



ARCHDIOCESE
OF LOUISVILLE

Social Media Guidelines
June 2024

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Introduction

By using the language and images of His day, Jesus Christ touched and transformed those He encountered. From Jesus, His followers received the good news of the Gospel, and guided by the Holy Spirit they, in turn, handed it on to the generations that followed.

From storytelling to printing presses to the Internet, the methods of communicating the good news have evolved. Today, we have access to a vast amount of information, opinion, inspiration, stories, visual media, and resources through the Internet. We also have opportunities to engage in new ways of communicating through social media.

Social media specialist Jon Lebkowsky defines social media this way: “Social media is a fundamental transformation in the way(s) people find and use information and content, from hard news to light entertainment. It’s an evolution from the broadcast delivery of content—content created by a few and distributed to many—to network delivery, where content can be created by anyone and published to everyone, in a context that is ‘many to many.’”

In the Church, social media presents both opportunities and challenges, yet calls us to participation. Pope Francis expressed it well when he said: “The revolution taking place in communications media and in information technologies represents a great and thrilling challenge; may we respond to that challenge with fresh energy and imagination as we seek to share with others the beauty of God.” (48th World Communications Day Message). Social media should always reflect the truth, beauty, and goodness of our faith.

As we explore the possibilities of social media, we must also be aware of recent research outlining the harm, especially to youth and to vulnerable individuals. The Church has an opportunity to proclaim the good news and to assist families in addressing and mitigating this danger.

The purpose of this document is to provide information, guidance, and best practices regarding the use of social media by parishes, schools, and archdiocesan agencies. Generally, this document provides guidelines rather than policies. Nothing in this document abrogates existing policies already in place.

Please note that teachers and adult volunteers in Catholic schools are required to sign the “Internet and Electronic Mail Employee/Volunteer User Agreement,” which has additional policies and prohibitions related to instruction. Parents and students are required to sign the “Internet and Electronic Mail Student User Agreement.” (These forms are found in the appendix of the Catholic School Handbook.)

Gratitude is extended to the communications staff of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops for their *Social Media Guidelines* and for their work and witness in this field and to the Diocese of Rockford, who published an excellent social media booklet and graciously granted permission for the use of some of its material in this publication.

Definitions

Administrators: Those who operate, monitor, and post on social media, webs, and blogs.

Archdiocese, diocese, or archdiocesan: Includes the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Louisville (hereafter called Archdiocese or Archdiocese of Louisville) as a corporation sole and archdiocesan agencies, parishes, diocesan elementary and secondary schools, and other diocesan-owned and operated facilities.

Church-sponsored: Owned and operated by the Archdiocese of Louisville or one of its parishes, schools, agencies, or other diocesan facilities.

Church Personnel: Includes employees and volunteers of the parishes, schools, agencies, or other entities owned by the Archdiocese of Louisville.

Employee (See Church personnel): One employed and paid by an entity of the Archdiocese of Louisville.

Feed/Stream: The Internet is a constant connection that allows people to share and update information at all times. The concept of a news feed or information stream was born out of the ‘always-on’ nature of the Internet and is simply a list of information updates that flows like a stream. It is possible to subscribe to feeds or streams through various social media and communication platforms on the Internet. The news feed or information stream is the construct upon which many social media platforms are based, and each platform has its own way of dealing with the stream or unique incarnation of the feed.

Friends/Followers: This term may vary across platforms but refers to the people that like, subscribe, or are given permission to be connected to a social media profile. Friends/followers are the people that have been given access to view a profile or page and with whom content is shared.

Mandatory Reporting of Abuse: Per KRS 620.030: “*Any person* who knows or has reasonable cause to believe that a child is dependent, neglected, or abused shall immediately cause an oral or written report to be made to a local law enforcement agency, the Kentucky state policy, or the Commonwealth’s attorney by telephone or otherwise.” This applies to information obtained through social media and includes clergy (except for information obtained with the Sacrament of Reconciliation), employees, and volunteers.

Ministry/Group: A parish, school, agency, or facility of the Archdiocese of Louisville and its employees or volunteers who administer an online presence. Examples could include a parish youth ministry Facebook page, a high school soccer team Twitter account, a DRE blog, and so on.

Minors: Persons under the age of 18 and vulnerable adults. A dependent or vulnerable adult is defined in Section 209.020 (4a) of the Kentucky Revised Statutes as an individual, 18 years or older, who is considered vulnerable when, because of an impairment of mental or physical functions, he or she lacks the legal capacity of an adult.

Profile: Profile is a term that many social media platforms have in common. It is used to describe the web page dedicated to each user in most of the platforms, whether it is called a profile or not. As the word profile implies, it also can simply refer to the collection of information about a user, along with uploaded content such as photos, videos, etc. A profile is both a web page space for the information and the information itself that identifies a user.

Social Media: According to the Oxford Dictionary, social media are websites and applications that allow users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. Examples include Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter), Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok.

Supervisor: The person ultimately in charge of a ministry/group: for a parish, the pastor or pastoral administrator; for a school, the principal, pastor, or president, and so on.

Volunteer (see Church personnel): One who works in an unpaid capacity for parish, school, or agency and has ongoing ministerial responsibilities within that parish, school, or agency. These may include but are not limited to, catechists, youth ministers, coaches, tutors, classroom assistants, etc.

Section I: Best Practices

The web is no longer simply a repository of information – it has become a participatory platform for content creation and distribution.

