



ST. MICHAEL CATHOLIC CHURCH

Social Media Policy

St. Michael's Church and School

St. Michael Parish/School Social Media Policy and Protocol (“Social Media Policy”)

INTRODUCTION

The Need to Engage in Social Media

“The world of digital communication, with its almost limitless expressive capacity, makes us appreciate all the more Saint Paul’s exclamation: ‘Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel’ ” (1 Cor 9:16) – Pope Benedict XVI, May 16, 2010, 44th World Day of Communication Message.

Social media is the fastest-growing form of communication in the United States, especially among youth and young adults. Our Church cannot ignore it, but at the same time, we must engage social media in a manner that is safe, responsible, civil, and purposeful.

As Pope Benedict XVI noted in his message for the [44th World Day of Communication](#), this new form of media "can offer priests and all pastoral workers a wealth of information and content that was difficult to access before, and facilitate forms of collaboration and greater communion in ways that were unthinkable in the past.”

The Church can use social media to encourage respect, dialogue and honest relationships – in other words, “true friendship” ([43rd World Communication Day Message](#)). To do so requires us to approach social media as a powerful means of evangelization and to consider the Church’s role in providing a Christian perspective to digital literacy.

The online encyclopedia Wikipedia defines social media as “... media designed to be disseminated through social interaction, using highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques. Social media use web-based technologies to transform and broadcast media monologues into social media dialogues”.

Opportunities and Challenges

Social media offers both opportunities and challenges to Catholic organizations. These can be grouped into three primary categories:

- Visibility
- Community
- Accountability

Visibility

Online social media communities are vast and growing at a rapid pace. Given the size and scope of these communities, they offer excellent forums for the Church's visibility and evangelization.

Therefore the key question that faces us is not “Should we engage”, but: “How will we engage?” This engagement must be undertaken with the knowledge that this is a serious commitment. Social media requires constant input and monitoring to maintain visibility and awareness of the Church’s presence through that particular social media. To keep members, a social networking site must have new content on a regular basis. Therefore it is important that site administrators determine how often posts will be made so that our “followers” can become accustomed to our schedule.

Community

Social media can be a powerful tool for strengthening community, although social media interaction should not be viewed as a substitute for face-to-face gatherings. Social media can support communities in a myriad of ways: connecting people with similar interests, sharing information about in-person events, providing ways for people to dialogue, etc. A well-considered use of social media has the ultimate goal of encouraging “true friendship” and of understanding the human longing for meaningful community.

Accountability

Social media provides a tool for building community. Membership in communities also requires accountability and responsibility. People who use social media expect site administrators to allow dialogue, to provide information, and to acknowledge mistakes. The explosion of information available to social media consumers has meant that they often only use information from trusted sites or sites recommended by those whom they trust.

While not every demand or inquiry can be met, it is important that creators and site administrators of social media understand how different social media is from mass media and the expectations of its consumers. Many communication experts are describing the adoption of social media as a paradigm shift in how humans communicate, as important a development as that of the printing press and the discovery of electronic communication.

POLICY

All “Users” as defined in the St. Michael Parish/School, who are St. Michael Parish/School employees or clergy working directly for the St. Michael Parish/School who utilize social media for or on behalf of the St. Michael Parish/School must abide by this Social Media Policy, the St. Michael Parish/School Acceptable Use and Responsibility Policy for Electronic Communications, the Archdiocese of Louisville Code of Pastoral Conduct, the Code of Canon Law and complementary legislation, applicable state and federal law, and the policies of the social media sites they use.

St. Michael Parish/School will engage in social media in a thoughtful way, focusing its efforts in specific, St. Michael Parish/School-approved virtual venues.

Social media presences will be established for St. Michael Parish/School departments and initiatives following the “Site Establishment” policy below.

Certain St. Michael Parish/School employees and/or volunteers will be identified as site administrators for these St. Michael Parish/School-approved social media venues. This identification will be made by Communications Director.

Recognizing that certain Users currently maintain their own personal social media presences (including Facebook page(s), Twitter account(s) and blog(s), it is recommended that such Users abide by this Social Media Policy, the St. Michael Parish/School, the Archdiocese of Louisville Code of Pastoral Conduct, the Code of Canon Law and complementary legislation, applicable state and federal law, and the policies of the social media sites they use.

Social media site visitors are also asked to abide by the Site Code of Conduct (below) and will be blocked from use of the site if they violate the Code more than once.

