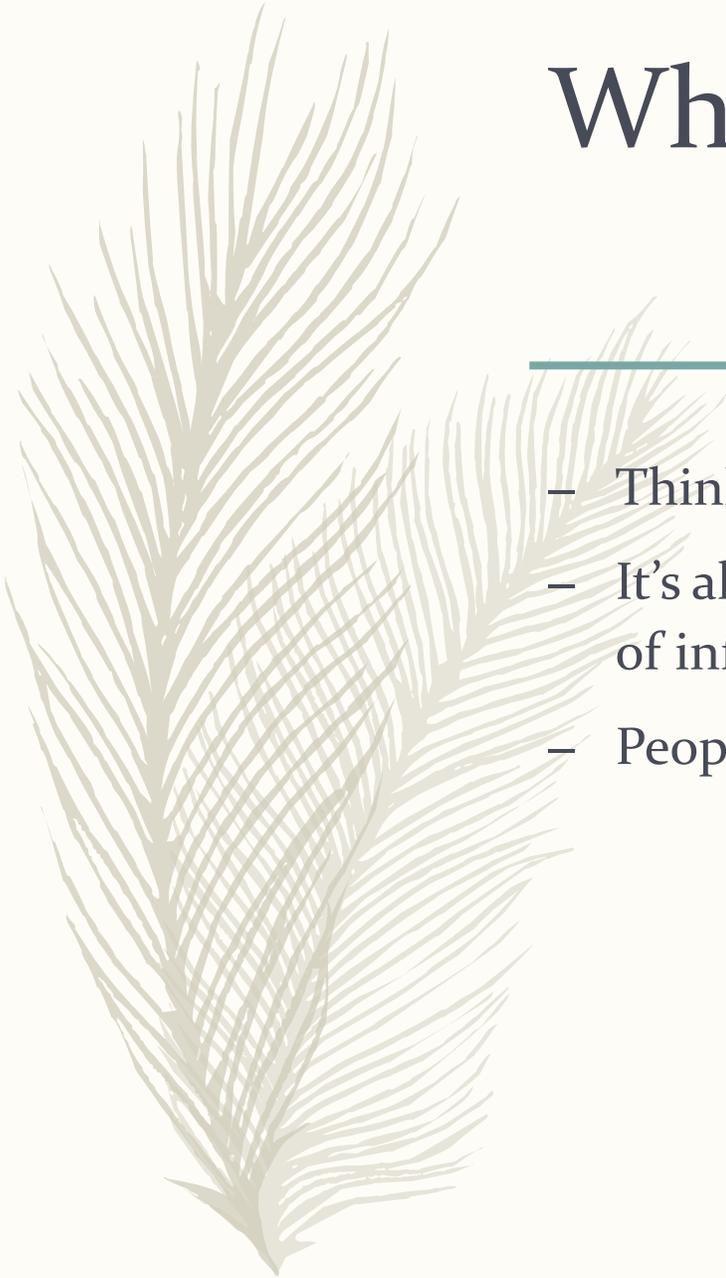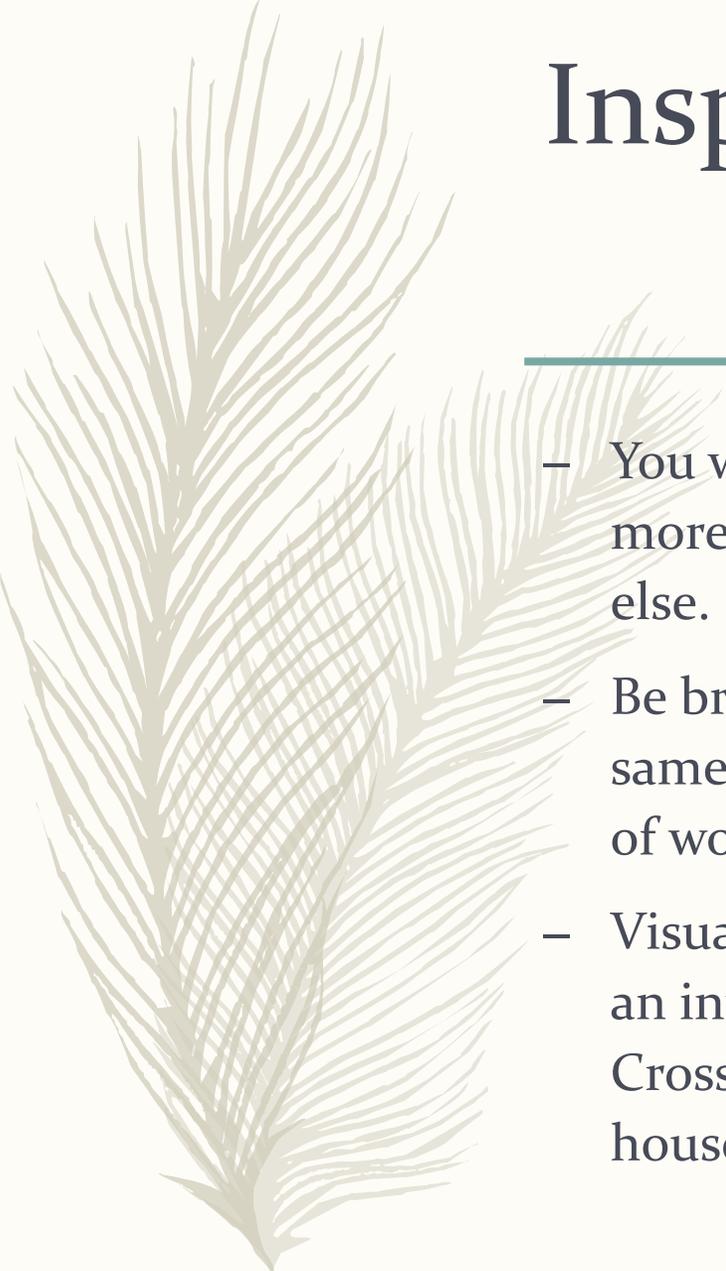# ELEMENTS of an EFFECTIVE VIRTUAL PRESENTATION