Advances in technology have increased the opportunities for the Church to communicate her message, with social media providing a possible tool for communication, catechesis, evangelization, vocation recruitment, and many other ministries. Contact through social media, however, cannot replace the essential work of building relationships through personal contact.

An important consideration is how to engage. Setting up a Facebook page or Instagram account is not sufficient. Careful consideration should be given to the unique strengths of each platform and the needs of the ministry or audience these tools serve. Goals should be established for each medium, including what is to be communicated, how to communicate, and how often content is posted. While information often can be shared through several communication vehicles, the way it is shared should respect the culture and conventions of the vehicle, and it should be relevant and age-appropriate for the audience.

Questions about the proper use, supervision, or administration of social media can be directed to Gary Hermann, the Coordinator of Social Media in the Archdiocesan Communications Office at the Pastoral Center, 502-585-3291 or ghermann@archlou.org.

General Principles

Be selective: Use the right medium for your message. A tweet or blog may not be the best way to communicate a message intended only for a small group. Email or other means may be more effective.

It also is important to respect the interactive and dialogical nature of social media. If every social media post involves only advertising or self-promotion, users will quickly abandon your platform. Consider content that “feeds” (informs and inspires) your audience and promotes interaction.

Be responsible: What is communicated on church-sponsored social media reflects upon the whole Church. Administrators of church-sponsored social media are responsible for the content on the page.

- Social media platforms for parishes, schools, or agencies should never be utilized without the express permission and oversight of the supervisor (e.g., pastor, principal, agency director, etc.).
- The site or tool is owned by the parish, school, or diocesan institution, not by the administrator of the site or the ministry/group that created or administered the social media or web entity. The existence of this tool is at the discretion of the supervisor of the parish, school, or diocesan entity.

- According to Facebook’s Terms of Service, accounts for individuals are to be set up as profiles and accounts for organizations should be set up as organizational pages. If a “profile” for an individual was set up as your organizational page, it should be converted to an organizational page with a business account. In addition to conforming to the Terms of Service, the organizational page can remain consistent as staff positions change.
- All passwords related to social media sites should be shared with the supervisor or his or her delegate and should be maintained in a secure, central location. Passwords should be closely guarded and difficult to guess. The hacking of social media accounts is an increasing problem and can cause damage to the reputation of the ministry/group.
- If Church personnel become aware of serious issues reflected on the social media of minors, they may have a legal obligation (in the case of child abuse) or an ethical obligation (in the case of bullying, self-harm, or threatening behavior) to report this to the authorities or to the administrator of the parish, school, or agency in other cases. Here is a link to information about reporting child abuse in Kentucky, <https://www.chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dCBS/dpp/Documents/reportingchildabuseneglecthandbook.pdf>. The obligation to report child abuse also is covered in *Restoring Trust: The Sexual Abuse Policies of the Archdiocese of Louisville*. See [Sexual Abuse Policies of the Archdiocese of Louisville – Archdiocese of Louisville \(archlou.org\)](https://www.archlou.org/sexual-abuse-policies). If Church personnel see something concerning, they should say something to the proper authorities. Please note that Catholic schools have protocols for dealing with threatening behavior, bullying, and self-harm.
- Ideally, at least two adult administrators who can update frequently and understand the conventions of the various social media sites should be available to monitor and update the sites. Under the supervision of the adult administrators, youth can be allowed to contribute content, but posts should always be approved by adults before being publicly posted.
- Users should always abide by copyright and fair use regulations. It is always best to ask permission for the use of others’ trademarks, logos, photos, and written material. See links to resources regarding fair use and copyright in Appendix D.

Be smart: Posts on social media forums are visible to people across the globe. What is posted will be public and permanent. Even what is deleted can be accessed.

Care must be taken to establish appropriate boundaries between professional relationships and personal relationships on social media. Church personnel should be diligent in avoiding situations that might become a source of harm or scandal for themselves, others, or the Church.

It is also important to keep in mind that though digital and social media may seem like a relaxed and casual interaction between two individuals, these methods also have the nature of permanent, written communication. Before posting, tweeting, or sending an email or text message, ask yourself if someone

might be able to read something into a post or message that was not intended, especially when responding in haste or when emotions are involved. Keep in mind that nuances such as tone of voice and facial expression contribute greatly to how communication is received in a person-to-person context; those elements are not part of tweets, postings, emails, or text messages.

- Forums or any other feedback medium should be continually monitored by site administrators. Ideally, comments should be moderated and reviewed before posting.
- Consider publishing clear rules of the road or comments/posts policies about what is allowed on your social network site. In general, openness and transparency should guide social media, but posts that are obscene, violent, or that misrepresent the position of the Church can be taken down or “hidden.” Anonymous posts should not be allowed. As an example, here is the “Comments Policy” for the archdiocesan Facebook Page:

The purpose of this Facebook page is to provide information, inspiration, and an interactive forum for those who are interested in the Catholic Church (the Archdiocese of Louisville) of Central Kentucky. This is a moderated page, and all posts and comments should be marked by Christian charity and respect for the truth.

Posts or comments will be deleted that contain:

- *Vulgar language.*
- *Personal or inflammatory attacks on persons or groups.*
- *Content or comments that are off topic.*
- *Spam.*
- *Links to sites that contain offensive material or attack persons or groups.*
- *Promotion of products or partisan political organizations or agendas.*
- *Information that is factually incorrect.*

The Archdiocese of Louisville reserves the right to remove posts and block users who violate this policy.