Site Code of Conduct:

All posts and comments should be marked by Christian charity and respect for the truth. They should be on topic and presume the good will of other posters. The discussion should take place primarily from a faith perspective. No ads, please.

Site Establishment

Web sites or social networking profile pages are the centerpieces of any social media activity. These guidelines apply to a profile, or fanpage on Facebook, a Twitter account, a video sharing site account, and any future sites determined for use as noted below.

- Any site establishment for or on behalf of the St. Michael Parish/School will be approved by Communications Director.
- All St. Michael Parish/School social media site(s) administrators will be identified by Communications Director.
- There should be at least two site administrators (preferably more) for each social media site, to allow rapid response and continuous monitoring of the site.
 - Social media site administrators must monitor a site at least daily and take prompt remedial action if the administrator notices inappropriate posts or other inappropriate interactions, including, but not limited to bullying, harassment, vulgar language, sexual innuendo, and inappropriate personal information.
 - Steps for dealing with bullying/harassing behavior align with St. Michael Parish/School bullying/harassment prevention policy and may include:
 - Document, if possible, and remove offensive posts.
 - Inform Communications Director, Principal, Asst. Principal or Pastor at (St. Michael Parish/School).
 - Contact parents/guardians of offenders and bullied children/youth under the age of 18.

- Remind offenders and bullied children/youth and their parents/guardians of the social media site code of conduct and the comment policy which prohibit bullying/harassing and state consequences for such behavior.
 - Offer appropriate assistance to bullied children/youth.
- Do not use personal sites for St. Michael Parish/School programs or other purposes for or on behalf of (St. Michael Parish/School).
 - A parish or school leader or staff person's inappropriate personal posts may be seen by parish, school or Archdiocesan leadership which could potentially result in employment consequences.
- Passwords and names of sites should be registered with Communications Director / Communications & IT Coordinator / School Administrator. More than one designated site administrator should also have access to this information for each site.
- Administrators establishing a site must follow these rules:
 1. Abide by St. Michael Parish/School Social Media Guidelines and Acceptable Use Policy
 2. Abide by Archdiocesan policy. (Code of Conduct, etc.)
 3. **Do not claim to represent** the official position of the St. Michael Parish/School or the teachings of the Church, **unless authorized to do so.**
 4. Abide by state and federal law, including copyright, fair use, and financial disclosure laws.
 5. Do not divulge confidential information of others.
 6. Do not cite others, post photos or videos of them, link to their material, etc., without their approval.
 7. Practice Christian charity.
 8. Refer to established trusted sources, including resources on the Archdiocese's website(s) and the USSCB website, to ensure accuracy.

Social networking with minors

Users must have appropriate permission from a minor's parent or guardian before contacting a minor via social media or before posting pictures, video, or other information that may identify that minor. Do not tag minors in visual images or otherwise post minors' names in connection with visual images of those minors.

If any User knowingly communicates privately with a minor as a part of his or her duties for or on behalf of the (St. Michael Parish/School), reasonable steps must be taken to send the minor's parent/guardian the same communication content, not necessarily via the same technology.

Church personnel should be encouraged to take reasonable steps to memorialize and preserve private communications with youth, especially those which concern the personal sharing of a teen or young adult, as appropriate. All Users must abide by the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, which is federal legislation that oversees how Web sites interact with children

under age 13. A summary is available at <http://www.ftc.gov/privacy/privacyinitiatives/childrens.html>. Children under age 13 are not allowed to use Facebook or other social media sites which collect information. A site administrator should not knowingly allow a child under age 13 to engage in Facebook or other applicable social media sites.

Social media primarily intended for minors must utilize appropriate privacy settings.

PROTOCOL

How to post, monitor, and respond

Approved site administrators should use their judgment when deciding whether to respond to any post. It is not necessary to respond to every post. Some posts are too outrageous to be dealt with and are best left alone. Report these to Communication Director / Pastor via email, copying other site administrators. In some instances, if applicable and appropriate, the ability to comment can and should be disabled.

A FAQ page (or pages) will be developed on www.stmichaelchurch.org to which to refer people with common questions/comments. Visitors can then be referred to the appropriate FAQ page. Web sites for the Archdiocese, USCCB, Vatican and other entities may also be appropriate resources. This saves time and ensures a consistent response.

Common sense is the best guide when deciding whether to post information in any way relating to St. Michael Parish/School in particular or the Church in general.

