SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF DALLAS

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GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The use of technology is **rapidly growing** to form, inform, and, with God's grace, transform the adults, teens and children of our diocese.

Every day, **countless conversations take place online** about the Catholic faith on social media, and the Diocese of Dallas encourages Church and School personnel to join these conversations to proclaim the Gospel. The Diocese of Dallas also **respects the rights of Church and School personnel** to use social media as a form of self-expression.

It is important that we **make every effort to ensure the safety** of producers and consumers of social media, while at the same time ensuring the integrity of the message we proclaim. This requires responsible, focused, and intentional use of new and yet-to-be-developed technologies.

These guidelines apply to all Church and School personnel (employees, clergy and all volunteers), and to their use of social networking sites, blogs, or any other kind of social media. Other websites are usually not considered social media, but this policy also applies to the creation, content and use of parish, school, and ministry websites, as well as to online discussion by any Church and School personnel of matters pertaining to ministry.

The Catholic Diocese of Dallas would like to thank the following organizations for excerpts of their Social Media policies included in this document:

Archdiocese of Boston
Archdiocese of Chicago
Archdiocese of Cincinnati
Archdiocese of Melbourne (Australia)
Boy Scouts of America
Diocese of Fairbanks
Diocese of Grand Rapids
New York City Department of Education

ENGAGING ONLINE WITH THE LOVE OF CHRIST

Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.
1 Corinthians 10:31

Any online post, comment, photo, song, video, blog, or podcast by Church and School personnel on an official ministry site, or which connects the employee or volunteer to a Diocesan entity, **must reflect the values of our Catholic faith**.

Faith comes by what is heard.
Romans 10:17

Church and School personnel should be sensitive to being clear about the **intended audiences** for social media conversations on personal social media accounts. Conversations containing personal views intended for a specific limited audience should not be misinterpreted as a representative viewpoint of a larger institution.

To prevent this type of confusion, **it is important to cultivate relationships online so that professional and personal boundaries are clear**. Church and School personnel who use social media in a personal capacity should not present themselves in a way that could be misinterpreted as having the same authority as a social media account used by church or school leadership in a professional capacity (e.g., a Facebook public figure page for the Pastor of a parish, the Twitter account for a school principal).

Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity.
Galatians 4:5

When participating on social media, be sure to use **sound judgment** and **common sense**. Don't forget that anything published on a personal website is no different from making such information available in any public forum. Use discretion when posting about sensitive topics and events.

Care should always be taken in accepting or adding 'friends' on personal social media accounts. Be sensitive to activity and engagement on social media, as many social media networks share your "Likes", comments and other actions with your friends and followers.

The person who is trustworthy in very small matters is also trustworthy in great ones.
Luke 16:10

Make sure you are always **honest and accurate** when posting information or news, and if you make a mistake, correct it quickly. Be open about any previous posts you have altered. Remember that the Internet archives almost everything; therefore, even deleted postings can be searched. Never post any information or rumors that you know to be false, especially regarding parishioners, students, other Church and School personnel, or the Diocese or a Diocesan entity.

You shall love your neighbor as yourself.
Matthew 22:39

Do not post obscene, harassing, offensive, derogatory, defamatory, trolling, cyberbullying, or otherwise potentially scandalous comments, links, and/or images, or materials which could discredit or cause embarrassment to the Catholic Diocese of Dallas or its affiliates, employees, vendors, partners, agencies, schools, or others.

ESTABLISHING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR A PARISH, MINISTRY OR SCHOOL

When creating a social media site for your parish, ministry or school:

- **Establish and utilize official social media accounts for parish, ministry or school communication** – Official Church and School social media accounts and other official communications channels should be the first and primary source for official parish and school news (e.g., event invitations, parish announcements, etc...) and not the personal account of a Church or School employee or volunteer.

- **Get to know the social media network** - Be aware of the terms of use, age restrictions, and privacy options and controls for each site prior to establishing a ministry presence. Keep in mind that, in certain circumstances, the Diocese or a Diocesan entity may be bound to terms of use which apply to an official social media account.

- **Choose at least two administrators** - Two Safe Environment cleared adults should be granted access and trained to act as administrators for each official website/social media account. One of the administrators must be a parish or diocesan employee. Administrators must have full access to all account or site settings and must have complete access to all communications to and from the official site or account.

- **Get approval** – Make sure to get approval from a <u>Supervisor</u> before creating a new social media site for a ministry, parish, school, or other Diocesan entity.

