



Social Media Policy

“The world of digital communication, with its almost limitless expressive capacity, makes us appreciate all the more Saint Paul’s exclamation: “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel” (1 Cor 9:16).

—Pope Benedict XVI, 44th World Communications Day message (2010)

For generations Church leaders, including Pope Benedict XVI, have articulated the clear need to use new technologies to express the Word of God to all people.

The Diocese of Savannah recognizes the powerful tool electronic media can be to evangelize and educate all people. In order to ensure electronic communication on the Internet is appropriate, effective and reflective of our Catholic values, and consistent with the rules and values of our workplace, the Diocese of Savannah has established the following policies.

These policies are in addition to and complement existing policies regarding the use of electronic communications which collectively serve to share the Good News in a way that creates a safe environment for all vulnerable populations.

Definition of Social Media

Any web-based and mobile technologies which are designed to turn communication into interactive dialogue. This includes, but is not limited to the use of blogs/wikis, message boards/forums, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, Pinterest, etc.

Establishing A Social Media Presence

It is important to remember online content is visible to anyone in the world so one must always be mindful about the nature of the information posted. Content should consistently represent the views and teachings of the Catholic Church.

- Approval from the department head/pastor/principal/agency director is needed before seeking permission to establish a new site or account from the Diocesan, parish, school or social service center webmaster.
- Once granted, the new site (e.g. WordPress blog or

Recommended reading:

- Vogt, Brandon. *The Church and New Media: Blogging Converts, Online Activists, and Bishops Who Tweet.* Huntingdon, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc, 2011.
- USCCB Social Media Guidelines: www.usccb.org/about/communications/social-media-guidelines.cfm
- Recommended Technology Guidelines for Pastoral Work with Young People: <http://www.nfcym.org/resources/documents/TechnologyGuidelinesNov2010.pdf>

CATHOLIC PASTORAL CENTER
2170 E. VICTORY DRIVE
SAVANNAH, GEORGIA 31404



Facebook page) should contain the official Diocesan logo or standard approved images used for the Diocese of Savannah and/or its entities (parishes, schools and agencies). Diocesan logos can be requested by email to communications@diosav.org.

- A minimum of two adult individuals within the Diocesan department and/or its entities should have full administrative access to the account (no minors should be granted administrative privileges). These individuals should be registered and have email alerts of any page activity sent to their Diocesan assigned email account (this allows for a quicker response time to urgent requests and helps to ensure that all postings are appropriate).
- Administrators should establish separate sites and pages for personal and professional use (please review section on personal use of social networking sites below for more information).
- Personal pages and information should be neither advertised nor accessible to young people. In addition, do not link personal accounts to your work accounts.
- Post the following “rules of conduct” established by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops for visitors to Facebook sites: “All posts and comments should be marked by Christian charity and respect for truth. They should be on topic and presume the good will of other posters. Discussion should take place primarily from a faith perspective. No ads please.”
- This online “rules of conduct” should be utilized in sync with Diocesan codes of conduct for other areas, such as the standards for protection of children and young adults.

General “Rules of the Road” for the Administrator

- **Stick to your ministry** and do not claim to represent the official position of the Church unless authorized to do so. **Be honest, professional and clear** as to who you are and the ministry you represent.
- Do not post information about the Diocese, coworkers, or your audience that should be kept confidential.
- All comments should be respectful and on topic. You have the right and ability to block/delete those that are potentially libelous, disrespectful or contrary to church teaching.
- Prior to posting make sure you are following all copyright and fair use laws. Always attribute photos, quotes, information to original source/author.
- **Evaluate success of messages and effectiveness of your site.** Be able to answer questions like who is the audience and are they engaged in this forum(s).

Guidelines for the Use of Social Networking Sites with Minors

The Diocese of Savannah recognizes the various ways, both positive and negative, that technology and social media can be used. It is important that technology be used in a responsible and ethical way and that Diocesan staff, volunteers and parents be transparent in all forms of communication, particularly when ministering to young persons. Social networking sites should be used for ministry and education rather than for befriending



people or socializing. Parents must have access to everything provided to their children. For example, parents should be made aware of how social media are being used, be told how to access the sites, and be given the opportunity to be copied on all material sent to their children via social networking (including text messages). While parents should be provided with the same material as their children, it does not have to be via the same technology (that is, if children receive a reminder via Twitter, parents can receive it in a printed form or by an e-mail list).