Above all, please remember to be professional, kind, and discreet.

All Users should report to Communication Director any 'unofficial' sites that carry the St. Michael Parish/School logo or name or otherwise purport to be an official site of the (St. Michael Parish/School).

All Users should report to Communications Director any misinformation regarding St. Michael Parish/School they find on a site. This is especially important when responding to an incorrect wiki, such as Masstimes.org, etc.

St. Michael Parish/School's Social Media Goals

- Make the name of Jesus Christ known and loved
- Educate visitors about the teachings of the Church
- Share St. Michael Parish/School's, and where appropriate, the Archdiocese's goals/messages/initiatives
- Drive traffic to St. Michael Parish/School's website and where appropriate, the Archdiocese's website, the USCCB's website or other appropriate websites

Social Media Site Posting Guidelines

- Do not disclose any information that is confidential or proprietary to St. Michael Parish/School or the Archdiocese.
- Write in thoughtful language consistent with the message of the Catholic faith (no insults, slurs or obscenities, or “chat” language).
- Do not instigate conflict, and be the first to admit and correct a mistake
- If it gives you pause, pause. Re-read your comments for tone and accuracy before posting.

Examples of topics for acceptable and encouraged posts:

- St. Michael Parish/School information – blog posts, current campaigns, new initiatives, etc.
- Upcoming St. Michael Parish/School events
- Links to articles believed to be of interest to the audience
- Recent news releases Communication Director / Pastor
- Anything appropriate that fans or followers would benefit from knowing

How to Deal with Negative Feedback on Facebook

- 1) Determine what type of feedback the site has received. Not all posts warrant a response. Negative feedback can come in a variety of forms and is best dealt with by a response tailored to the comment.
 - **Straightforward Problems** – Someone has an issue with St. Michael Parish/School in particular or the Church in general.
 - **Constructive Criticism** – The comment comes with a suggestion attached. This type of feedback may point out a perceived “flaw” with policy or practice and is negative, but it can be helpful to receive.
 - **Trolling/Spam** – Trolls leave groundless attacks and try to incite conflict. Spammers try to use a parish, school or Archdiocesan page to promote their products.
- 2) Once it is determined what type of feedback has been received, the appropriate response must be determined.
 - **Straightforward Problem Response:** This is on a case-by-case basis, but the best responses educate rather than defend. For example:
 - **Straightforward Problem Post:** (In regards to the new Missal) I think prayer which touches the heart and can be felt in a personal way as it is proclaimed is so much more beautiful than prayer that does not flow. To me, this new translation is awkward.
 - **St. Michael Parish/School Response:** For any questions or concerns you may have regarding the new translations of the Roman Missal, we encourage you to visit the following website: <https://www.archlou.org/services-directory/archdiocesan-agencies-facilities/worship-office/>

- Constructive Criticism Response: Thank the site visitor for their suggestion. For example:
 - Constructive Criticism Post: Dear Communications Office: Please have your FB page admin set wall posts on this page to "Admins Only." It's an easy thing to do and takes mere seconds. It will not prevent Facebook site visitors from posting comments or expressing opinions. It will cause comments to respond to relevant topics. Thanks and God bless!
 - St. Michael Parish/School Response: @xxxx: Thank you for the suggestion. It is something we have been considering. We will continue to monitor the page closely and evaluate our options.

- Trolling/Spam Response: This is designed either to bait a site administrator into an unnecessary and image-damaging fight/discussion: do not respond.
 - Trolling Post: The Catholic Church hates everyone.
 - Spam Post: Add me up guys. Thanks.
 - St. Michael Parish/School Response: Do not respond. Delete the post and block the troller/spammer. Report to Communication Director / Principal, Asst. Principal, if appropriate.

How to Moderate a Facebook Page

St. Michael Parish/School Facebook site administrators are determined by Communications Director / School Principal / Pastor.

We have the right to delete comments that violate our comment policy (below).

If a poster blatantly disregards the Code of Conduct posted for visitors of the site (i.e. uses vulgar language, maliciously attacks another poster, etc.), we operate under a one strike policy - we let poster know once, and only once (by a personal message), that they are violating our comment policy. If a poster has been warned and disregards the warning by continuing to post comments that go against our Facebook policy, we reserve the right to ban them from posting on the page.

If there is a fan that needs to be warned, please bring it to the attention of the Communications Director via email, including the poster's name and a screen shot of the inappropriate/unacceptable comment. The Communications Director will warn the poster, and monitor as needed.