- Feel free to block individuals or delete comments that do not conform to policies. It may be appropriate in other situations to ask the person posting to take the conversation “offline” so that it can be held by phone or in person.
- Parishes, schools, and archdiocesan agencies may not “*participate or intervene in political campaigns on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office.*” See <http://www.usccb.org/about/general-counsel/political-activity-guidelines.cfm>. Thus, Church personnel may not use Church-owned web pages, email systems, or social media to post partisan information or to advance a particular candidate for public office, even if the candidate is running in a non-partisan election (e.g., judges).

Be real: Authenticity and transparency are the driving forces behind social media. Do not use anonymous or fictitious names, identities, posts, or comments.

Be private: Seek permission when publishing personal information about individuals in the community. Employees must never divulge confidential information that comes to their attention because of their employment with the Archdiocese of Louisville. As much as possible, inform persons that images may be used on ministry group websites and social media platforms and where possible, obtain specific permission. If an individual expresses discomfort with a posted photo or video featuring him or her, take it down immediately.

Church personnel should not use personal sites as the primary method for conducting church-related ministry. It is certainly fine to share information about parish, school, or agency programming that is open to the public on personal sites, but personal sites should not be used as a ministry platform.

Be respectful: Respect the audience and express viewpoints with appropriate language, Christian charity, and civility. Respect the Church and her teachings. Those who post and respond on the site in the name of the Church should post in the first person, be transparent about their roles, and refrain from claiming to represent the official position of the parish or Church unless authorized to do so.

Please see below information on the use of images, video, and audio.

Minors – Special Considerations

These recommendations are promoted for two main purposes: 1) to respect the role of parents as the first educators of their children and 2) to promote a culture of safety and respect for the dignity and privacy of children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

With any social media forum, the parents or guardians of minors should be given the option of having access to everything provided to minors. Inform parents about how the ministry group is using social media and how to access the sites. Church organizations should make every effort to obtain written permission for photos, quotes, or video of minors to be used in parish social media or other communication vehicles; this is usually accomplished through a general release form, included in the Appendix of this document. If a minor's full name is used online or in a publication, written permission must be on file. The existence of a written photo release form when using photos, quotes, or video of minors is required in school settings.

- Normally young people request to become part of a ministry-related social media group. This request should only be accepted when a permission form is on file.

- On Facebook, ministry/groups should be established as a public organizational page or a closed group. For public organizational pages, those who wish to follow the page “like” it. For closed groups, an administrator approves those who seek to join the group. For Facebook, it is possible to shut off private messaging options, and it is possible to remove posts or block individuals who become disruptive. If your ministry group Facebook page is not set up this way, it is easy to change. Be in touch with the archdiocesan digital media coordinator at 502/585-3291.
- Church personnel with a personal social networking site and who work in settings with minors should not “friend” a minor on their personal profiles or social networking sites and/or “friend” minors on the minors’ personal social networking sites. This practice should continue throughout the senior year of young people in parish or school settings, even if they reach their 18th birthday during that year.
- Church personnel should avoid engaging in online games with minors.
- Church personnel should use Church-sponsored accounts to communicate with minors, along with their parents. Communication should be limited to church-related ministry. Consider using tools like Google Voice or Remind that allow the use of personal cell phones but provide a separate number for communication.
- Church personnel should not respond to inappropriate messages or emails from minors and should share the message immediately with a supervisor.
- Avoid participation in chat rooms or video chats with minors unless the chat room has been created for a particular ministry or employment-related circumstance.
- Church personnel should avoid sharing personal phone numbers and email addresses with minors.
- The mandated child abuse reporting law, which includes child pornography, applies to all persons in the state of Kentucky and to information learned or shared on social networking sites. See *Restoring Trust: The Sexual Abuse Policies of the Archdiocese of Louisville* at [Sexual Abuse Policies of the Archdiocese of Louisville – Archdiocese of Louisville \(archlou.org\)](#) or go to www.archlou.org/report for more information. As stated in the “Be Responsible” section of these guidelines, Church personnel also should inform the administrator of the parish, school, or agency if they learn of other serious issues reflected in the social media of minors in their care.

- Accessing, downloading, possessing, or sharing pornography is always inappropriate and may have legal consequences if minors are involved. If Church personnel become aware of inappropriate photos or video involving a minor on a minor's phone or other device, never ask the minor to share the images or video with any other person. Rather, report the concern to the authorities and to your ministry supervisor.
- Please be aware of the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, which is federal legislation that oversees how websites interact with children under the age of 13. In general, because of this legislation, most social media platforms do not allow children under the age of 13 to have online accounts, and personnel who become aware of accounts among those younger than 13 should inform parents of the existence of these accounts. For more information, see <https://www.ftc.gov/tips-advice/business-center/guidance/complying-coppa-frequently-asked-questions>.

Using Images, Quotes, Video, and Audio in Publications, Websites, Videos, and Social Media

It is preferable to obtain permission for the use of images, quotes, audio, and video of people in diocesan, parish, and school communication vehicles, including publications, newsletters, bulletins, social media, videos, and websites. This models common courtesy and a basic respect for the dignity and privacy of others. It would be important to always seek permission before using an individual's image or words to *endorse* a particular effort, such as a fund-raising campaign or a marketing campaign used to promote any church-related program or event.

