expertly cultivated and spiritually rich trips that allow our travelers to experience faith, history, and culture in an integrated and holistic way.

We handle all the details from booking your travel and accommodations, to providing spiritual preparation and chaplaincy resources, to cultivating local partners, to planning detailed itineraries, to offering debriefing resources after the trip. From start to finish we are your partners and co-pilgrims in the journey toward God.

While we handle the logistics, you are free to open your heart and mind. To slow down. To be curious. To contemplate. To notice God in the ordinary. To be available to a sacred encounter.

We believe pilgrimages are powerful. Join us. Discover what God has in store for you.

Introduction to Fundraising

“Fundraising is,

first and foremost, a form of ministry. It's a way of announcing our vision and inviting other people into our mission. ”

– Fr. Henri Nouwen

When we think about a pilgrimage experience, it is natural to focus on the pilgrim – the physical journey and the spiritual transformation. But we often forget that pilgrimages, even solo pilgrimages, invite others to accompany the pilgrim. A limited few may be able to physically join the pilgrim on their journey, but many people can join the pilgrim spiritually. Friends and family can pray for the pilgrim. Fellow parishioners can financially support the pilgrim. And mutual friends may hear of the pilgrim's journey and be inspired by them.

Fundraising is one of the many ways that others can support a pilgrim. While many think of fundraising as an unpleasant burden and associate it with begging for money, the Dutch theologian Fr. Henri Nouwen said, fundraising is a ministry and “a way of announcing our vision and inviting other people into our mission.”

People want to be a part of something bigger than themselves and often give generously of their time, talent, and treasure to worthy causes that align with their values. How can you share your vision for your pilgrimage and get others to join you?



Prayer

FOR PILGRIMS



Lord,

As I prepare for this pilgrimage, help me to trust you will guide my footsteps, you will speak my name, you will hear my voice, and it will all bring me closer to you.

In the whirl of preparation, do not let me lose sight of the goal: union with you. Let me see this time as part of the journey. From the packing to the praying, the fundraising to the fine-tuning, let it all lead me closer to you. Let me see those I interact with as fellow pilgrims, regardless of if they plan to join me on the physical journey. Let me bring them all along in prayer. And let this work be work in your name, in your goodness, in your love.

Through the intercession of Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, the patron of Verso Ministries, please grant me the courage, obedience, perseverance, and patience, to grow closer to you.

Amen.

Be sure to spend time in prayer as you reflect on these questions and be open to the nudgings of the Holy Spirit. Start to write down or type your thoughts. Let them sit for a few days, then review and edit as needed. These statements should offer a quick snapshot which will serve as the basis of your invitation to others to join you in your pilgrimage adventure.

As you continue to read through this Fundraising Kit and design your personalized fundraising efforts, always keeping your mission statement in mind. They should guide both why and how you prepare for the journey.

First, spend some time in prayer about your mission in attending your pilgrimage. Reflect on the following questions:

- 1.** Why are you going on pilgrimage?
- 2.** Why did you select this particular journey?
- 3.** What do you hope might change as a result of this pilgrimage?
- 4.** Are there any persistent questions or themes that have been percolating in your heart that you hope to explore during this time?
- 5.** How can you share what you learn on your pilgrimage with others upon your return?

Now, boil those reflections down to a succinct (2-3 sentence) mission statement. You will use this later in your fundraising efforts.

Mission Statement

Think of this as your explanation or your elevator pitch as to why this pilgrimage is important to you, and what you hope to achieve.

I have chosen to attend this pilgrimage, because
(why it appeals to you/your values)

I aspire to transform my life by

After this experience, I believe I will impact the lives of those around me by

Fundraising Goal Setting Worksheet



While pilgrimages are rich experiences, they do come with a price tag. To help offset those costs, we recommend fundraising a portion of your expenses. At Verso, as experts in both ministry and travel, we've each had experience in ministry fundraising and have brainstormed some of our best ideas to share with you.

As you begin fundraising, it's important to do so intentionally. We suggest considering the 5 Ws – who, what, when, where, why – before planning how you'll fundraise.

Why: Your why is the mission statement you drafted. Be clear to yourself and to others why you are pursuing this endeavor.

