SOCIAL MEDIA BEST PRACTICES

& TOOLKIT FOR PARISHES AND SCHOOLS

THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE of PENSACOLA-TALLAHASSEE

THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE
of
PENSACOLA-TALLAHASSEE

THE OFFICE OF **COMMUNICATIONS**

Sharmane Adams
Director of Communications
Editor of the Catholic Compass
adamss@ptdiocese.org
850.435.3528

Derek Diamond
Communications Specialist
diamondd@ptdiocese.org
850.290.3575

TABLE OF **CONTENTS**

1 WHY SOCIAL MEDIA?

1 GUIDELINES FOR STARTERS: DO'S AND DON'TS

3 SOCIAL MEDIA 101

- Facebook, Instagram and Twitter basics
- Posting 101
- Hashtags
- Interacting with other accounts

7 GROWING YOUR FOLLOWING

9 EXPANDING YOUR REACH: ADS

9 GRAPHICS AND VIDEO

10 WHAT ABOUT SNAPCHAT, YOUTUBE, LINKEDIN, PINTEREST, ETC.?

11 RESOURCES

Social media has changed the way people communicate. Technology is constantly changing, and it's more important than ever to be educated on the different social media platforms that are offered on the internet. As Catholics, we are called to proclaim the Gospel from the mountaintop, and social media is an excellent platform to evangelize. We hope the information we provide in this document will guide you in representing your parish or school.

WHY SOCIAL MEDIA?

The power, promise and potential of social media can no longer be denied. Billions of people use Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to communicate, interact and share experiences. Corporations, institutions and even governments are on social media. Those who are investing in it are seeing immediate returns. Social media has become the front line of communication for many organizations. It is so pervasive that many may question an organization that doesn't have a social media presence.

Social media wears many different hats. It can function as a communications platform for events and initiatives, a public relations tool to improve the public perception of your organization, and it can serve to market your goals and agenda. A well-functioning and dynamic social media presence is an undeniable win for your organization.

GUIDELINES FOR STARTERS: DO'S AND DON'TS

- Create a separate social media account that is reserved for work. Use your diocese/parish/school email to set up the account. Do not use your personal email.
- When posting, be respectful and professional.
- Before posting, make sure the content is accurate and appropriate.
- An administrator should monitor comments in a timely manner. Anyone who displays inappropriate conduct should be blocked or banned. In settings, choose the option to be notified by email when comments are made.
- Do not provide your personal opinion on parish or school social media accounts.
- Do not post photos or videos of minors without a signed release from the parents. Communication dealing with minors must adhere to the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. (**www.ptdiocese.org/safeenvironment**)

- Do not provide any personal information about children without the consent of a parent or guardian.
- Do not use personal accounts or pages to post information about parish or school events and programs. Instead, establish a group page for your ministry.
- Due to copyright laws, it is best to share or retweet a post instead of copying and pasting the content into a new post.
- Do not use images, photos, videos or music without permission from the copyright holder unless it is in the public domain or exempt by Fair Use. When in doubt, always use your own media.
- When posting, make sure you obtain information from reliable sources. You can collect valid information from reputable sites such as the Vatican, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops, archdioceses and dioceses.

EXAMPLES OF APPROVED CHURCH SOURCES FOR NEWS

Vatican News
www.twitter.com/Pontifex
www.news.va
www.facebook.com/news.va.en
www.twitter.com/vaticannews

USCCB
www.usccb.org
www.facebook.com/usccb
www.twitter.com/usccb

Catholic News Service
www.catholicnews.com
www.facebook.com/CatholicNewsService
www.twitter.com/CatholicNewsSvc

The Florida Catholic
www.thefloridacatholic.org
www.facebook.com/FloridaCatholic
www.twitter.com/Fla_Catholic

SOCIAL MEDIA 101
FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM AND TWITTER BASICS

Understanding the basics of the major social media platforms can help you determine which platforms will be most effective for your organization.