- **Monitor and review sites on a regular basis** - Administrators should monitor all engagement and comments on social media posts, and respond promptly to issues and questions. Keep Supervisors in the loop when issues arise that may need action by parish, school, or Diocesan staff.

  Supervisors are ultimately responsible for the administration and content of official social media sites, and should maintain a list of all social media accounts within their particular ministry, parish, school, or other Diocesan entity. Supervisors are also responsible for regularly monitoring social media sites for their organization.

- **Obtain permission before posting content** - Just because content is available on the Internet does not mean that the content can be freely used for any purpose. Do not post any non-original content (e.g., photographs, artwork, articles, etc.) unless and until you

have obtained written permission from the copyright owner to do so. This also extends to posting videos or recordings of Masses or other events that contain performances of copyrighted music or other copyrighted material.

Church and School personnel should not post a recording of anything connected to their duties as employees or volunteers unless the parish or school has given permission for the posting and has obtained the appropriate releases.

Certain content is not allowed on official social media sites:

- **Confidential and Proprietary Information** – Church and School personnel are prohibited from disclosing any information that is understood to be held in confidence by the Diocese of Dallas or its entities, except by explicit permission of the appropriate authority. This specifically includes personal information regarding parishioners, students, or others involved in a Diocesan or Diocesan entity ministry which you learn in the course of your ministry work but have not received specific permission from the subject of the information to disclose using a specific online forum.

  For example, it is a violation of this policy to post to a parish Facebook page information regarding a homebound parishioner's medical condition disclosed to a visiting minister unless the parishioner has specifically authorized sharing of the information on the parish Facebook page.

- **Unauthorized Use of Trademarks and Logos** - Do not use Diocese or Diocesan entity trademarks or logos in any way that could reasonably suggest official Diocesan or Diocesan entity sponsorship or endorsement unless you are specifically authorized to do so. Do not use trademarks or logos of any other person or organization without the permission of the owner.

- **Outside Businesses** – Official social media sites may not be used for conducting or promoting outside business.

  Church and School personnel should avoid conducting outside businesses through personal social media accounts or websites in a way that implies sponsorship or endorsement of the business by the Diocese or a Diocesan entity.

  For this same reason, clergy should avoid conducting outside businesses through social media accounts or websites which identify them as clergy of the Diocese of Dallas.

COMMUNICATING WITH CHILDREN

The primary purpose of communications between Church and School personnel and children engaged in ministry on social media is to **provide information related to a ministry, school or event** and to **encourage online engagement and evangelization**, and not for personal or private interaction between adults and children.

Church and School personnel should **always be considerate of boundaries** and ensure they are observed, particularly in communications with young people and with use of social media in a youth ministry or school setting.

- Private channels and private communication create an environment that puts both children and adults at risk. To help ensure that all communication on social media channels remains positive and safe, **channels used by Church and School personnel to communicate with children regarding ministry activities must be public and all communication on or through them must be public.** This enables administrators to monitor all communication and helps ensure there is no inappropriate communication between adults and children or between children themselves. Therefore, **no private channels** (*e.g., private Facebook groups or invite-only YouTube channels*) **are acceptable as channels for communication between Church and School personnel and children who are connected in any way to ministry or school related activities.**

- Official ministry, school and personal social media accounts **should not be used to contact children privately** (*e.g., Facebook Messenger, Twitter Direct Message*). Online "chatting" with children is not permitted (*Google Hangouts, etc.*).

- **Use of Smartphone and tablet messaging apps** (*Snapchat, WhatsApp, Kik, etc.*) **and "anonymous" apps** (*YikYak, Whisper, etc.*) **are forbidden** for use as communication tools for parishes, schools and ministries due to the lack of accountability and ability to retain records of communications on these apps. This policy also prohibits the use of any such apps for communications between any Church or School personnel and any child connected to any ministry or school related activity.

- Church and School personnel **must not initiate or accept "friend" requests** with children connected to ministry or school related activities using their personal profiles on Facebook or other social media platforms or apps. **Children should instead be encouraged to "Like" and participate in public discussions on ministry and school Facebook pages** and other public social media for parishes, schools or ministries.