What to know and do before you go live!

What is an online gathering?

- Think of an online gathering as a retreat, not a class.
- It's all about connections with Christ and one another, not just the dumping of information.
- People want action!

Inspire

- You want to form and inspire parents and children so they want to know more. If your presentation doesn't inspire you, it is not inspiring anyone else.

- Be brief: Audiences lose attention roughly 10 minutes of hearing from the same presenter. If your presentation is longer than that, use visuals in lieu of words.

- Visuals could be interactive activities to keep families engaged. How about an interactive prayer, time before the Blessed Sacrament, Stations of the Cross, a decade of the rosary, looking for sacramental objects around the house?

Student Engagement

– Create opportunities for engagement and not passive reception. Work toward a sense of community and belonging.

– Invite participants to share experiences, thoughts, questions and concerns.

– Encourage virtual participants to keep their camera on and elicit frequent responses through questions and interactive polls.

Slides

Are you using a PowerPoint presentation? Keep the slides simple. Avoid too many words, graphics and animations. Less is more!

Creating a Virtual Sacred Space

What is important

- Space / Background
- Noise
- Lighting
- Camera Height
- Clothing and Microphone
- Bandwidth

Space / Background

Ask yourself:

- Will those watching me be comfortable viewing me and the shared screen?

- Will they feel part of the group?

Select a neutral space. A good background can enhance the learning experience.

- Do not present or record from your bedroom, kitchen, basement or vehicle. If these are your only options, select a blank wall or hang a cloth to neutralize the space behind you. The wall or cloth should be plain, not contain stripes, checks, or a busy pattern.

- A cross, crucifix, saint picture, etc. are good items to have in the background.

- Consider standing in part of the sanctuary if speaking about the Eucharist.

- Use stained glass windows, religious art or statues as a focal point.

Noise

- Minimize background noises.

- Select a room where you can be alone, if possible, without pets or other family members. Close the door.

- Turn off the television and radio.

- Close the windows to block outside noise.

- If noise does occur, immediately turn off your microphone so the audience does not hear it. If recording, pause, then restart when you are ready to resume.

Lighting

- Use natural lighting if possible.

- When using artificial light, place the light source so shadows are not created around you.

