Communications Guidance for Churches

Diocese of Hereford

How to take good photographs

They say a picture is worth a thousand words. It can describe the many things going on in a scene at a single glance, but sometimes it can be difficult to know exactly what the picture is telling you to look at.
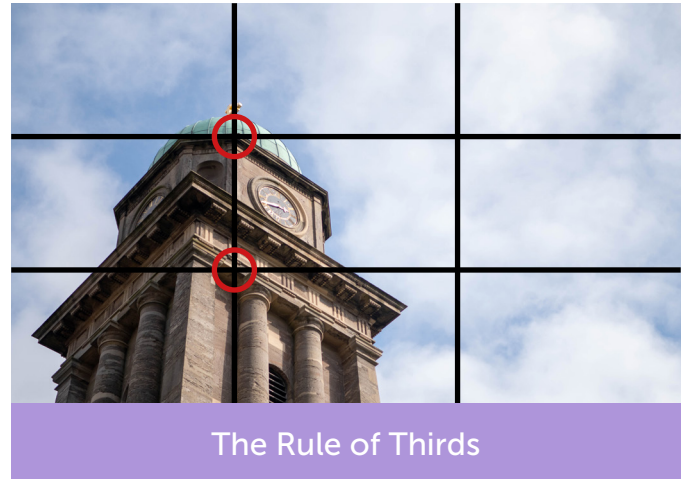
This is why its important for your photograph to highlight where you want the audience to look, as well as guide your audience through the image to tell its story. In this tutorial we will be looking at several ways you can improve your photography skills so that your lovely photographs become amazing photographs.

Focal Points and Composition

When taking a photograph, the first thing you want to find is a focal point within the image. The focal point is an area that your eyes are drawn to first when looking at an image, which should generally be the subject or object you're taking a photo of.

There are many reasons why we are drawn to certain points in a photograph. Textures, patterns, frames, symmetry, leading lines and juxtaposition are all good examples but in today's tutorial we will be focusing on using the rule of thirds.

To use the rules of thirds your photo will need to split into a 3x3 grid, just as the name suggests. When using the grid correctly, the focal point of the image should be placed where the horizontal and vertical lines intersect in either of these four locations.

The Rule of Thirds

When taking a picture it is also important to keep an eye on the background of the image as much as the foreground, as it can easily add more context to the story you are trying to tell.

Lighting

Another thing to improving your image is by taking note on lighting. The way a photograph looks can change significantly depending on the lighting. Lighting can change the appearance of an object, as well as the overall mood of the photo.

One of the most important things is to check to see if your photo is either underexposed or overexposed. Underexposure usually occurs in low-light settings such as a church building, which causes your photos to come out too dark, whilst overexposure usually happens when you're outside and the sun is brightly shining which causes the light areas to be blown out and impossible to darken.

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Outdoor Photography

Weather can also drastically affect the look and feeling of a photograph. Raining or stormy weather can be very unappealing to see on camera, and can also potentially interfere or damage your equipment. Make sure you are able to protect your equipment from the elements should you decide to film in this weather.

You may think that a bright sunny day is the best weather to film in, however the contrast between the sharp light and the shadows can be difficult to light subjects.

Make sure that the sun is behind the camera, with the subjects facing the camera. It may cause squinting, but it will ensure that their faces are fully exposed.

The best weather to film is when the sun is covered by cloud, such overcast weather, as the light is more balanced and diffused.

Sunny days create sharp shadows

Cloudy Days diffuses the sunlight