

Particular Law Regarding Social Media for the Diocese of Memphis in Tennessee



Mission Statement

Evangelization is at the heart of the Catholic mission in the Diocese of Memphis in Tennessee. Technological changes have resulted in a rapidly changing communications environment, making social media prevalent and powerful. The Church embraces multiple forms of technology as products of human genius and a great gift from God. Our goal is to use media to share the Good News and to aid individuals who are seeking to grow in faith and understanding. All Christian faithful have the duty and right to work toward the delivery of the divine message of salvation so that the message reaches all people in every age and in every land (Canon 211). Using social media as a method requires guidelines, safeguards, and vigilance. As we share information about our Catholic beliefs, communities, classes, and initiatives we will face good and bad encounters. The Department of Communications of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in a June 2010 publication urges dioceses to establish clear policies regarding social media. To effectively use social media associated with the Catholic Diocese of Memphis it is necessary to establish and enact policy regarding its implementation.

1. DEFINITION AND PURPOSE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- 1.1 Social media is defined as web-based and mobile technologies which are designed to turn communication into interactive dialogue. Some of the most common social media sites are Facebook, Myspace, Twitter and Youtube.
- 1.2 Social media's purpose for the Diocese of Memphis is to broadcast the Good News of Christ to a broad audience including those who are practicing Catholics, those interested in knowing more about Catholicism, and the public at large.

2. APPROVAL

2.1 *Authority for initial approval of Social Media activities*

- 2.11 Under the authority of the Diocesan Bishop the Pastor who exercises pastoral care of the community committed to him (Canon 549) will work with the Director of Communications to create and maintain a positive social media presence. Approval must be granted by the Pastor for a parish group, public or private, to own or maintain a web presence which associates itself with a parish or one of its entities.
- 2.12 In parish schools, the pastor must give consent for a group to develop and maintain a social media presence.
- 2.13 In diocesan schools, the Superintendent of Schools must authorize development and maintenance of a school-related web presence.
- 2.14 Public diocesan related associations established in the Diocese with permission of the Diocesan Bishop but not directly administered by the Diocesan Bishop, may use social media unless the Diocesan Bishop gives good cause to not allow the public association to own or maintain a web presence. Content will be supervised by the Office of Communications.
- 2.15 Private associations not erected by a competent ecclesiastical authority, may petition to use social media. If the private association is a parish based group, then the pastor is to determine if the group is to use social media. If the private association is a diocesan group then the group should petition the Director of Communications of the diocese.
- 2.16 Any use of the Diocese of Memphis logo and its entities for branding on titling pages, blogs or other similar elements of social media must be approved in writing by the Diocese of Memphis prior to use. Requests for consent are to be made to the Director of Communications in the case of diocesan association; the Pastor in the case of the parish; and the Principal in the case of schools. Any existence at the time of adoption of the particular law is not grandfathered and is required to be authorized.

3. OVERSIGHT

3.1 *Once social media has been approved for an organization, the person who practices oversight shall periodically review social media under their purview, and will respond to inquiries or complaints within a reasonable amount of time. The competent authority to practice oversight of social media activity is as follows:*

3.11 Websites which reside on Diocesan owned hardware must be registered with the Director of Communications. In all cases, the pastor and his designees are encouraged to utilize support of the Diocesan Communications Office for initial creation of a web presence.

3.12 Within a parish, the pastor or his delegate will oversee any media presence of parish associations and groups, public or private.

3.13 In parish schools, after receiving the pastor's approval, the school principal or duly appointed designee may oversee the school's media presence.

3.14 In diocesan schools, the principals, or an appointed designee will oversee media presence of associations and groups, public and private.

3.15 The overseer for diocesan associations, public and private, will be either an employee or volunteer appointed by leadership within said organization.

3.16 The Director of Communications reserves the right to advise parish and organizational leaders on correcting problems with sites and, furthermore, reserves the right to suspend sites which do not reflect basic Catholic or decency standards.

3.2 *All social media sites associated with the Diocese of Memphis must be registered with the Director of Communications and the following information must be provided:*

3.21 The name of the person who created the site

3.22 The name of the person assigned to monitor the site

3.23 Contact information for the site monitor- including phone number and email

3.24 Date when the site will be or was established

3.25 The purpose of the site

3.3 *When the particular law does not provide a direct answer for a specific issue, the one who has a question is to consult with the one who has designated oversight. If the one who has designated oversight is unable to determine the proper course of action, then the overseer is to contact the Diocesan Director of Communications.*

4. CONDUCT

4.1 Only groups with specifically granted permission shall post links or blogs on parish or parish school websites.

4.2 Photos of school aged children may be posted only when:

4.21 A group of children is photographed in such a manner as to avoid the possibility that any child may be specifically identified in the photo.

4.22 Photos in which a child is clearly identifiable may only be posted when parents have granted permission in written form and the form is maintained on file in the office of the organization which 'owns' the webpage or social media account.

4.3 No one may unlawfully harm the good reputation which a person enjoys, or violate the right of every person to protect his or her privacy. (Canon 220) If a person feels his or her good reputation is being harmed then the Pastor or Administrator must take action and perform a primary investigation into the matter. If it is found a person was aggrieved then appropriate action is to be taken which may include a request of removing the social media.

4.3 No confidential or private information is to be disclosed at any time. A group that receives permission is to bear in mind the content must relate to the purpose for which the permission was granted. Any personal information or other information which contradicts the intended purpose of the permission will be deemed inappropriate and appropriate action is to be taken which may include a request of removing the social media.

4.4 No association, private or public (as defined in canon law), is to assume the name *Catholic* without the consent of the competent ecclesiastical authority in accord with canon 300. The competent ecclesiastical authority to grant consent is determined by Canon 312 meaning the Diocesan

Bishop in his own territory, but not a diocesan administrator, has authority for diocesan associations, except, for those associations who enjoy rights by apostolic privilege.

- 4.5 Personal sites established by employees or volunteers of the Catholic Diocese of Memphis will not be monitored, however, the employees and volunteers must bear in mind that they are role models and are to conduct themselves accordingly. Personal sites should not offend the faith and moral and/or teachings of the Catholic Church.
- 4.6 The content of social media is to be strictly in keeping with the teachings of the Catholic Church. If content is contrary to the teachings of the magisterium, the Diocese will ask that the information be removed. If the registered person refuses to remove the content, appropriate action will be taken which may include a request to shut down the social media outlet.
- 4.7 All civil laws in effect are to be observed.
- 4.8 This document may be updated and modified at any time. Any future modifications will be made available on the Catholic Diocese of Memphis website at www.cdom.org



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DECREE

Due to the increasing use of a variety of electronic media, I desired that the Diocese of Memphis in Tennessee use these media in its mission of evangelization. At the same time, I am aware that these media can be used in ways that are contrary to the gospel. Therefore, I had established a commission to develop a policy for the use of these media in the Diocese that are consistent with and promote the preaching of the gospel.

This commission proposed particular law that will both proclaim the gospel by means of various media and will protect the message that is delivered. After consultation with several groups in the Diocese, I now decree that the attached is particular law for the use of social media in the Diocese of Memphis in Tennessee.

Given at Memphis, Tennessee
on this sixth day May 2011

The Most Reverend J. Terry Steib, S.V.D.
Bishop of Memphis in Tennessee

Rev. Michael P. Joyce, C.M.
Chancellor