- The window or light source should be behind and above the monitor or laptop, not behind your head.

Camera Height

- The camera eye should be at your eye level.
    - Too high…creates shadows on your face.
    - Too low…the audience can see up your nose!
- If you are sitting, lower your chair or place an object under the laptop to raise the camera to eye level.
- If you using your cell phone, place it on a surface to bring it to eye level. Don't hold it in your hand – the angle is poor, and as your hand moves, the camera becomes bouncy.

Clothing and Microphone
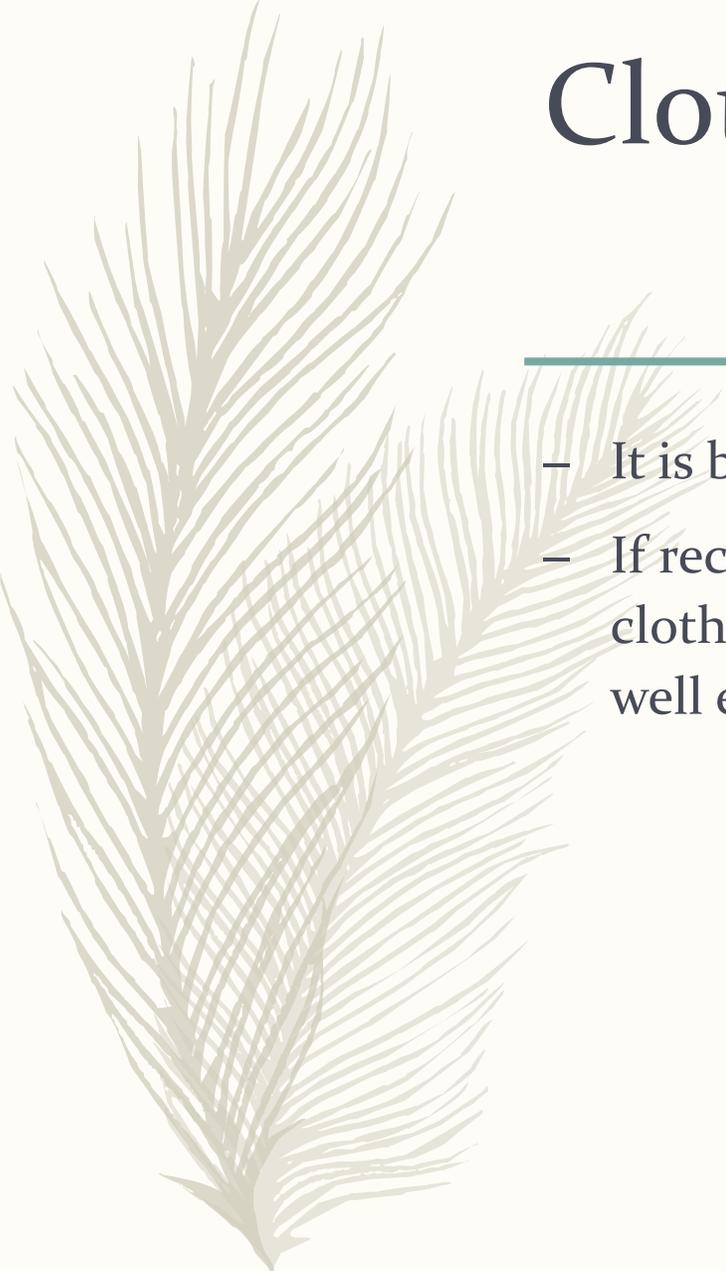
– It is best to wear clothing that is neutral in color, no plaids or stripes.