Facebook

Demographics*
- 69% of U.S. adults use Facebook.
- The highest population of active users are 25-29, followed by 30-49.
- 68% of the 50-64 age group is on Facebook.

Interactions
- React to a post with a like, sadness, anger, laughter, etc.
- Followers can comment with a written response to anything you post.
- Share a post from another account to display it on your own page.

Ease of use

Facebook is very easy to use. While the variety of features can be a bit overwhelming, the main interface is intuitively designed, making posting and sharing a breeze.

Ads

Facebook ads are also very easy to use and quite economical. Even $5 a day can go a long way toward gaining new followers. Facebook now also automatically places ads on Instagram when you utilize Facebook's Ad Manager, so your content reaches more users.

Strengths
- Facebook has the largest user base of all social media platforms (over 1 billion users worldwide).
- Facebook has the most features and tools of any social media platform.
- In addition to your main page, Facebook groups can be a great ministry tool for small groups or conferences.
- Engage your followers with Facebook Live videos – record a Mass, a special presentation or a ceremony. Facebook's feed algorithms favor the Facebook Live feature.

Instagram

Demographics*
- 37% of U.S. adults use Instagram.
- The highest population of active users are 18-29.
- 75% of young adults are using Instagram.
- Urban and suburban demographics use Instagram significantly more than rural demographics.
- The lowest population of active users are 65+.

Interactions
- Tap the heart to like a specific post.
- Comments are similar to Facebook comments.
- Use the "send to" feature to access sharing options, including a direct message to a user.

Ease of use

Instagram can be a little tricky for first-timers, but it's generally easy to use with a little practice. Instagram does not allow clickable URL links in posts, and video posts are limited to one minute in length (unless using a work-around like IGTV). It may be difficult to grow your following without a strong young adults demographic in your community.

Ads

Facebook acquired Instagram in 2012, adding analytics and ad functionality. Instagram ads are a great way to target young adults.

Strengths
- Instagram has the niche on the young adult and teen demographics.
- Instagram is a great platform to show off high quality photography.
- Instagram has a more robust set of image editing options than other platforms.

Twitter

Demographics*

- 22% of U.S. adults use Twitter.
- The highest population of active users are 18-29.
- The lowest population of active users are 65+.

Interactions

- Click the heart to like a tweet.
- Reply to a tweet with a comment.
- The "retweet" option is similar to Facebook's sharing function.
- When creating a tweet of your own, you can tag a specific user by using the "@" symbol followed by their Twitter username.

**Statistics from PewResearch.org*

Ease of use

Twitter is simple to use, but it requires very high activity to stay present in your followers' feeds. Twitter has been in decline, but it remains a popular platform for young adults, celebrities, public figures, artists and internet personalities.

Ads

Twitter ads are generally not a worthy investment. They are expensive and may even result in spam accounts following your profile.

Strengths

- Twitter makes it easy to stay up to date with current social media trends.
- Hashtags were invented on Twitter. Check Twitter for some of the latest hashtag trends.

POSTING 101

A one size fits all posting strategy does not work for everyone. How you approach social media will depend on your unique context. This section is intended to provide you with some basic information that will help you craft a posting strategy that works for you.

Recommended frequency, times and days for optimal results

Facebook

- Post 1-2 times per day, separated by at least 4 hours (to maximize reach).
- 8:30 a.m. and 7:45 p.m. are great times to post, but times can be flexible.
- The highest traffic occurs between 7:30-9:15 p.m. on Saturday, Sunday and Monday.
- The lowest traffic occurs from 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. and 1-3 p.m.

Instagram

- 1 post per day is ideal, but 2 posts in one day is fine on occasion.
- 8-10 p.m. seems to be the best time to post, followed by 3-4 p.m.
- The weekend and Mondays see the most traffic.

Twitter

- High volume Twitter accounts tweet 5-10 times a day or more. Tweet as often as you have relevant content and time available throughout the day.
- Times of high traffic are similar to Facebook – early morning (8:30 a.m.), lunch and mid to late evening.