After receiving written parental permission to communicate with young people via social media, Diocesan employees should be encouraged to save copies of conversations whenever possible, especially those that concern the personal sharing of a teen or young adult. (This may be especially important with email and text messaging.)

Make everyone aware of the [Children's Online Privacy Protection Act](#), which is federal legislation that oversees how websites interact with children under age 13.

SOURCE: USCCB Social Media Guidelines

Guidelines:

- Written permission must be obtained prior to posting identifying information of minors/young people on websites.
- The site administrator is an adult considered to be working with minors and thus should have completed all safe environment requirements per the Diocesan policy.
- Parents should be informed that a social networking site is being utilized as a standard part of youth ministry and any materials posted on the site must also be available through other communication mediums.
- There is a difference between initiating a “friend request” and accepting one. Friend/connection requests should be initiated by the young people, not the adult representative of the Diocese of Savannah and/or its entities.
- In photographs of youth activities, youth should not be “tagged,” or identified by name in the photograph.
- On the original social networking site, it is recommended that the “no tagging” option be set.
- Because of the potential of teen crises or time relevant information, any pages with high volumes of youth involvement should be monitored frequently by official organizational personnel. A plea for help that goes unanswered can be dangerous for teens and their families as well as damaging to the parish, school, and/or organization.
- It is recommended that clear guidelines or parameters be established with regard to times of communication between adults and young people. While young people may be on the phone/texting in the late evening hours, those who minister with young people should pre-determine a timeframe when it is too late to take a professional call, except in the case of serious urgency.
- All Diocesan employees must maintain separate personal and ministry based social media accounts to ensure that any information posted on one’s personal account is not made available to young people.
- If youth are to engage in blogging as a part of an officially sanctioned organizational activity, such activity must be monitored by at least two adults; the content of such a blog must be in compliance with Catholic Church teaching and values.

Do's:

- Comply with all safe environment requirements per the Diocesan policy.
- Obtain written permission prior to posting identifying information of minors/young people on websites.
- Inform parents that a social networking site is being utilized as a standard part of youth ministry
- Make any materials posted on the site available through other communication mediums.
- Monitor sites frequently.
- Establish clear time guidelines or parameters of communication between adults and young people.

Dont's:

- Initiate friend/connection requests
- Tag youth in photographs
- Post personal content on ministry based sites

Personal Use of Social Networking Sites

The Diocese of Savannah respects the right of employees, volunteers and independent contractors to create and maintain personal social networking websites.

Employees, Volunteers and Independent Contractors who choose to identify their affiliations with the Diocese of Savannah and/or its entities (parishes, schools and agencies) on personal social networking websites may be seen by their readers as representatives of the Diocese of Savannah. As a result, Employees, Volunteers and Independent Contractors must adhere to the following guidelines:

- Always include a Disclaimer. Please add a notice to your personal website that clearly communicates to your readers that the comments or views you choose to share do not reflect the views of the Diocese of Savannah, your parish, school or other diocesan-related entity. For example: "The views expressed on this social network are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of my employer."
- Adhere to the Confidentiality Policy. Employees, Volunteers and Independent Contractors must maintain the confidentiality of the Diocese of Savannah and its entities at all times.
- Be mindful of time spent on personal websites during your normal scheduled working hours. All time spent on personal social networking websites should be spent on your personal time. Time spent on personal networking websites should not interfere with an employee's job performance.
- Policies regarding workplace conduct in our churches, offices and schools also apply to online activities. Inappropriate postings that may include discriminatory remarks, harassment or threats of violence will not be tolerated .
- Be mindful that the information posted on your personal social networking site, or on other social networking sites could potentially be grounds for discipline or possible termination of employment.
- Consult the Human Resources Department of the Diocese of Savannah for more information.



Acknowledgments

Compiled by the Communications Department of the Diocese of Savannah, utilizing the policies and guidelines of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Diocese of Salt Lake City, the Diocese of Orlando, the Archdiocese of St. Louis and the Archdiocese of Atlanta.

*** Please retain for your records ***



Social Media Policy Acknowledgment Form

I _____, hereby acknowledge receipt of the Diocese of Savannah's Social Media Policy. I understand and hereby consent to its contents, application and enforcement:

This _____ day of _____, _____.

Signature: _____

(Printed) Name: _____

Check one:

Priest

Deacon

Religious

Seminarian

Employee

Independent Contractor

Volunteer