St. Michael Parish/School's Facebook Comment Policy to be Posted on All St. Michael Parish/School's Facebook Sites

The purpose of this Facebook page is to provide an interactive forum where readers can gather and discuss information about the wide range of issues involving St. Michael Parish/School.

Followers are encouraged to post questions, comments, and concerns, but should remember this is a *moderated* online discussion hosted by the St. Michael Parish/School.

The St. Michael Parish/School appreciates healthy, constructive debate and discussion; that means we ask that comments be kept civil in tone and reflect the charity and respect that marks Christian discourse.

It is understood that comments made by visitors do not necessarily reflect the positions of the St. Michael Parish/School and/or the teachings of the Catholic Church. Comments will not be removed simply because they express opinions in disagreement with the teachings of the Catholic Church. However, comments that may be deleted include those that contain:

- Vulgar language
- Personal attacks/bullying/harassment/inflammatory remarks against a person or group
- Links to sites that contain offensive material or attack the Catholic Church
- Spam
- Promotion of services, products, political organizations/agendas
- Information that is factually incorrect (Rumors)
- Content/comments off topic

The St. Michael Parish/School reserves the right to remove posts which/block posters who violate this policy.

How to Deal with Negative Feedback on Twitter

- 1) Determine what type of feedback the site has received. Not all posts warrant a response. Negative feedback can come in a variety of forms and is best dealt with by a response tailored to the comment.
 - **Straightforward Problems** – Someone has an issue with the St. Michael Parish/School in particular and/or the Church in general and has laid out why.
 - **Constructive Criticism** – The comment comes with a suggestion attached. This type of feedback may point out a perceived “flaw” with policy/practices and is negative, but it can be helpful to receive.
 - **Trolling** – Trolls leave groundless attacks.
- 2) Once it is determined what type of feedback has been received, the appropriate response must be determined
 - **Straightforward Problem Response:** This is on a case-by-case basis, but the best responses educate rather than defend. For example:

- Straightforward Problem Tweet: @ARCHSPM I don't like the Missal Changes!
 - St. Michael Parish/School Response: @xxxx Find out more about why these Missal changes are happening throughout the English-speaking world at <https://www.archlou.org/services-directory/archdiocesan-agencies-facilities/worship-office/>
- Constructive Criticism Response: Thank the site visitor for their suggestion. For example:
 - Constructive Criticism Tweet: @ARCHSPM You need to get the word out about your calendar of events, you should tweet events.
 - St. Michael Parish/School Response: Thanks, @xxxx. That's a great idea. We will try to implement that ASAP.
 - Trolling Response: This is designed to bait administrators into an unnecessary and image-damaging fight:
 - Do not respond.

Video Sharing Site (YouTube)

- 1) Comments on video sharing site(s) should be disabled unless you are able to commit to monitoring regularly.

Currently St. Michael's online presence consists of the following official pages / sites:

1. Church Website
2. School Website
3. Youth Ministry Website
4. Official Church Facebook page (St. Michael Catholic Parish)
5. Youth Ministry Facebook page (St. Michael Youth Ministry)
6. Official School Facebook page (St. Michael Catholic School)
7. St. Michael - St Vincent DePaul Facebook Page (St. Michael Conference of St. Vincent DePaul)
8. St. Michael Bereavement Committee Group (private Facebook group)
9. St. Michael PTO Group (private facebook group)
10. St. Michael Knights Athletics Facebook page (St. Michael Knights Athletics)
11. Young Adults & Professionals at St. Michael Louisville (private Facebook group)
12. Church Twitter account (@stmichaelparish)
13. Instagram Church (#stmichaelparish, #stmikesparish)
14. Instagram Youth (#smymloouisville)
15. Instagram School (#stmlou)
16. LinkedIn site (Saint Michael Catholic Parish)
17. YouTube Channel (Saint Michael Church)

Because social media is a constantly evolving area, this policy applies to all new social media platforms whether or not they are specifically mentioned in this policy.

Any proposed new site must be approved by the Communications Director, Parish Business Manager, School Principal, Assistant Principal or Pastor.

Questions concerning the policy should be directed to the Communications Director. This policy and guidelines may be updated and modified at any time. The current version of the policy can be found on the St. Michael's website (stmichaelchurch.org) or obtained from the Communications Director.