Obtaining specific permission is often more feasible in formal settings, such as schools, where general release forms can be obtained as part of the registration process. Here are some ideas to assist parishes with this recommendation in less formal settings:

- If possible, include general release forms as part of the registration processes for parish membership and activities so that you have them on file for most families. If this is done, however, it will be important that someone is able to monitor the images used in parish communication vehicles so that families that have withheld permission are not featured. In all cases, avoid using names, particularly full names, for minors.
- For events or large venues, include language in the program and/or on posted signs communicating that photographs or video will be taken and used in parish, school, or agency communication vehicles. Here is an example of language that can be used:
 - [Parish or organization] has granted permission for photography and videography to take place at [insert an event name]. These photos and video may be used for promotional purposes by [name of parish or organization] and the Archdiocese of Louisville. This is a public event with no expectation of privacy, and your attendance releases the Archdiocese of Louisville [and name of parish/organization] from any liability for the use of your image for promotional purposes. If you do not wish to be photographed or videotaped, please let

the photographer or videographer know or remove yourself from the area where photographs, video, or audio are being taken.

- It is important that those taking pictures, conducting interviews, or shooting video communicate clearly about what they are doing and inform those being photographed or videotaped about the possible use of the material in communication vehicles. Those who do not wish to be photographed or videotaped can then distance themselves from the process or inform the photographers or videographers that they do not want to be featured in photos or videos.
- Photos or video of groups where individuals are not individually featured and when those individuals knew they were being photographed can be used without specific permission. In addition, individuals at events held in large public areas would not have an expectation of privacy.

Section III: Websites

A web page is an extension of a ministry/group; that is, the web presence of the parish, school, or archdiocesan institution or entity by which it is sponsored, administered, and monitored. A ministry/group that establishes a web presence must make a commitment to this vehicle of communication. Thus, websites, especially the indexes, main page(s), and calendar of events, should be regularly updated. There should be an intentional plan and set of goals regarding establishing, maintaining, and updating a web presence. This plan should be clearly communicated to the staff, employees, and volunteers of the parish, school, or diocesan entity.

Parish websites can vary greatly in size based on the size of the parish and number of programs offered, but all parish websites should be readable and mobile-responsive. The most important information should always be easy to find. Measure results and usage of your website through tools such as Google Analytics and adjust content and placement based upon the results. Use social media to drive visitors to your website whenever possible.

WordPress is the world's most popular website builder. WordPress sites can be customized with many tools, settings, and appearance options. Plugins can be added to give a WordPress site increased functionality to meet specific needs. Weebly and GoDaddy are other popular web builders that have been used in our Archdiocese. Many parishes have also partnered with church-related or secular marketing companies that handle all facets of website management including the creating, updating, and hosting of the website.

Section IV: Email and Text Messaging

Email and text messaging allow for flexibility and immediacy in communication. When combined appropriately with face-to-face communication, email and text messaging can enhance how Church personnel communicate and allow ministers to communicate more personally with groups such as college students who have periods of time when they are geographically distant from the parish or school. Text messaging has become the preferred method of communication for youth.

Emails between Church personnel and minors should be limited to school and ministry-related topics. Another adult should always be copied (either publicly or privately) on an email with a minor.

Text messages can be very effective. There are many bulk texting services that help Churches communicate while also protecting youth. With these services, all text transactions are permanently logged, ministers' personal phone numbers are not used, and parents can be copied on bulk texts. With the proper precautions and good choices by leaders, bulk texting is an excellent form of communication between the parish and parishioners, including minors. And texts are read at a significantly higher rate than emails.

Individual texting has its place, but much more caution must be exercised, especially in situations involving minors. This is for the protection of the minor and the adult minister. Given that it may not be practical to add another adult to an individual text with a minor, consider whether the communication could be handled in person and always refrain from communication that can be misunderstood. Please note that by policy, school personnel may not exchange individual texts with students. All text messaging, whether bulk or individual texts, should be limited to school and ministry-related topics.

It is important to remember that there is no such thing as a private email or text message. All emails and texts can be logged, archived, and forwarded to other parties. Any form of written communication has permanence, and there should be no expectation of privacy.

Keep in mind that the nature of texting and emailing also has the quality of permanent written communication. Nuances such as your tone of voice and facial expression contribute greatly to how communication is received in a person-to-person context, and those elements are not part of emails or text messages.

Always avoid any communication that might be construed as inappropriate. Church personnel should set and communicate acceptable times to send or receive an email or text message for work purposes. Privacy settings on the ministry/group messaging site should be set to "offline" or "unavailable" outside of those acceptable times. Never respond to an inappropriate text or email, especially from a minor. If you receive one, immediately report it to your supervisor.

The Archdiocese of Louisville has email and social media policies for its employees. Please see *Personnel Policies of the Archdiocese of Louisville* (<https://www.archlou.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Policies-and-Procedures-with-new-table-of-contents-FINAL-to-Print.pdf>).

Section V: Blogging

The word blog, which is a contraction of the term “web log,” is a type of website, usually maintained by an individual, with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material, such as graphics, audio, or video. The newest entry is commonly displayed first. Blogs can be very brief or very long. Your blogs should address the needs of your audience and address the topic first and foremost. Longer blogs are served well by sub-heads.

Blogs should be updated regularly (at least once per week), and they benefit from the use of images and video. Don’t forget to share your blog posts on other social media outlets. Measure results through tools such as Google Analytics.

