



Diocese of Cheyenne Office of Communications

Best Practices When Communicating on Behalf of the Church on Social Media

First and foremost, please remember that within the context of communicating on behalf of the Church, Social Media is a ministry and should be treated as such. Those who create content for parish social media platforms should do so with the goal of sharing the Good News with dignity and not fall into pop-culture attitudes and language. While it is tempting to be part of the fast-paced, frenzied world of Social Media, those communicating on behalf of the Church need to slow down and create content that is pleasing to the Lord.

Offer Thoughtful Posts

Have no expectation of privacy when using social media. Consider what could happen if a post becomes widely known and how that may reflect on you, your parish, the Diocese of Cheyenne and the Bishop, and the Universal Church. Search engines can turn up posts years after they are created, and comments can be forwarded or copied. If you wouldn't say something at church or to your mother or to a member of the media, you shouldn't post it online. Be equally thoughtful about images you post and what message those images send to viewers.

Remember Your Audience is Everyone Who Spends Time on Social Media Sites

A presence in the social media world is available to the public at large. This includes Catholics across the U.S., Catholics throughout the world, the USCCB, and non-Catholics who may or may not feel friendly toward the Catholic Church. Consider this reality before publishing to ensure the post will not alienate or provoke those outside of your intended audience. Some topics inevitably provoke those who have anti-Catholic bias or who have strong opinions about certain social issues, but we can create posts that are not intentionally provocative by using thoughtful language. Creating posts that will invite those who aren't already Catholic to "Come and See" what the Church has to offer also should be a goal when creating content.

Strive for Accuracy and a Competent Tone

Before posting on social media, review content for grammatical and spelling errors. Make sure links work, and be thoughtful about what organizations to which you link or from which you gather content. (An organization or group may advertise themselves as Catholic or have Catholic in their name, but that does not mean that they adhere to Church teaching.)

Do not link or gather content from entities that have a history of attacking the pope, bishops, or the USCCB. Do not link or gather content from entities that are politically motivated in such a way that divides the Diocese of Cheyenne's message of unity. Because parish communicators represent the Roman Catholic Church, it is imperative that when you post about Church doctrine, Catholic Social Teaching, Church history, etc., that your information is correct. When in doubt, look it up. Check the Catechism, see what



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popes have said, ask your pastor to check your work. It is equally important that messages and images are wholesome and do not cause scandal or confusion regarding Catholic morals and ethics.

Work to Create Dialogue - Don't Just Push Content

Give your audience opportunities to respond or to take action. Lead the audience to your controlled communication platform (your website or the Diocese of Cheyenne website). Thank people for input and feedback. Don't become discouraged when people don't respond or their responses are not what was hoped for. It takes a long time for people to feel comfortable enough to interact, especially on social media sites that are not set up for arguments.

Be Human

People want to interact with a human person, even when you are acting for or representing an entity/organization. Be relevant and timely and add value. That means being aware of conversations that are already going on without you and knowing what is happening in your community and the world and responding with compassion and resources whenever possible.

Social Media at the Parish Level

In addition to the above practices, parishes should use social media to speak directly to their church family and the community in which they live.

Also, important to keep in mind, as the Diocese of Cheyenne continues to journey toward *Vision 2030*, is that one of the foundational goals of messaging across all communication platforms in the Diocese of Cheyenne is to develop stronger diocesan unity and identity. We all are the Diocese of Cheyenne; therefore, the Office of Communications is asking all parishes to follow the Diocese of Cheyenne Facebook and Instagram pages, and share its content on your sites when you need a post, or when a diocesan post pertains to your parish such as a "Faces of the Body of Christ" feature of someone in your area. Thank you to those parishes that already do this because it communicates that we are connected as one body no matter what town we live in — we all are the Body of Christ in the Diocese of Cheyenne.

Social Media at the Diocese of Cheyenne Office of Communications

Social Media at this level aims to build the unity mentioned above, as well as to create a presence that strengthens Catholic identity by making posts that are intended to share the Good News and prayers, encourage people to learn more about Catholic Social Teaching, the Universal Church's response to world, national, and international issues and happenings, and important events, including ordinations of deacons and priests, special Masses and gatherings for the entire state (like the Synod 2021 – 2023 Final Discernment and Mass in June 2022 and the Spanish Mass in Casper in September 2022).

Currently, the Office of Communications is using a one-presence, one-voice model with social media. Other dioceses and archdioceses are moving in a similar direction. As is true with all new technologies, when these social media platforms arrived, people created social media pages without any understanding of consequences. One consequence is that too many voices from one entity become confusing and messy. By



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tightening up, the Diocese of Cheyenne Office of Communications is building a presence that speaks clearly and communicates, by practice, unity among all the offices in the Chancery that use social media platforms.

The Office of Communications is blessed to have a freelance social media assistant Carmella Chavez. She manages the two Diocese of Cheyenne Chancery Office social media pages, Facebook and Instagram, (the Office of Communications does not recommend having a Twitter account). As a member of the Office of Communications team, she contributes to the monthly social media content strategy and planning meeting. Carmella developed the “Faces of the Body of Christ” campaign, designed to introduce Catholics across the state to their sisters and brothers.

In addition, Carmella can assist parishes that currently have no social media presence to create Facebook and Instagram pages. She also is available to brainstorm content ideas. She can be reached via email at cchavez@dcwy.org.