- If a child directly contacts Church or School personnel engaged in ministry through a personal social media account, **the ministry or school account should be used to reply.** In unusual cases where a personal account is used to respond, such as an emergency situation which requires urgent communication, Church and School personnel should **maintain copies of all such messages and must promptly provide copies of the communication to a Supervisor.**

- **Parents must have access to everything provided to their children** and be made aware of how social media is being used to communicate with their children as well as how to access the sites.

- **Church personnel are forbidden to post or distribute personal identifiable information** of any child under the age of eighteen. Personal identifiable information includes but is not limited to: full name, home address, email address, telephone number or any information that would allow someone to identify or contact a child or that would jeopardize their safety or well-being in any way.

- As an exception to this policy, a child whose parent or other legally responsible adult has signed a current Video/Image Release form may be identified by name in photographs or videos posted to an official social media account unless the child or his/her parent has requested otherwise.

- When sharing photographs or videos of children, **verifiable consent should always be obtained from the parent or guardian before images are shared online.** Verifiable consent can take the form of: a Video/Image Release form, an email from a parent or guardian, or spoken permission by a parent or guardian in the presence of another adult, preferably an employee of the Diocese, School or Diocesan entity.

- When children form their own social media groups, **adults should not join these groups.**

- Counseling of children through social media is not permitted.

- Electronic communication is not intended to be the primary means of communicating with minors. In extraordinary circumstances when using email, text messages or other electronic communication with a minor, **a second safe environment cleared adult must be included.** Except in emergency situations, **this communication can only take place between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m.** (*Safe Environment Program, Section 4.21*)

PROTECTING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS ONLINE

Church and School personnel of the Diocese of Dallas and Diocesan entities are expected to comply with this policy, the Safe Environment Program of the Diocese of Dallas, the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, and all other applicable law.

Consistent with the Diocese of Dallas Safe Environment Program, communications with vulnerable adults should follow the same guidelines as communications with children.

Please visit these websites for more information about the protection of children online:

- **Catholic Diocese of Dallas Safe Environment Program**
  http://www.cathdal.org/ a-safe-environment

- **Children's Online Privacy Protection Rule ("COPPA")**
  http://www.cathdal.org/coppa

- **The USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People**
  http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/charter.cfm

AUTHORIZATION TO SPEAK FOR DIOCESE OR A DIOCESAN ENTITY

All matters of the employing entity that require news releases or public statements must be reviewed and coordinated with the Director of Communications.

Communication in Crisis Situations

In the event where media inquiries are urgent or in a crisis situation, the Director of Communications will serve as spokesperson for the Diocese. The Vicar General acts as spokesperson when the Director of Communications is not available. No statement may be made on behalf of the diocese or any employing entity unless it has been approved by the Director of Communications of the Diocese.

(Excerpted from the *Diocese of Dallas Employee Handbook*, Section 120 – External Communications)

OTHER APPLICABLE DIOCESAN POLICIES

The same principles and guidelines found in other Diocesan policies regarding Church and School personnel conduct apply to Church personnel activities online. These include, but are not limited to:

- **Email** – Catholic Diocese of Dallas Safe Environment Program (Code of Conduct, Section 4)
  http://www.cathdal.org/ a-safe-environment

- **Computer Systems and Internet Use** – Computer Internet Policy
  https://www.cathdal.org/Computer_Internet_Policy.pdf

- **External Communications** – Employee Handbook (Section 120)
  https://www.cathdal.org/Employee_Policy_Manual.pdf

- **Communications and Non-Parish Based Organizations** – Non-Parish Based Organization Policy
  https://www.cathdal.org/Non_Parish_Based_Organization_%28NPBO%29_Policy.pdf

- **Online Giving** – When creating Online Giving accounts, follow the procedures for *Bank Accounts - Accounts (checking and other types)* in the "Accounting for Funds" section in the Accounting Standards Handbook.
  https://www.cathdal.org/Accounting_Standards_Handbook.pdf

All diocesan policies may be found at www.cathdal.org/policies.

POLICY ENFORCEMENT

Ultimately, although Church and School personnel are solely responsible for materials they post online, social media activity by Church and School personnel can have adverse consequences for the Diocese and its entities. Church and School personnel must refrain from any actions, through public or private social media or other online communications, that could be an embarrassment, cause scandal, or bring discredit to the Diocese or a ministry, parish, school, or other Diocesan entity. Inappropriate postings, which may include discriminatory remarks, harassment, threats of violence, or similar unacceptable or unlawful conduct, will not be tolerated, whether such postings are made using official or personal social media accounts.