A church-sponsored blog should not be used:

- For personal communication or to promote a personal agenda.
- To conduct or promote outside business activities.
- To condemn or belittle any individual, organization, or institution.
- To divulge personal information about any person or confidential information about a person, institution, or issue obtained in the course of job duties.

In consultation with the supervisor of the Church-entity, Church personnel should decide whether to allow comments on blogs. There is no expectation that bloggers respond to all comments, but if comments are allowed, they need to be monitored and may need a response, removal from the blog, or the blocking of the person commenting in certain circumstances.

Section VI: Personal Sites and Special Issues:

Personal Sites

It is assumed that a person's moral and religious commitments correspond to the ministry that one seeks to render. Thus, the personal sites of church employees also should reflect positive values and should not offend the faith, morals, and/or teachings of the Catholic Church. For more information, please see *Archdiocese of Louisville Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual 2017* at <https://www.archlou.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Policies-and-Procedures-with-new-table-of-contents-FINAL-to-Print.pdf>.

Special Issues

Church personnel are encouraged to contact the Archdiocesan Communications Office (comm@archlou.org) in the event of questions or concerns that arise while using social media, especially in the following situations:

- Personnel become aware of unofficial sites using the archdiocesan, parish, or school logo or claiming the identity of the Archdiocese, parish, or school without authorization.
- Personnel become aware of incorrect information and misinformation, especially information that may be defamatory, libelous, or slanderous, on social media sites.
- Personnel become aware of a dangerous or violent post directed at the Church or Church personnel on any social media site.
- Personnel need information about how to report suspected child abuse.
- Personnel need guidance on how to deal with a difficult person or situation on a ministry/group social media site.
- Personnel who are making a report of child abuse by clergy or by an employee or volunteer of the ministry/group should inform the Chancellor of the Archdiocese (502/585-3291) after reporting to authorities. Please see *Restoring Trust: The Sexual Abuse Policies of the Archdiocese of Louisville* (2013) or www.archlou.org/report for more information about reporting sexual abuse.

For further questions or suggestions, do not hesitate to be in touch with the Archdiocesan Communications Office at the Pastoral Center, 502/585-3291 or comm@archlou.org.

Appendix A: Primary Social Media Platforms

New platforms are established seemingly every day; these are the primary social media platforms being used. Information on most usage and demographic statistics is provided courtesy of 2024 Pew Research Center reports. Studies show that 95% of Americans are internet users (up from 93%)* and 15% are smartphone only users. 95% of teens have a smartphone and 46% say they use it “almost constantly.” Almost 75% of adults under 30 use at least five social media platforms.

Please be aware of the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act, which is federal legislation that oversees how websites interact with children under the age of 13. In general, because of this legislation, most social media platforms do not allow children under the age of 13 to have online accounts.

**Updates in statistics reflect changes between the 2021 and 2024 Pew Research findings unless otherwise noted. Stats on teen social media usage are from a 2023 Pew report.*

Facebook (Meta)



Key Demographics: By far, the biggest social media network, which includes 68% of the entire adult population: 67% ages 18-29 (down from 88% in 2016); 75% ages 30-49; 69% ages 50-64, and 58% of ages 65+ (up from 50%). 33% of teens ages 13-17 use Facebook. Women favor its use by 17 percentage points over men. Children under 13 years of age are not permitted to have a Facebook account.

Facebook is a social media network based on the idea of connecting people through a person’s profile. The network started to give individuals their own personal, pre-formatted web page dedicated to displaying their personal information, photos, and communication with other members of the Facebook community. The profiles allow people to upload photos and videos, chat with other people through Messenger, and post content they wish to share with others to a space called “the wall.” The wall is Facebook’s name for the news feed or digital stream of information that is posted to one person’s profile. Facebook also includes a general news feed on the home page. The news feed is an aggregation of shared content on friends’ walls. The news feed also includes a fair amount of “sponsored content” (ads) mixed into posts from friends and organizations you have chosen to like. Because of widespread disinformation during the 2016 election, Facebook does not allow auto-posting of content from outside social networks.

Organizations such as parishes or youth groups can establish a public page or a private group. In the case of a public page, those who wish to follow the page “like” it. For private groups, those who wish to join are approved by an administrator. On both types of pages, it is possible to shut off private messaging options and remove posts or block individuals who may become disruptive. For an organizational page, it is important that fresh content be provided regularly, daily if possible, and that the content provide value to those who follow the page.

Facebook provides a uniform home base for content and a great way to direct people back to source content, such as websites. While it is free to set up an account and share info, paying to boost content on Facebook increases the reach of any post. Facebook offers the free MetaBusiness Suite for content management. MetaBusiness provides analytics and lets you create and share posts, reels, and stories to Instagram separately or simultaneously. The Meta Business Suite mobile app allows you to do it easily on your phone.

Facebook also offers video capabilities like YouTube for live and pre-taped videos. A Facebook Live begins when the live stream icon is tapped from a smartphone or other device with video capability; the “finish” button is tapped to complete the video. A video switcher allows the same live video to appear on multiple social platforms at once. Facebook Live also offers the option to write a description of the event, and followers can tune in to view the event. Your friends or followers are alerted when you go live, and the video appears on their feed. After the video is completed, it will be archived and posted permanently on your timeline for viewing later. A pre-recorded video published on Facebook will auto-play in the newsfeed when included in a post.

