



***SOCIAL MEDIA
POLICY
of the
DIOCESE
of
CAMDEN***

(Promulgated 9/25/13)

I INTRODUCTION

"There exists a Christian way of being present in the digital world: this takes the form of a communication which is honest and open, responsible and respectful of others. To proclaim the Gospel through the new media means not only to insert expressly religious content into different media platforms, but also to witness consistently, in one's own digital profile and in the way one communicates choices, preferences and judgments that are fully consistent with the Gospel, even when it is not spoken of specifically..."¹

In the above statement, Pope Benedict addresses both the message and the messenger of communications. Those who minister within the Church are charged to proclaim the Gospel by their words and with the witness of their lives. The core meaning of Pope Benedict's words urges us to utilize new forms of social media to further this mission. How we pursue this goal must reflect the profound mission that we share and desire to communicate to others through the media enlisted for our use.

Efforts to engage in new and appropriate internal and external Church-related communications present new challenges, limitations and opportunities. For this reason, the use of communications technology has necessitated the development of policies that advance the Church's salvific mission while facilitating an awareness of boundaries, protecting the integrity of the information being delivered, and working to safeguard all those involved.² This *Policy* addresses the acceptable use of internet and social media by employees and volunteers.

This Policy applies to all online and mobile-based communication tools (of every type, kind, nature and description) used for sharing content and discussing information, initiated or participated in by employees or volunteers of the Diocese of Camden, or any constituent Parish or any Parish School, or any employees or volunteers of Bishop McHugh Regional School, Camden Catholic High School, Holy Spirit High School, Paul VI High School and St. Joseph High School (hereafter "Diocese/Parish/School"), or hosted on other platforms (such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.). It includes all social networking vehicles owned or operated by the Diocese/Parish/School. Social media is a constantly evolving arena of communication, and so this Policy applies to all new media platforms whether or not they are specifically mentioned.

The Diocese of Camden reserves the right to make changes to this *Policy* at any time and with its sole discretion, and interpret and administer this *Policy* in light of changing circumstances and events. This policy will be reviewed at minimum on an annual basis.

¹ Pope Benedict XVI. *Truth, Proclamation and Authenticity of Life in the Digital Age*. On the occasion of the 45th World Communication Day, January 24, 2011.

² Adapted from the Social Media Policy of Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Washington, D.C. Permission granted by Ana Kelly, Director of Communications, HTCC, December 29, 2010. Adaptations from this site continue throughout this document.

II BACKGROUND

In his message for the 44th World Communications Day (2010), Pope Benedict XVI noted that social media "can offer priests and all pastoral workers a wealth of information and content that was difficult to access before, and facilitate forms of collaboration and greater communion in ways that were unthinkable in the past."³ Therefore, the Church can now "use social media guidelines to encourage respect, dialogue, and honest relationships... To do so requires us to approach social media as a powerful means of evangelization and to consider the Church's role in providing a Christian perspective on digital literacy."

While Pope Benedict XVI strongly recommends responsible use of digital media, he also raises another pastoral concern. Accompanying the reality of easy access to instant communications is the potential risk of losing sight of who our "neighbor" is. There is a new and very real danger "that we may be less present to those whom we encounter in our everyday life." We may also fall into the trap of not taking "time to reflect critically on our choices and to foster human relationships which are truly deep and lasting. It is important to remember that virtual contact cannot and must not take the place of direct human contact with people at every level of our lives."⁴

Prior to the internet age, diocesan and church "communication" referred to the transfer of information within the walls of a diocese or parish through parish bulletins, direct mail, education and formation programs, and similar endeavors. In the current milieu of mass media, a broader net can be cast to express the message of the Gospel over multiple channels. Employees and volunteers are required, however, to ensure their responsible use of technology as they use new communication tools that better enable us - as the Vision Statement of the Diocese of Camden states - to grow "ever more into a dynamic community of faith, hope, and love..." as the Catholic Church of South Jersey.

III PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

Social networking is an important educational and evangelizing tool to promote programs and events, as well as to have informal discussions with a great variety of communities and individuals. The Diocese encourages administrators to support the use of social media technologies and to give employees, clerics and volunteers the necessary training and tools to interact safely and responsibly online. However, those using social media should bear in mind that certain comments and information may have an unintended, but harmful, effect.