– If recording, invest in a good microphone. One that clips on to your clothing works very well. The microphone built into a laptop does not work well enough for recording, it is usually too far away.
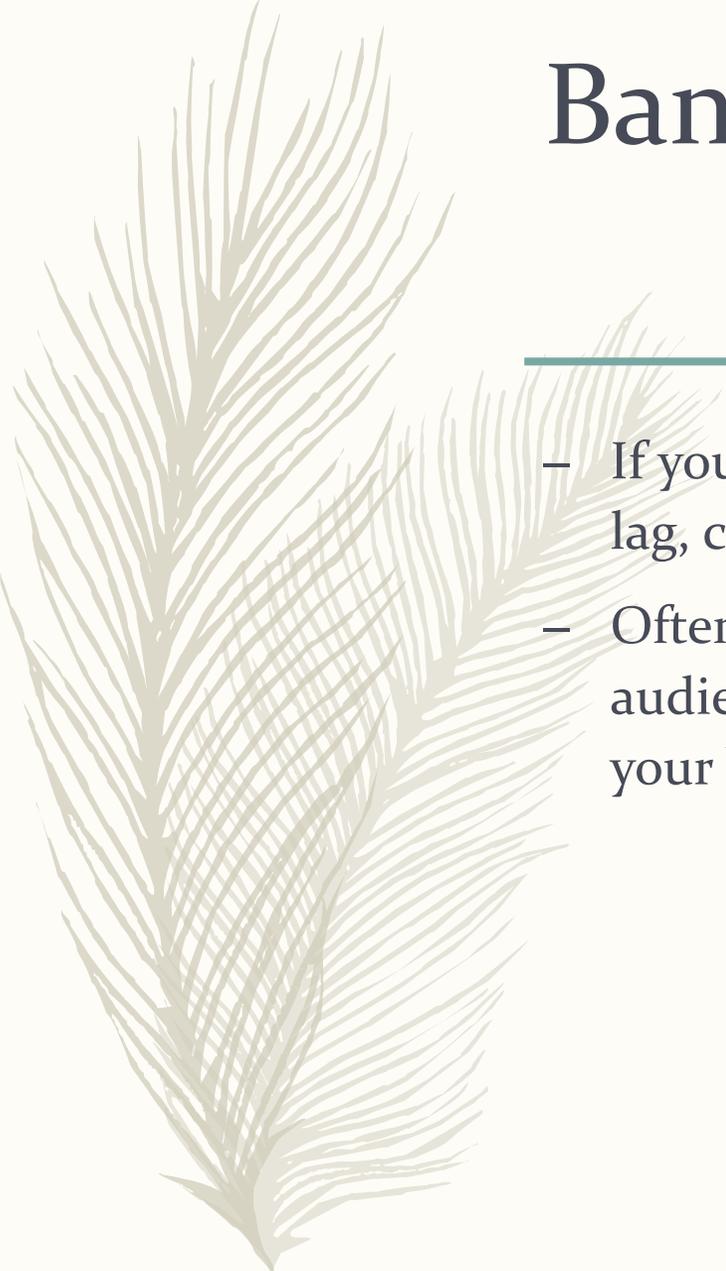
Bandwidth

- If you notice – or you audience complains – about too much freeze-frame or lag, consider increasing your bandwidth.

- Often times a Webcam produces lag time when you are speaking to the audience, or the audience is responding to you. You may have to increase your bandwidth.

In General...

– Be prepared:

  • Know your technology and test it in advance.

  • Practice before the recording begins. How far back should you stand? How is the camera height? Is the lighting okay? Where should you place your notes?

– Log on early in case others have difficulty accessing the site or with their equipment.

– Standing is better than sitting. It allows for good delivery skills.

Polls

Don't be afraid to take a poll when you are finished.

- Survey Monkey is a popular tool to use.

More Elements for Virtual Presentations

- When recording, look straight into the camera, not at the screen.

- It is important for the audience to see you. Even when using slides or pictures, the presenter's face should be visible. Our brains are wired to connect with a face. Videos with the presenter's face have a much higher retention rate than those without.

- The value of using short video clips: Short videos can help break up a long presentation and reset the participants' attention clock. However, practice this in advance with your presentation program (GoToMeeting, Zoom...). There are often a few more steps to share your computer's audio than there are to simply share your screen.

- Presentation style: Make sure that the presentation style (formal, information, conversational...) matches the subject and the audience. In general, most of our audiences will connect best with someone that is relaxed and personable. An overly formal presentation, while professional looking, can be perceived as sterile and disconnected. If this is the case, participants will struggle to stay connected.

- Stretch breaks: During long presentations – those over 50 minutes – it is a good idea to take a scheduled stretch break.