Facebook was rebranded as Meta in 2021 during a large push by the company into virtual reality. According to *BBC*, the MetaVerse’s Horizon Worlds has “300,000 monthly users: tiny when compared to the billions of people on Facebook and Instagram” and the company’s virtual reality branch “has lost a staggering \$21 billion since last year.”

Archbishop Shelton, the Archdiocese, *The Record*, and Catholic schools have Facebook accounts, as do several archdiocesan agencies.



Key demographics: 22% of U.S. adults: 42% ages 18-29 (up from 36%); 27% ages 30-49; 17% ages 50-64, and 6% ages 65+ (almost all numbers were flat for Twitter). 20% of teens ages 13-17 use Twitter. It is popular with those 18-29 and those who are college-educated. It is 7% more popular among men than women (up from 3%). Children under 13 years of age are not permitted to have an X account.

X is a social media network based on the concept of the “Twitter Feed.” Users establish their own accounts with a unique “handle” (e.g. @ArchLouKY) and then subscribe or “follow” other accounts. The information sent by the accounts you follow, called “tweets,” is aggregated into one information stream that is live and constantly updating. Content on Twitter was originally limited to 140 characters but later expanded to 280. (This expanded limit can now be exceeded, but many users keep posts brief and opt to use a “thread” feature of stacking related posts as opposed to using long posts.) Essentially, Twitter streamlined the idea of sharing content into its basest form: the aggregated news feed, while allowing users to choose from whom they wish to receive information. It is best to post (with tweets or

retweets) at least once a day. The best days and times to tweet will depend on your audience and can be determined by the time of day when you receive the most retweets and likes.

Tweets can be scheduled and managed by platforms such as Hootsuite, Buffer, or TweetDeck that also provide analytical information about how tweets perform. TweetDeck was originally a free independent service but has since been rolled into TwitterPremium+, which requires a fee. Being verified on X (having a blue check mark) was also previously a free service initiated by Twitter to ensure accounts weren't someone pretending to be another person. This service is now \$8 a month.

The changes above and the renaming to X have occurred since Elon Musk purchased Twitter from Jack Dorsey. According to *Axios*, X is moving to require all users to pay a monthly fee for this service. Advertising is down almost 60%, according to *Reuters*, and tweets (X posts) are down 25% since Musk bought the site, according to Pew.

Archbishop Shelton, the Archdiocese, and *The Record* have X accounts, and Archbishop Shelton releases a daily inspirational tweet.



Key Demographics: 33% of U.S. adults (up from 21%); 62% ages 18-29 (up from 48%) and 10% ages 65+ (up from 4%); it is 15% more popular among women than men (a 7% increase for women). 63% of teens ages 13-17 use TikTok, 17% almost constantly. Children under 13 years of age are not permitted to have a TikTok account.

TikTok refers to itself as “the leading destination for short-form mobile video.” The app acknowledged 150 million users in the US during a hearing before Congress in March 2023, according to NBC News (up from 100 million in August 2020). TikTok is the English language version of the Chinese-language site Douyin. TikTok frequently faces security questions, with several states banning TikTok on official devices and Montana banning the social network statewide, according to CNN. In 2024, the federal government passed legislation to force a sale of TikTok.

The New York Times described TikTok as “an endless stream of videos and, unlike the social media apps it is increasingly displacing, serves more as entertainment than as a connection to friends.” Many TikTok videos, often simply called TikToks, are set to music. Note that TikTok has a music library, protected by TikTok’s licensing process, so individuals and organizations do not need to acquire a separate license when including music from this library in a post. (Instagram has a similar feature.) TikTok users can also “REACT” to or “Duet” with someone else’s video.

The short nature of TikTok videos (3 seconds to 10 minutes) has led to content on the site frequently going viral unexpectedly. These viral successes have led to increased sales for many small businesses. Viral content that originates on TikTok is often re-posted on other social networks. The TikTok algorithm

and how it can create an “infinite scroll” has been a topic of interest. According to *The New York Times* that algorithm is designed to optimize “retention and time spent” by scoring videos based on “likes, comments and playtime.”



Key Demographics: 30% of U.S. adults; 53% of adults with at least a bachelor’s degree use LinkedIn, compared with smaller shares of those with some college experience (28%) and those with a high school diploma or less (10%), according to Pew. Youth under the age of 16 are not eligible for a LinkedIn account.

LinkedIn is the web version of a professional networking page. It has grown steadily over the last decade and a half and has become a ubiquitous asset to many professionals to house their portfolios and provide an online resume without having to create personal websites. A lot of professionals are on LinkedIn, and it provides helpful information about potential employees or volunteers. The Archdiocese maintains an official branded account on LinkedIn.



Key demographics: 35% of adult Internet Users (up 4%); women dominate the site, with 50% of online women using Pinterest as opposed to just 19% of men. Children under 13 years of age are not permitted to have a Pinterest account.

Pinterest is a news, links, and information sharing website. Imagine a corkboard at home for recipes, along with notes to self, important addresses, coupons, clothing ads, etc. Pinterest is a website that seeks to emulate that digitally. It’s graphic and image-heavy, due to the way information is collected and the layout of the website. Pinterest is used, for instance, by parish catechetical leaders in the Archdiocese to assemble and promote resources. Pinterest has developed a “Pinterest Business” option that allows the creation of an account categorized as “Institution/Non-profit,” “Media,” or “Public figure,” among other options. Previously existing Pinterest accounts can be converted to one of these options.