What: What are your fundraising goals and expectations? How much are you trying to raise? What will happen if you do not raise all of the funds?

Who: Do I want to fundraise individually or with a group? It is likely beneficial to do a bit of both. If you are raising funds as a group, be sure that everyone has reached consensus as to your group strategy.

When: Set an appropriate timeline to reach your goals, including deadlines along the way to help avoid procrastination.

Where: Will these fundraisers take place online? In-person? Do I hope to host an event and where will that take place?

Once you answer some of these fundamental questions, it should illuminate and streamline your fundraising effort, or your *how*.

Take notes on your 5 W's below:

Why

What

Who

When

Where

Who can help?

Before we dig into how to ask for support, let's think about who we could ask, starting with ourselves.

01

PERSONAL SACRIFICE

Before you ask others to support your endeavor, where can you sacrifice to contribute to your goal? Small changes can add up to big savings. Consider giving up a daily visit to Starbucks – that alone can bank up to \$25 a week. Over the course of eight weeks, you could “fundraise” \$200, or \$1,300 if you continued this sacrifice for a year!

- ✓ Cancel any subscription services you don't regularly use
- ✓ Give up your weekly takeout order or pack your lunch instead of eating out
- ✓ Hold off on upgrading your phone or other electronic devices
- ✓ Instead of buying the latest fashion trends, have a “closet exchange” with your friends
- ✓ Trade-in or sell old video games, electronics, and clothes
- ✓ Find a part-time job with a local business
- ✓ Find family, friends, and neighbors to hire you to mow lawns, babysit, wash/detail cars, rake leaves, weed gardens, etc.

Intentionally giving up something in preparation for your pilgrimage will not only help you financially, but the spiritual benefits really add up too!

02

FAMILY, FRIENDS, ACQUAINTANCES, AND CONTACTS

Another method of fundraising is to directly solicit financial support from your family members, friends, acquaintances, and contacts. Awareness creates support - the more people who are made aware of your pilgrimage, the more support you will receive, including financial support. And the more personal your invitation, the higher likelihood that someone will say “yes” to support you. So here are a couple of ways to personally invite others to contribute:



Letter writing campaign

While it may seem old fashioned, written letters are rare and get people's attention! [We've provided a letter template that you can use.](#) but feel free to write your own letter or adjust the template to your style. Remember that you want to share the mission of your pilgrimage, invite others to join you in your adventure either by prayer or by financial assistance, and to solicit prayer intentions that you can take with you on pilgrimage. After sending, consider following up with a phone call or email.



Connecting Via Technology

A variation of the letter writing campaign is to call or text family and friends to ask for their support. Again, you'll want to share your mission and vision. You could send an email using the letter template. You could create a fun post for Instagram or Facebook, record a video for TikTok, or tweet about the pilgrimage and ask for support in the form of prayers and money.



Face-to-Face Invitation

Besides a letter-writing campaign, there is no more effective method than sharing about your pilgrimage face-to-face. [We offer a 5-step process](#) which will help you prepare to authentically tell others about your upcoming pilgrimage, share your mission, ask for their prayer intentions, and gently request financial support.

03

DIOCESAN, PARISH, AND CATHOLIC ORGANIZATION SUPPORT

Check with your diocese, your parish, and local Catholic organizations about possible financial assistance for your pilgrimage. Be prepared to explain your mission in attending and what their investment will mean for your community. You could offer to put together a resource or presentation about a saint, holy site, or the pilgrimage experience for the diocese/parish to share in their communications or to use as a teaching tool.

Some diocesan offices may have grant or scholarship funds set aside for assisting with special initiatives, like a pilgrimage. Try reaching out to your group leader or the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, Evangelization, or Catechesis.

Get together with others from your parish community who are interested in the pilgrimage and schedule a meeting with your pastor to discuss the pilgrimage and individual financial needs. The pastor may be open to hosting a parish-wide fundraiser to support your efforts including one of the many fundraisers mentioned in this document. Or the pastor may be open to redirecting some parish funding towards your pilgrimage as a catechetical or evangelizing effort.

Catholic organizations such as the Knights of Columbus, Catholic Extension Society, and the Knights of Peter Claver seek partnerships that they believe in. If these organizations are in your area, meet with them (individually or as a group) to share your mission for your pilgrimage and ask if they will partner with you financially.