*Try scheduling your posts ahead of time using a free online tool called **Hootsuite** (www.hootsuite.com).*

Subject matter, style and formatting

Through our use of social media, the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee seeks to demonstrate that the Church is transparent and growing, and that we are joyful servants of Christ.

Diocesan guiding principles

- To demonstrate that the Church and the diocese are joyful servants of Christ
- To highlight specific, strategic aspects and programs of our diocese
- To expand our coverage throughout the diocese in an effort to be inclusive
- To act as the front line of our diocesan renewal
- To engage active parishioners and to bring back those who are absent from the church
- To share and teach the good news of Jesus Christ with those in our diocese
- To inspire our followers to contemplate, reflect and participate in their faith – not only on Sundays, but every day of the week

Subject matter

- Keep your posts relevant to your organization. Post videos and photos from your official events. The majority of a Catholic school's social media posts should be related to the teachers, students, parents or events associated with the school. However, we do recommend sharing highlight posts from diocesan social media, the Bishop, the Holy Father or the USCCB.
- Do not use your organization's social media for personal matters or business.
- Do not post about politics or other divisive issues.
- Your goal is to engage your followers with your posts. Publish relevant content that your followers will find interesting. It's OK to post announcements about upcoming events on occasion, but keep it minimal. Announcements often receive very little engagement and should not dominate your page.

Style

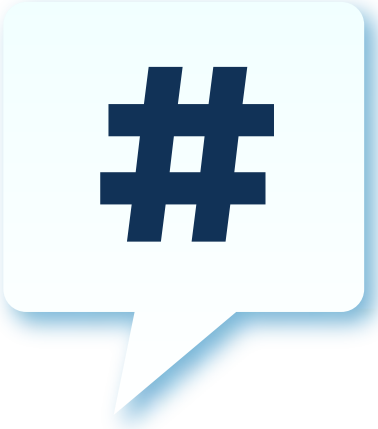
- Posts should be positive, warm and upbeat. Be professional, but avoid being overly formal.
- Personalize your tone. Develop a "persona" for your organization. Reply to comments from your followers when appropriate.

Formatting

- Keep the length of your posts brief and digestible – a few sentences to a paragraph at most, unless a longer format is required for a special post.
- Tag relevant accounts (use the "@" symbol, then type the name of the page or account), make use of hashtags (more on hashtags on the next page) and tag your location when able.
- Always use full sentences and proper grammar. Due to the 280 character limit, some abbreviations are more acceptable on Twitter, but use them only if necessary. Consider linking to a full-length Facebook post if your content is too long for Twitter.
- URL links are not clickable in Instagram posts, but each account is allowed one link in their bio. Consider using a service like Linktree (http://linktr.ee) or link to a collection of links on your own website (www.ptdiocese.org/linktree). Direct your followers to the link in your bio when needed. For example, "Check the link in our bio to see more photos."

HASHTAGS

In the social media realm, the **#** symbol is called a "hashtag." When placing this symbol in front of a word (i.e., #Catholic), it creates a link to all other social media content that also contains the #Catholic hashtag. Anyone viewing your post can click the #Catholic hashtag link to view other recent posts that have been self-identified using the same hashtag. This will display content from other pages or profiles.



It can be a very useful tool for categorizing your posts, connecting with similar social media content across the entire platform and growing your following. Facebook, Instagram and Twitter all utilize hashtags.

Diocesan social media uses **#PTdiocese** at the end of most of our posts. Other organizations in our diocese can also use this tag to connect their content with the main diocesan pages and other diocesan organizations. Hashtags do not use spaces between words, so use "camel caps" to help with readability. Simply capitalize the first letter of each word. #CamelCapsLookLikeThis

Great hashtags

#PTdiocese	#PrayForUs
#Catholic	#Rosary
#CatholicSchools	#MotherMary
#ParishLife	#HearOurPrayer
#TBT	#BishopWack
#ThankyouJesus	#PopeFrancis

Hashtags can also be very useful for retreats, conferences and events: #ChrismMass2020, #RespectLifeConference2020 or #SROLFallFest. Attendees at an event can contribute or view content that has been tagged using that event's designated hashtag.