³ Adapted from USCCB, *Guidelines for Social Media*, June 2010.

⁴ Message for the 45th World Day of Communications, Benedict XVI, from the Vatican, 24 January 2011, Feast of Saint Francis de Sales.

The purpose of the *Policy* is four-fold:

1. To maximize best practices for wide-ranging delivery to and reception of the Good News through mass media and electronic communications channels.
2. To be respectfully and responsibly present to those whom we encounter in ministry on every level and in every form of communication.
3. To balance our digital presence with our real-life presence to all people in the Diocese of Camden and beyond.
4. To minimize the risk to the reputation of the Church that can be caused by improper and unauthorized external communications.⁵

IV SPECIFIC POLICIES

1. A social network account for Church purposes will be independent of any individual's personal social networking account. The logon information will be documented and kept on file accessible to management. All employees and volunteers are to familiarize themselves with this *Policy*.
2. The Moderator of the Curia or his designee will approve any media project of the Diocese, evaluate its appropriateness in ministry and determine who will develop it, as well as designate who will oversee its use.
3. All those using social or networking media will inform all interested and/or affected parties of this particular form of communication in order to be inclusive and fully transparent. This information may be published through a bulletin, newsletter, website, etc.
4. While engaged in social networking activities, employees and volunteers must adhere to the highest ethical, pastoral and legal standards. The content of any and all communications is subject to review and monitoring. There is to be no expectation of privacy in or to any such communications (including password-protected email accounts), or files, or any other matter, stored in, created on, received from or sent through any system maintained, provided by, funded or paid for by the Diocese/Parish/School, and the retrieval and review by the Diocese/Parish/School of all electronic communications so stored (whether on a hard drive or otherwise), created, received or sent, regardless of whether such communications are in the course of being transmitted or are in storage, is authorized. The Diocese/Parish/School cooperates fully with local, county, state and federal officials in any

⁵ Parish Policy for External Communications, St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church, Naperville, IL, used with permission.

investigation concerning or related to any illegal activities through the use of social media.

5. No pictures, images, videos, or other releases, except those which are newsworthy or of general interest, may be identified or linked without permission of the person or persons depicted, and no picture or image of any minor may be posted without the specific permission in writing of the minor's custodial parent or guardian.
6. All social networking sites will be configured so that no comments can be made by the public or unauthorized managers of the site. If a site does not allow for comments to be disabled, the following disclaimer must be displayed prominently on the site:

"Thank you for being a member of our online community. We welcome open discussion on current topics and issues. As a community of faith, we always conduct ourselves upholding the dignity of each and every individual.

This site permits readers to post comments although we are not responsible for the content of those comments. Opinions and views expressed in those comments reflect the thoughts of the individuals who post them and do not necessarily reflect the views of this organization.

As a condition of posting comments, you agree not to post any inappropriate comments – including, but not limited to obscenities, foul language, spam, personal attacks, bashing, bullying, intimidation, harassment, verbal abuse, threats, insults, commercial solicitations, repetitive or fraudulent comments, comments irrelevant to the post under which they are written, comments which are morally objectionable, and comments which are otherwise inconsistent with Catholic teaching. We welcome your questions and comments; however, we will not respond on this site. Please direct questions and comments to us via email at <address>@camdendiocese.org.

We reserve the sole right, but are not obligated to, review, edit and/or remove any and all comments. We reserve the right to block any user who posts inappropriate comments.

Links to external websites should not be interpreted as an endorsement of those organizations or the opinions of those organizations. We are not responsible for the content of external web sites.

Thank you for your contributions to our site and for your help in creating a courteous, safe and energetic place for discussion."

7. The administrator of a networking site reserves the right to monitor conversations, postings, images and behavior of members of the group and challenge, educate, intervene and/or delete as necessary. Employees and volunteers are to use discretion when establishing a connection with others.
8. Employees and volunteers are expected to write knowledgeably, pastorally, accurately, and professionally. Employees need to communicate their official location-related email address, not their own personal email address.
9. Whether or not an employee or volunteer is using social media for personal purposes, comments may be viewed as a reflection of the Church. Employees and volunteers need to be on guard against any comment,

suggestion or discussion that could harm the Church or the Church community.