Regardless of whether your diocese or parish or local Catholic organizations can financially assist you, be sure to ask leaders and members if they have any prayer intentions that you could bring with you and offer during your journey.



Fundraising Strategies

Now that we've brainstormed who might help, let's dig into how we might be able to raise funds.

01

PARTNER WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES AND RESTAURANTS

Many local businesses may be willing to assist you financially, particularly if your mission aligns with theirs. To start, if your parish has a bulletin, see which businesses advertise there. Those businesses are likely run by a fellow parishioner who may be willing to donate!

Some restaurants, whether a local mom and pop or a national chain, will consider partnering with you in your fundraising efforts, especially if it brings them more business. This is often in the form of a coupon code or an evening when your supporters patronize the restaurant and you receive a percentage of the sales that evening. Some national chains that support fundraisers include Little Caesars Pizza, Krispy Kreme Doughnuts, and Chipotle, but there are many more who may be in your neighborhood. While their websites may provide helpful information, the best strategy is to visit the nearby restaurant and ask to speak to the manager or owner. Be prepared to share your vision for your pilgrimage as you ask them to partner with you.



02

EVENT FUNDRAISER

If you're fundraising as a group, hosting a fundraising event might be a way for everyone to generate funds. The event need not be fancy, just something people will want to attend and will facilitate donations. Some ideas include:

- ✔ A cook-off. Chili? Pie? BBQ? You decide the dish, then invite participants who believe they can make the best one. Have entrants pay a fee that lets them compete for a prize (and bragging rights!), while tasters pay a separate fee to sample the competition.
- ✔ A tournament. Horse-shoes, corn-hole, volleyball, wheel-barrow racing, you name it! Charge a participant fee and then let people get competitive! You can also serve snacks, waters, etc. for a small fee and let those proceeds go towards your fundraiser as well!
- ✔ A bake sale or car wash. These one-day events are typically easy to organize. If you're looking for a venue, ask your pastor if you can set up outside Mass!
- ✔ A spelling bee or dad-joke competition. Get your participants laughing with a competitive event that allows people to show-off while you collect funds. Have the audience crown the winner by paying a dollar for each vote.
- ✔ Delivery service. Make yourselves the new UberEats by offering a one-morning event where you drop donuts and coffee on people's doorsteps. Allow them to order for themselves or gift the service to a friend.

Prepping for your face-to-face encounters

Asking people you know for money can feel uncomfortable, so we'll offer a step-by-step plan that helps make it more natural.

5 STEPS FOR MAKING THE ASK

- 01 Build rapport.**
Approach the person with genuine interest. Ask about their family, their work, their life.
- 02 Share the mission.**
Share that you are planning to go on a pilgrimage and why. Explain your aspirations, the pilgrimage, Verso Ministries, and any other details they may find interesting.
- 03 Don't make it about money.**
Allow space for genuine conversation or questions, rather than focusing on the financial aspects.
- 04 Invitation for support.**
If it doesn't naturally arise, ask if they would kindly consider supporting you – either through prayer or monetary donation.
- 05 Thank you + prayer.**
Close the conversation with a heartfelt prayer and thank them for their time and consideration, regardless of their donation.

Sample letter

Friends, family and supporters,

My name is _____. I'm a practicing Catholic hoping to deepen my faith and grow closer to God by joining Verso Ministries on a pilgrimage to [place] in [city/country] from [travel dates].

As I embark on this journey, I request your support. Though the fruits of this journey will be great, so are some of the costs. If you are so inclined, I'd appreciate your financial support via [your preferred form of check, Venmo, etc.]. If you are not able to give at this time, I request your prayers and offer to bring your personal prayer requests with me. Please feel free to share those intentions with me.

Should you be moved to support me on this pilgrimage, either with funds or prayers, please contact me at [share email, phone or mailing address].

Pope Benedict, in an address given at the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in 2010, gave this summary of Catholic pilgrimage:

"To go on pilgrimage is not simply to visit a place to admire its treasures of nature, art or history. To go on pilgrimage really means to step out of ourselves in order to encounter God where he has revealed himself, where his grace has shone with particular splendor and produced rich fruits of conversion and holiness among those who believe."