Site/Page or Group Recommendation:

Parishioners who would like to recommend a site, social media page or group, must complete the recommended site/page form and submit that form to the Communications Director for approval. Any site, page or group that is created and does not have an approved form on file at the parish office will be required to be shut down until the form is on file and approved.

Logo and Name:

All approved sites connected with St Michael's should display one of the approved logos for the parish.



Other Logos that we may use with permission from the organizations:



For additional information concerning graphics standards please see our **Graphic Standards Handbook**

Additional Guidelines:

Use of Official Name and Logo –

Any use of St. Michael Parish's name or logo for branding or titling personal pages, blogs or other similar elements of Social Media must be approved in writing by the Communications Director prior to use. Any uses in existence at the time of adoption of this policy should be registered with the Communications Director; they are not automatically included and should be authorized pursuant to this policy. Permission to use the name or logo of the parish may be revoked at any time at the sole discretion of St. Michael's Pastor or person designated by the Pastor.

Copyright Laws –

Users must comply fully with copyright law when posting and uploading copyrighted materials. Any posting of materials to St. Michael's social media channels sponsored by St. Michaels must be limited to materials in which the copyright is owned by the party seeking to post the information. Some materials specifically indicate how they may be shared; err on the side of caution (for example, cite the URL rather than cut and paste a whole article or other material).

Safe Church –

Laws mandating reporting of suspected abuse/neglect/exploitation of children, youth, elders and vulnerable adults apply in the virtual world as they do in the physical world. (See Child Protection Policy, Sexual Harassment Policy)

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

It is preferable to obtain specific 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 fundraising campaign, or a marketing campaign used to promote the school or other parish program.

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.

- For events or large venues, include language in the program and/or on posted signs that indicates photographs or video will be taken and used in parish, school, or diocesan communication vehicles.
- In all cases, it would be important that those who are taking pictures, conducting interviews, or shooting video be transparent about what they are doing and inform those being photographed or videotaped about the possible use of the material in the parish, school, or diocesan communication vehicles.
- Photos or video of large groups where individuals are not individually featured and where those individuals knew they were being photographed can be used without specific permission.

St. Michael Parish/School gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Communications Office and the Archdiocese of Louisville Communications office in the development of this policy.

The following release forms are courtesy of the Archdiocese of Louisville Communications Department and have been modified to reflect St Michael Church.

Release forms and Media Request forms can be found on the following Appendix pages.

Name of Ministry/Group _____

(APPENDIX A)

Social Media Request Form

Requestor's Name: _____ Date: _____

Street Address _____

City, State, Zip _____ (____) _____
Phone

Email _____

Select the type of Account you are requesting:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- YouTube
- Other Social Media

Specify _____

Provide a description of the social media project, including target audience, anticipated content, areas of discussion and justification for this group or page creation.

List the name(s) and titles of the person(s) who will have access to the social media account:

Name _____ Title _____

Name _____ Title _____

Name _____ Title _____

Form Received: _____

Approved

Rejected

Name of 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 St. Michael Catholic Parish for use by St. Michael Catholic Parish, its school, or committees. I authorize the release and distribution of information concerning my activities with St. Michael Catholic Parish, its school, or committees, including my photographs, interviews, and/or audio/video recordings, to St. Michael Catholic Parish for promotional materials, websites, social media tools, or media coverage about St. Michael Catholic Parish, its school, or committees, with the following restrictions:

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

I release St. Michael Catholic Parish, 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 St. Michael Catholic Parish, its school, or committees 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 _____

Name of 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 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 St. Michael Catholic Parish, 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 St. Michael Catholic Parish, its school, or committees 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

Name of 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, by email, or through social media) and/or an audio or video recording, and/or I agree to have photographs taken of me by a person or persons authorized by St. Michael Catholic Parish, its school, or committees for use by St. Michael Catholic Parish, its school, or committees. I authorize the release and distribution of information concerning my activities with Catholic parishes, schools, and agencies, including my photographs, interviews, or audio/video recordings, to St. Michael Catholic Parish, its school, or committees for promotional materials, websites, social media outlets, or media coverage about Catholic parishes, schools, agencies, or facilities, with the following restrictions:

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

I release St. Michael Catholic Parish, 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 St. Michael Catholic Parish, its school, or committees and their services. This agreement fully represents all terms and considerations; no other inducements, statements or promises have been made to me.

Name

Signature Date

Street Address

City, State, Zip (_____) Phone

Email