- a. Employees and volunteers may not attribute personal statements or opinions to the Diocese/Parish/School.
 - b. If employees or volunteers express personal statements or opinions they must post the following notice: "The views expressed are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of any other person or entity."
10. Employees and volunteers who serve in a leadership role need to consider whether or not it is appropriate to establish a connection on a social networking page of an individual with whom there is interaction only through this leadership role.⁶
 11. Any use of the name, logo, insignia or coat of arms of the Diocese/Parish/School must be specifically approved in writing prior to use. Any uses in existence at the time of adoption of this *Policy* are not grandfathered and should be specifically authorized pursuant to this *Policy*, and such may be revoked at any time.
 12. Even when using social media for personal purposes, an employee's or volunteer's comments may be viewed as a reflection of the Diocese/Parish/School. The use of social networking vehicles owned, operated or provided by the Diocese/Parish/School employees and volunteers will positively represent official positions of the Diocese/Parish/School. Statements made by employees or volunteers may not be represented as expressing the position of the Diocese/Parish/School unless the speaker or writer is specifically authorized to do so in writing (with a copy of such authorization being provided to the Director of Communications of the Diocese).
 13. Employees and volunteers must comply fully with copyright law when posting and uploading copyrighted materials. Any posting of materials from diocesan employees or the diocesan website will not be copied or uploaded to other forums without the prior written consent of the Director of Communications.
 14. All users of social media must safeguard the privacy interests of others. In particular, potentially identifying information (that is, any information that can identify a particular person, including but not limited to, name, phone number, address or email address) may not be disclosed without the prior signed written consent of the person identified. In cases where a user has consented to publication of such information, appropriate privacy settings and levels must be considered.
 15. Social media is not intended for the use of children under the age of 13. Any site operated by an employee or volunteer that is oriented toward youth

⁶ Used with permission of the Diocese of Richmond, Mary Jane Fuller, Director of Human Resources.

between the ages of 13 and 18 must require registration for all users and must be password-protected so that only registered, approved users may access the site. Registration for such a site must require the use of a legal name and valid contact information, such as an operational email address. Users of such a site may not post images of, or communicate with, minors without the prior written consent of a custodial parent or legal guardian of any minor depicted; furthermore, regardless of whether such consent has been given by any person, no information concerning anyone under the age of 18 years is ever to be posted, downloaded or disseminated in any manner.

16. Any use of social media that violates this *Policy* should be brought to the attention of the Director of Communications of the Diocese of Camden. In areas where this *Policy* does not provide a direct answer as to how employees or volunteers should answer social media questions, this question must be referred to the Director of Communications.

V

UNACCEPTABLE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Examples of unacceptable use of social media include, but are not limited to, the following:⁷

1. Creating or issuing personal communications that appear to be official communication of the Diocese/Parish/School.
2. Disseminating or intentionally accessing material that is defamatory, abusive, obscene, profane, sexually suggestive, pornographic, harassing, intimidating, threatening, racially offensive, illegal, fraudulent, or otherwise inappropriate – or any illegally written, recorded, or electronically retrieved or transmitted communication.
3. Disclosing confidential information except as necessary for valid work purposes. Confidential information includes all information that is not generally available to the public, including but not limited to, financial information, and/or personnel files.
4. Violating copyright laws, including the acquisition, use or distribution of pirated software.
5. Using someone else's username or password.
6. Attributing personal statements, opinions or beliefs to the Diocese/Parish/School.
7. It is unacceptable to dissent from Church teachings in the use of social media vehicles. Employees and volunteers are expected to represent positively the official positions of the Church, and they need to be on guard against any comment, suggestion or discussion that could harm the interests of the Church or the Church community.

Failure to adhere to this policy can result in disciplinary action in the case of an employee, and a status review in the case of a volunteer. Such disciplinary action can include, where warranted, dismissal in the case of an employee; and in the case of a volunteer, removal from volunteer status.

⁷ Adapted from the Diocese of Springfield, IL.