Keep your hashtags relevant and specific. Avoid using generic hashtags such as #Love, #Beautiful, #Happy, etc. Even though these tags would connect you to a large hashtag network, they will also connect your followers to unrelated or inappropriate content. Always use your platform's search bar to check a hashtag's connected content before using it.

Hashtags are great for posts on major holidays. Here's an example:

ptdiocese ...

ptdiocese Happy Father's Day! Dads, we love you, and we thank God for you. May the Lord bless you and your families! "Nothing is so strong as gentleness, nothing so gentle as real strength." ~ St. Francis de Sales #PTdiocese #HappyFathersDay #FathersDay

INTERACTING WITH OTHER ACCOUNTS

Interacting with other accounts is highly encouraged. Responding to comments and starting conversations creates a sense of momentum and community.

Use discretion and don't engage with those who are saying harmful, hurtful or inappropriate things. Hide or delete inappropriate comments and ban or block antagonistic accounts when necessary.

Engage with your followers often – that's the point of social media! If you are not sure how to respond to a particular comment or question, check in with your priest, principal or supervisor. As the voice of your organization in the social media realm, it's crucial to respond appropriately and accurately.

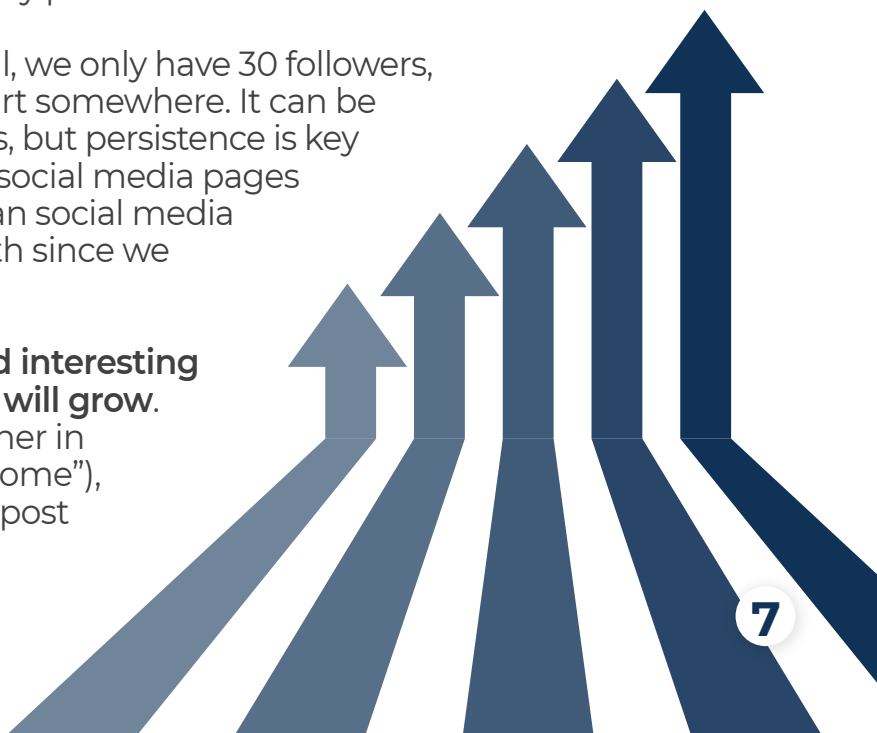
Consider "signing off" your responses with your first name. This can be useful if you have multiple administrators operating a social media account, and it adds a personal touch to your responses.

GROWING YOUR FOLLOWING

"How do I grow my following?" is the question asked most often in the social media world. The simple answer, like many tasks in life, is that it takes *hard work* and *patience*. There really isn't a shortcut. Outside of the rare viral phenomenon, growing a social media following is almost always a slow and steady process.