Instagram



Key Demographics: 47% of U.S. adults (up from 40% in 2021 and 32% in 2016): 78% ages 18-29 (up from 71 % in 2021 and 59% in 2016); 59% ages 30-49 (up from 48% in 2021 and 33% in 2016); 35% ages 50-64 (up from 29 % in 2021 and 18% in 2016), and 15% ages 65+. 15% of teens ages 13-17 use Instagram. It is popular among women, the Hispanics and Asian communities and those in urban or suburban environments. Children under 13 years of age are not permitted to have an Instagram account.

Instagram was originally a photo-sharing platform that later added a short-form video function and a stories feature. Instagram offers various editing options (filters). Once edited, the photo or video is shared on the Instagram feed but also can be connected with Facebook to share the photo on a different social network. (The companies are both owned by Meta, which is why Instagram content can feed to Facebook unlike most other social networks.) MetaBusiness provides analytics and allows users to create and share posts, reels, and stories to Instagram separately or simultaneously. The Meta Business Suite mobile app allows this to be accomplished easily on a phone.

Unlike other social networks, linking is somewhat limited on Instagram. Links can only be placed in a story using the sticker feature or placed in a bio ("See link in bio" is commonly found at the bottom of posts). Captions can be generated for videos. Instagram also provides a text-based app called "Threads;" this platform hopes to develop into a serious X (Twitter) competitor.

The Record has an Instagram account.

Reddit



Key demographics: 22% of U.S. adults (up from 18%) and most popular with 18-29 year old males and the Asian community. Children under 13 years of age are not permitted to have a Reddit account.

Reddit is a social news website that serves as a way for people to share and discover new content online of any kind. Its users rule the site; once content is posted the users are free to up-vote or down-vote content to move it up or down the ladder of content. The front page of Reddit shows the top 25 posts based on the ratio of up-votes to down-votes. The site can be divided into sub-Reddits based upon categories or can be viewed with all content aggregated into one spot. The Internet-interested portion of this demographic is not friendly to preaching or continuous organizational self-promotion.

Snapchat



According to Pew, 27% of U.S. adults use Snapchat; with 65% of users 18-29 and 4% 65+. 60% of teens ages 13-17 use Snapchat. Children under 13 years of age are not permitted to have a Snapchat account.

Snapchat is a photo and video messaging app that began in 2011. Its unique feature is that it allows users to send messages, photos, and videos that will auto-delete after being opened. Friends also can privately send messages to each other. Users can add friends from their phone/device contact lists and friends who are located nearby, so when in a group, it is easier for friends to connect. Snapchat also has a drawing tool allowing users to embellish photos and add text to them before sending. Please note, however, that nothing digital really disappears, and there are ways to circumvent the “disappearance” of images or videos. As with any other social media, users should exercise caution about what is sent through this social media platform. Snapchat invented the “story” feature, allowing users to send messages, photos, and videos that will remain for 24 hours. (This function was later replicated by many other platforms.)

YouTube



Key Demographics: Roughly 83% of Internet users across all demographics. According to Pew, it was one of only two platforms that saw significant growth from 2019 to 2021 and has grown 2% since 2021. According to a study from *Business Insider*, YouTube reaches more persons ages 18-34 than any single cable network. 93% of teens ages 13-17 use YouTube, 16% almost constantly. Children under 13 years of age are not permitted to have a YouTube account.

YouTube has a vast collection of videos that can be shared, stored privately, or hosted for embedding elsewhere and that serve as a personal digital video archive for videos produced in-house or by others. Many organizations establish YouTube Channels for their video work. YouTube videos originally were limited to just a few minutes, but that limit is now 12 hours or 256 GB. Long-form content is now as prevalent on YouTube as short-form content, and live video is available. YouTube is owned by Google, so YouTube and Google accounts sync into one account. YouTube allows the user to subscribe to other channels, and other accounts can subscribe to your channel. YouTube originally was promoted through other social media, but YouTube channels have increasingly become their own social network. The Archdiocese of Louisville has a YouTube channel.

Church/Ministry/Group_____ **(APPENDIX B)**

Date: _____ Name: _____

(Please type or print the name of the child/vulnerable adult.)

Promotional Release Form
(For a Child/Youth under Age 18 or Vulnerable Adult)

I agree to participate in an interview (in person, in writing, by phone, or by e-mail), an audio or video recording, and/or I agree to have photographs taken of me by a person or persons authorized by the Archdiocese of Louisville for use by the Archdiocese of Louisville or one of its parishes, schools, or agencies. I authorize the release and distribution of information concerning my activities with Catholic parishes, schools, and agencies, including my photographs, interviews, and/or audio/video recordings, to the Archdiocese for printed promotional materials, video/audio productions, television, websites, social media platforms, or media coverage about Catholic parishes, schools, or agencies, with the following restrictions:

(If there are no restrictions, write "none.")

I release the Archdiocese of Louisville, its personnel, and any other persons from liability connected with the taking or use of such material. I grant this authorization and release because I favor the promotion of the Archdiocese, Catholic parishes, schools, and agencies and their services. This agreement fully represents all terms and considerations; no other inducements, statements or promises have been made to me.

Name of Minor/Vulnerable Adult:

I give consent for the minor or vulnerable adult:

Signature Date

Printed Name/Relationship to Minor

Street Address

City, State, Zip () Phone

Email

Church/Ministry/Group: _____ **(APPENDIX C)**

Date: _____ Name: _____
(Please type or print name of minor or vulnerable adult.)