Before creating online content, Church and School personnel should consider some of the risks and rewards that are involved, bearing in mind that any online conduct that adversely affects job performance or otherwise adversely affects other Church or School personnel, the Diocese or a Diocesan entity, parishioners, students, or others involved in a Diocese or Diocesan entity ministry may result in disciplinary action.

Violations of this policy, the **Safe Environment Program** of the Diocese of Dallas, the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, or other applicable law may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination, for an employee or cleric, or removal from position, if a volunteer.

By acknowledging receipt of this policy and accepting employment or a volunteer position with the Diocese of Dallas or any of its entities, each employee and volunteer agrees that he or she will, upon request, provide the Diocese of Dallas access to any social media account which the Diocese of Dallas reasonably believes has been involved in a violation of this policy, the Safe Environment Program of the Diocese of Dallas, the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, or other applicable law, policy, or standard.

The Diocese of Dallas reserves the right to make changes to this policy at any time and at its sole discretion, and interpret and administer the policy in light of changing circumstances and events.

APPENDIX I: DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

Social Media Glossary

- **Blog:** A blog (a contraction of the term "web log") is a type of website with chronologically posted articles of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. "Blog" can also be used as a verb, meaning to maintain or add content to a blog.

- **Cyberbullying:** The use of social networks to repeatedly harm or harass other people in a deliberate manner. Cyberbullying could be limited to posting rumors or gossips about a person in the internet bringing about hatred in other's minds; or it may go to the extent of personally identifying victims and publishing materials severely defaming and humiliating them.

- **Mobile App**: A computer program downloaded to a device that is designed to run only on smartphones, tablet computers and other mobile devices. *Examples: Instagram, Vine*

- **Social Media:** Mobile and web-based technologies, through which individuals and communities distribute, co-create, share, and modify user-generated content. *Examples: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Google+, Blogger, Flickr*

- **Social Networking Sites:** A platform to build social networks or social relations among people with similar interests, activities, background and real-life connections. Social networks encourage engagement and interaction. *Examples: Facebook, Twitter, Yelp*

- **Trolling:** Sowing discord in an online community by starting arguments or upsetting people, by posting inflammatory, extraneous, or off-topic messages with the deliberate intent of provoking readers into an emotional response.

- **Website:** A website, also written as web site, or simply site, is a set of related web pages typically served from a single web domain. The pages of a website can usually be accessed from a simple Uniform Resource Locator (URL) called the web address.

    - **Personal website:** A social network page, blog or any Internet website/tool created by Church personnel to share personal communication with friends and family.

    - **Ministry website:** A social network page, blog or any Internet website/tool created by Church personnel to conduct parish, diocesan, or affiliate business.

Definitions of Positions and People

- **Adult:** An individual who is eighteen years of age or older.

- **Child/Minor:** Any person who has not reached his or her 18th birthday or any individual over the age of eighteen who habitually lacks the use of reason.

- **Church and School personnel:** Bishops, priests, deacons, religious, seminarians, pastoral ministers, administrators, lay employees, officers, directors, trustees, governors, members and volunteers in the Diocese of Dallas or a Diocesan entity, including a parish, agency, school, or other organization sponsored by the Diocese or for which the Diocese has the direct or indirect right (whether alone or in conjunction with others) to elect or appoint officers, directors, trustees, governors, and/or members (collectively, "Diocesan Entities"). Designation as "Church personnel" for purposes of this policy shall not be construed as creating an employment or agency relationship between the Diocese or any diocesan entity and any person not subject to an express employment agreement with the Diocese of a diocesan entity.

- **Supervisor:** The hiring and/or supervising agent: for parish staff, the pastor; for parish volunteers, the appropriate administrator (e.g., Director of Religious Education or Director of Youth Ministry); for school personnel, the principal.

- **Volunteer:** An adult who works without financial or material gain on behalf of the Diocese of Dallas or its affiliates who is not an employee or a cleric (for example, an intern, catechist, scout leader, coach, student teacher and others in similar capacities).

- **Vulnerable Adult:** any adult that is physically, mentally, or emotionally impaired, whether temporary or long-term, or that is disabled, or that is otherwise unable to function in one or more ways that result in an impaired ability to respond as a typical adult is expected to function. A vulnerable adult may also be someone who comes for Spiritual Direction and confession depending on the person's mental, emotional or psychological frame of mind at the time, as well as upon his/her physical condition.