Many echo this common frustration: "Well, we only have 30 followers, so what's the point?" All pages have to start somewhere. It can be frustrating to only see a few engagements, but persistence is key in order to get the snowball rolling. Many social media pages are simply not active enough. Our diocesan social media pages have been seeing noticeable growth since we began posting at least once a day.

This is the core strategy: **post relevant and interesting content consistently, and your following will grow**. It won't be as easy as it was for Kevin Costner in *Field of Dreams* ("if you build it, they will come"), but if you follow the strategies below and post consistently, you will see results.



If you are posting quality content on a consistent basis, these additional tactics can also help you grow your following:

- **Follow as many relevant accounts as you can**. Accounts are more likely to follow you if you follow them. It gives them a chance to interact with you and share your content, expanding your social media community.
- **Share, comment and like posts from high profile accounts**. A well-placed comment displays your page to a new set of eyes – another account's followers. By commenting on a post from an account with a lot of followers, you are "piggybacking" their reach. The name of your account above your comment essentially serves as free advertising.
- **Use relevant or trending hashtags**. Is it National Ice Cream Day? Use the trending hashtag (#NationalIceCreamDay)! Be creative to find ways to keep trends relevant to your organization. For example, post a picture of your staff or volunteers out for ice cream on National Ice Cream Day. Try a Throwback Thursday post (#TBT). Fun and silly posts can be very refreshing, especially when pictures of smiling faces are included.
- **Promote your social media internally**. Internal communication can be the best way to kick-start your social media following. Ask your staff, volunteers, students, parents, parishioners, etc. to like and follow your pages! Promote your social media accounts at gatherings, in the bulletin, on your website, on flyers for events and on any kind of distributed media. Display links to your social media accounts as often as you can!

Keep in mind...

Work with what you've got. It's great to set big goals and to work hard toward meeting those goals, but don't get discouraged if your follower numbers don't catch up with the big league accounts. EWTN, for example, has over a million followers on its main Facebook page. They are a large organization with a very large reach and a lot of resources. They have the means to reach that many people.

A rural Catholic church's Facebook page will not grow as quickly as the page for a large Catholic church in a big city. It's important to keep your area's population and demographics in mind. When setting goals for follower growth, find a few similar organizations to yours and check out their social media. How many followers do they have? What kind of content are they posting? You can learn a lot just by checking a few feeds from similar organizations on a regular basis.

Growth is good! More followers mean more people seeing Catholic content in their feeds. However, one of the primary purposes of your social media is to inspire and engage those already in the fold. Even if you can count all of your followers on one hand, you still have an amazing opportunity to encourage them in their faith.

EXPANDING YOUR REACH: ADS

Once your chosen social media platforms are well established, it is worth exploring social media advertising. Even if you have done very well and have gathered a sizable following from within your "organic reach" (the audience that can be reached without paid advertising), there is still a portion of your audience that remains unavailable to you. Facebook and other social media platforms have actually geared their algorithms to restrict your page's reach if you do not advertise with them.

Like it or not, social media platforms have made it clear that paid ads are necessary for those looking to get maximum reach. However, even a small investment in social media advertising can have a big effect on your page's growth.

The world of marketing and advertising is complicated and ever-changing, but thankfully, Facebook has a few simple and effective options for those just getting started. Try their **automated ad system** to create something new or **boost an already existing post**.

Try promoting a big event – a festival, an open house, a special Mass or a conference. Ads will bring your page to the attention of a much wider audience. For best results, use ads to promote events or content that will interest a broad spectrum of people.

Check out **www.facebook.com/business/ads** to learn more.

GRAPHICS AND VIDEO

Graphics and video are no longer optional in a social media strategy; they are essential. Nearly every post should be accompanied with a graphic, a picture or a video.

"Graphic design" can be an intimidating term, but with the right tools and a little practice, anyone can create quality graphics. Canva (**www.canva.com**) is a free web-based graphic design tool that provides lots of great resources to help you make impressive graphics. There are loads of great templates you can use, fully loaded with text and imagery. Check out the "Canva 101" video tutorial on our website at www.ptdiocese.org/parishresources.