I hope to step out myself to hear God's voice in my life and see the path laid out for me. Please pray for me.

In Christ,

[Your name]

Brainstorming Potential Patrons

To keep things organized, use the following document as you brainstorm who you might contact and the outcome once you do. This will prevent you from soliciting repeat requests and will help you in your next step, thank yous.

Who to Contact	Phone/Email	Date of Contact	Amount Requested	Did They Donate? (yes/no)	Donation amount
<i>Ex: Jim Sully</i>	<i>777-555-3333</i>	<i>8/19/2022</i>	<i>\$100</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>\$50</i>

Donations Spreadsheet

As you work toward your financial goals, use the following worksheet to keep track of funding, prayer requests and thank you notes.

Donor Name	Contact Info	Donation Amount	Donation Medium	Thank You Sent (Y/N)	Prayer Requests	Other Requests
<i>Ex: Jim Sully</i>	<i>777-555-3333</i>	<i>\$50</i>	<i>Check</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>Prayer intention for daughter</i>	

Gratitude: Following up with your patrons

“

No duty

is more urgent than that of returning thanks.”

”

– St. Ambrose

Your donors have intentionally chosen to support you on your journey and you owe them your gratitude, and to bring them along as virtual companions on your journey. We can't stress this step enough! Just as your patrons intentionally chose to support you, so should you make time and space to thank them throughout your journey.

Before: Upon receipt of donation, send each patron a hand-written note thanking them for their financial support and their prayers. Use stationary paper or notecards (with matching envelopes), which can be purchased at any store that has a greeting card section. A hand-written note makes a more meaningful and emotional connection than an email or typed letter, and is appreciated by donors of all ages.

During: We recommend bringing your patrons' names and addresses printed on mailing labels or saved as a note in your phone so you can purchase postcards and stamps during your pilgrimage and send from those those places. Each note need not be long – an update on your experience and another thank you. Your patrons will deeply appreciate that you took the time to write to them in the midst of your journey.

This is also a great time to start a Facebook album or send a text to each patron with a photo or video. Not only does it show them the fruit of their donation, but it also shows you're thinking of them, even while on your personal journey.

After: Once you return, consider hosting a post-pilgrimage “Sharing the Journey” event either in person or virtually online. Invite all of your supporters to attend and share stories and images of your pilgrimage. Teach them about some of the sites you saw, or share meaningful stories or quotes you heard. Allow them to ask questions about your experience. Let them see the transformation in you that they invested in!

If leading an event isn't for you, consider creating a personalized postcard, booklet or slideshow as a keepsake to send patrons. Not only is it a great thank you for them, but it offers you an opportunity to reflect and remember key details from your trip.

However you decide to offer gratitude to your patrons, whether from our suggestions or in your own, creative way, do it with a heart of genuine and joyful thanksgiving!



Prayer

FOR SUPPORTERS



Lord,

I was humbled to ask for support, and yet your servant, _____, came to my aid. When I told him it was you I sought, he did not hesitate to give generously.

In thanks, Lord Jesus, I hope to bring _____ with me on this pilgrimage. As I journey toward you, may s/he join me spiritually. I bring with me his prayer intentions, and hope by joining our prayers, we join deeper in communion with one another and with you.

You said that “where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in their midst” (Matthew 18:20). Be with us, Lord, as we look to seek and find all that is good.

Amen.

Conclusion

“*Fundraising is*

a very rich and beautiful activity. It is a confident, joyful and hope-filled expression of ministry. In ministering to each other, each from the riches that he or she possesses, we work together for the full coming of God's Kingdom. ”

-Fr. Henri Nouwen

The team at Verso hope that this fundraising kit has offered you some practical ideas for inviting others into your pilgrimage, including supporting you financially. If you have any questions or suggestions for improving this Fundraising Kit, please contact hello@versoministries.com

At Verso, we continually keep our pilgrims in our prayers. This includes during their preparation, their pilgrimage, and their return. Under the patronage of Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, we hope that all of your pilgrimage preparations, including your fundraising, will facilitate your encounter with Jesus Christ and bring you closer to him. Verso l'alto!



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