Social Media Permission Form
(For a Child/Youth under Age 18 or Vulnerable Adult)

I agree to allow my child or vulnerable adult to participate in social media opportunities sponsored by the Archdiocese of Louisville or one of its parishes, schools, agencies or facilities. I understand that I will be informed about which social media tools are used, how they are used, and how to access the site. This permission is granted with the following restrictions:

(If there are no restrictions, write "none.")

I release the Archdiocese of Louisville, its personnel, and any other persons from liability connected with my child's participation in social media. I grant this authorization and release because I favor the promotion of the Archdiocese, Catholic parishes, schools, and agencies and their services. This agreement fully represents all terms and considerations; no other inducements, statements or promises have been made to me.

Name of Minor/Vulnerable Adult:

I give consent for the minor or vulnerable adult:

Signature Date

Printed Name/Relationship to Minor

Street Address

City, State, Zip (_____) Phone

Email

Church/Ministry/Group_____ **(APPENDIX D)**

Date: _____ Name: _____
(Please type or print name of adult.)

Adult Promotional Release Form

I agree to participate in an interview (in person, in writing, by phone, or by e-mail), an audio or video recording, and/or I agree to have photographs taken of me by a person or persons authorized by the Archdiocese of Louisville for use by the Archdiocese of Louisville or one of its parishes, schools, or agencies. I authorize the release and distribution of information concerning my activities with Catholic parishes, schools, and agencies, including my photographs, interviews, and/or audio/video recordings, to the Archdiocese for printed promotional materials, video/audio productions, television, websites, social media platforms, or media coverage about Catholic parishes, schools, or agencies, with the following restrictions:

(If there are no restrictions, write "none")

I release the Archdiocese of Louisville, its personnel, and any other persons from liability connected with the taking or use of such material. I grant this authorization and release because I favor the promotion of the Archdiocese, Catholic parishes, schools, and agencies and their services. This agreement fully represents all terms and considerations; no other inducements, statements or promises have been made to me.

Name: _____
(Please print)

Signature Date

Address

City, State, Zip (_____) Phone

Email

Fair Use and Copyright – Appendix E

Generally safe operating principle: seek permission before using content created by others or use material from sources such as Creative Commons that provide free licenses for use.

General Resources:

Guide to using photographs on social media: <https://blog.hootsuite.com/understanding-image-copyright/>.

Provides a general FAQ on copyright: <http://fairuse.stanford.edu/overview/fags/copyright-basics/>.

A summary of Creative Commons licenses, which provide a good source of free licenses and material in the public domain: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/>.

A good resource on social media design, photos, copyright, etc. from the Diocese of Dallas: <https://www.cathdal.org/design>.

Good resources for free and legal images: www.pixabay.com and for religious art in the public domain: Wikimedia Commons.

For Teachers/Schools and Classroom Settings:

Teachers involved in face-to-face instruction in a classroom setting have more flexibility in using copyrighted materials under the “fair use” language of U.S. copyright law. However, this may not apply to published material that is included on teacher or school websites or that is used in school newsletters or other printed material not used in the classroom.

Helpful summary for distinguishing between what teachers and schools can and cannot do with copyrighted material: <http://www.theedublogger.com/2017/01/20/copyright-fair-use-and-creative-commons/>.

For Other Parish Settings:

Videos can be used without licenses in the context of face-to-face classroom instruction, but other uses, e.g. parish movie night, require a license. The fact that you own a video or are not charging admission for a “movie” event does not give you public performance rights. These links provide information and resources for parishes:

A summary of the law on this issue with resources for obtaining licenses: <http://www.ecfvp.org/files/uploads/MovieLicensingPermissions.pdf>.

Here are a couple of good articles on this topic:

<https://buildfaith.org/movies-at-church/>

<https://churchleaders.com/youth/youth-leaders-articles/144190-to-show-or-not-to-show.html>

This organization provides video licenses based upon the size of your parish. Please note that parish size is defined as *regular attendance at the main service(s). If there are multiple services, use the combined attendance.* <http://us.cvli.com/> (Church Video License). You also can contact the producer of the video and arrange for a license.

For Worship/Music:

Church Music Publishers Association: Provides a good summary of copyright law and licensing rules that apply to the use and performance of church and secular music: <http://cmpamusic.org/copyrights/>.

One License.net: Through One License, license holders have access to thousands of congregational hymns, songs, and service music from today's top liturgical music publishers to use in worship aids, service bulletins, and projections to inspire congregational singing. The major publishers of Catholic liturgical music can now all be found on this source. Please see www.onelicense.net.

This Emory University site provides a good summary of copyright law for worship and religious situations. Please note that parishes putting homilies or streaming Masses online that include music may need a podcast/streaming license. While there is no license needed for performing music during a worship service, there may be a special license required for online streaming or podcasting. Please see www.onelicense.net for further information and/or <http://sco.library.emory.edu/copyright/religious-organizations.html>.

Please exercise caution when using popular music in parish or school videos or other digital platforms. The illegal use of popular music can create big problems, and the fact that the parish is non-profit and not making money from the use of the music is not usually a defense for fair use. For information about licensing popular music, please see these major licensing agencies:

Harry Fox Agency (HFA): <https://www.harryfox.com/>.

American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP): <https://www.ascap.com/>.

Broadcast Music, Inc. (BMI): <https://www.bmi.com/>.

SESAC Inc.: <https://www.sesac.com/>.