Producing a high-quality video is difficult without the right equipment, software and expertise. However, the quality of video that smartphones can capture continues to impress, and most video content shared on social media is captured with smartphones. At your organization's major events, use your smartphone to take pictures and record videos. Your videos don't have to be perfect – people love videos! Record a favorite hymn at Mass, a homily, a special presentation or a moment from a fun gathering.

WHAT ABOUT...
SNAPCHAT, YOUTUBE, LINKEDIN, PINTEREST, ETC.?

If you already have an established presence on the "big three" (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter), then you may be wondering what the next step is? Is it helpful to create accounts on other social media platforms?

It depends on the context of your organization, but generally speaking, less is more. It's best to focus on your primary social media platforms. Some sites simply do not have a large enough user base to warrant the investment of your time. Plus, there is always more room to grow your presence on your primary networks.

However, if you discover that your organization's community is using a social media site that you're not using, then hop aboard! If your community has a lot of Pinterest users, and you see a need for one, give Pinterest a go.

Some notable mentions...

LinkedIn has become a standard for professional networking, especially in the corporate world. Large organizations, CEOs and other business executives populate the site. Personal accounts function much like an online resume, and many companies use LinkedIn to find candidates for their open positions.

Snapchat is very popular with youth. Thirteen-year-olds are the most active users. The user base has begun to decline, however, with many teens migrating to Instagram.

Pinterest primarily focuses on fashion, food, decor and other lifestyle content. Most of the users on Pinterest are female. Women's ministries may find a use for a Pinterest account.

Video or photography sites like **YouTube**, **Vimeo** or **Flickr** do have social media components built into their sites, but their primary function is simply to display your content. Users can follow or subscribe to your account and comment on your submissions, but you will not find the same depth of interaction that you would find on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter.

YouTube is one of the most visited sites on the internet. If you are creating a lot of high-quality video content, YouTube may be a fruitful destination for your videos. If you are looking for a cleaner, more professional presentation for your videos, try Vimeo.

RESOURCES

Diocesan promotion
A primary function of the Communications Office is to support and promote diocesan events and Bishop Wack on social media. However, we are also committed to promoting our parishes and schools. If you are planning an event, we have resources and tools available to help you with promotion. Follow these steps below to notify us of your event.

- Fill out the form at **www.ptdiocese.org/submitevent**. If approved, your event will be published on the online diocesan events calendar (www.ptdiocese.org/calendar) and in our NewsNotes email newsletter. If submitted early enough, some events may be published on the "Things to Do" page of the next issue of the Catholic Compass.
- If you post about an event on your organization's social media page, tag the diocesan account, and we may share or retweet your post. To tag us on Facebook or Instagram, type **@ptdiocese** at the end of your post. On Twitter, tag us using **@pt_diocese** (note the added underscore "_"). We love to share highlighted posts with photos and videos!

Helpful links
Check out **www.ptdiocese.org/parishresources** for tutorial videos, graphics, helpful links and other resources. As we develop new content that may be useful for our parishes (and schools too!), we will add items to this page.

Here are a few links to some of our most used online resources:

- **www.unsplash.com** and **www.pixabay.com** are great destinations for free stock photos.
- **www.franciscanmedia.org** has an excellent collection of write-ups on nearly every saint.
- **www.usccb.org** regularly releases free graphics and documents for social media.
- **www.hootsuite.com** is an excellent free tool to help you manage multiple social media accounts. Hootsuite can enable you to post to an Instagram account from a computer.
- We use **www.bitly.com** to shorten URL links. Long links can be distracting and fill up valuable space. Use bitly or another link shortening service to tidy up your web links.
- Download a digital copy of Catholic Extension's liturgical calendar at **www.catholicextension.org/calendars**

We hope this document was helpful to you. Please don't hesitate to reach out to our office with any questions. We are thankful for all that you do for the diocese and the Church.

THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE
of
PENSACOLA-TALLAHASSEE

THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE
of
PENSACOLA-TALLAHASSEE