



ROMAN CATHOLIC  
**DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER**

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## **Social Media Policy**

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Issued by: The Very Reverend Joseph A. Hart  
Revised by: The Most Reverend Salvatore R. Matano

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### **KEY POLICY STATEMENTS:**

- All official "Diocese of Rochester" sites (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) must be reviewed and approved by the Office of Stewardship & Communications.
- Unless authorized by the Diocesan Director of Communications, employees are not authorized to speak to the media on behalf of the Diocese of Rochester or its Affiliated Employers ("DORAE"). If an employee is not authorized to speak for DORAE and chooses to identify him or herself as an employee of DORAE then he or she must denote that the views expressed are his or hers alone and do not necessarily represent the views of DORAE.
- Personal use of social media resources must be separate from official DOARE business use. Personal sites/accounts cannot be used for business use and vice versa.
- Be respectful of DORAE and its current and potential employees, parishioners, vendors, donors, benefactors and those of other faiths. Do not disclose confidential information and respect all copyright laws.
- Employees with an online presence are solely responsible for anything they write or present online.
- All professional ministers and other authorized representatives must comply with the following policies when using electronic communication with children, youth and vulnerable adults:
  - All information displayed on public sites must reflect the values of our Catholic faith and should always follow the teachings of the Church.

- All sites must adhere to the parish and diocesan policy on consent to use of pictures. No photos of minor children can be used without the express written consent of the parents/guardians.
- Employees must not use any communications technology that is not "one-to-many" when working with youth or vulnerable adults.
- **There is to be absolutely no tagging of pictures with youth names or other identifiers, to ensure that these names will not appear in web searches.**
- Because Catholic Schools and their personnel already have and use existing and approved tools to communicate with parents and students via official school websites, the use of personal Facebook accounts and other social-networking sites is not allowed in those organizations.

**APPLIES TO:** All Employees of the Diocese of Rochester and its Affiliated Employers

**DETAILS:**

**General Social Media Participation**

As a diocese, communication among our employees, parishioners, donors, benefactors and those of other faiths is encouraged. Blogs, social networks, discussion forums, wikis, video, and other social media - such as Facebook and Twitter - can be a great way to evangelize and stimulate conversation and discussion.

The DORAE Social Media Policy applies to, but not limited to, the social media resources listed below:

- All blogs, wikis, forums, and social networks hosted or sponsored by DORAE
- Personal blogs that contain postings about DORAE ministries, employees, parishioners, vendors, donors, benefactors and those of other faiths.
- Postings on external blogs, wikis, discussion forums, or social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter containing information about DORAE ministries, employees, parishioners, vendors, donors, benefactors and those of other faiths.
- Participation in any video related to DORAE ministries, employees, parishioners, vendors, donors, benefactors and those of other faiths whether you create a video to post or link to on your blog, you contribute content for a video, or you appear in a video created either by another DORAE employee or by a third party.

Even if social media activities take place completely outside of work, as personal activities should, your conduct that adversely affects your job performance, the performance of other DORAE employees, or that otherwise adversely affects DORAE's legitimate interests may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

**Requirements**

This section describes the requirements that are most relevant to DORAE employees participating in social media of various kinds. It is extremely important that you follow these requirements.

**General Rules for Internet Content**

All information displayed on public sites must reflect the values of our Catholic faith and should always reflect the teachings of the Church. This includes, and is not limited to, language, photos, songs, videos, bulletins, blogs, podcasts, and applications. All sites must adhere to the parish and diocesan policy on consent to use of pictures.

**Official Diocesan Pastoral Center Use of Social Media**

All official "Diocese of Rochester" profiles, accounts, and channels on social media sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc.) will be reviewed and approved exclusively by the Office of Stewardship & Communications with the advice and counsel of Information Technology. The Office of Stewardship & Communications is solely responsible for all content communicated on any public social media medium through an official DOARE profile and/or channel. Only designated employees are permitted to use social media for official DORAE purposes.

**General/Personal Use of Social Media**

Personal use of the types of social media resources listed above must be separate from business use. Personal profiles, accounts, and sites cannot be used for official DOARE business use and vice versa. If you have a business need for an account or website, permission must be obtained from the Office of Stewardship & Communications.

**Follow the DORAE Policies**

All aspects of the Employee Handbook (including the Equal Employment Opportunity and Non-Discrimination Policy, Reasonable Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities Policy, and Harassment Free Workplace Policy), Code of Conduct, and all other Diocesan Policies (including the Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy), apply to online conduct (blogging or other online activities) just as much as they apply to offline behavior. Become familiar with them, and ensure your postings are consistent with them. Inappropriate postings that may include discriminatory remarks, harassment that violates these policies, threats of violence, or similar inappropriate or unlawful conduct will not be tolerated and may subject you to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

**Protect Confidential Information**

Employees may not use personal social media resources to disclose DORAE confidential information. This includes nonpublic financial information and anything related to DORAE strategy, ministries, policy, personnel, parishioners, vendors, donors and benefactors that has not been made public. Protecting the confidential information of our employees, parishioners, vendors, donors and benefactors is also important. Do not mention them, in social media without their permission, and make sure not to disclose items such as sensitive personal information of others. Any and all personal observations should be accurate and based on publicly available information. If you make a mistake, correct it quickly.

**Refrain from Objectionable or Inflammatory Posts**

Do not post anything that is false, misleading, obscene, defamatory, profane, libelous, threatening, abusive, hateful, or embarrassing to another person or entity or that might constitute bullying, discrimination, or harassment on the basis of race, sex, disability, religion, or any other status protected by law or DORAE policy. Make sure to respect others' privacy. Linked third party Web sites and blogs must meet our standards of propriety. Be

aware that false or defamatory statements or the publication of an individual's private details could result in personally legal liability and potentially for DORAE.

**Don't Speak for DORAE**

Unless authorized by your supervisor, never represent yourself as a spokesperson for DORAE. Make it clear that the opinions expressed are personal and do not necessarily reflect the views of DORAE. For this reason, DORAE employees with personal blogs that discuss DORAE ministries, employees, parishioners, vendors, donors, benefactors and those of other faiths should include the following disclaimer in a visually prominent place on their blog:

*The views expressed on this [blog; Web site] are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of [the Diocese of Rochester; parish].*

Similar for video appearances, you should preface comments by making it clear that these are personal opinions and do not represent those of fellow employees or DORAE.

**Using Social Media at Work**

Refrain from using social media while on working hours or on equipment provided by DOARE, unless it is work-related and authorized by your manager or consistent with the Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy.

**Don't Post Anonymously**

While not an official spokesperson, posting as a DORAE employee may still be relevant to the subject matter. You should identify yourself as an employee if failing to do so could be misleading to readers or viewers. Employees should not engage in covert advocacy for DORAE. When blogging about DORAE-related topics or providing feedback relevant to DORAE to other blogs or forums, identify yourself as a DORAE employee.

**Respect Copyrights**

Recognize and respect others' intellectual property rights, including copyrights. While certain limited use of third-party materials (for example, use of a short quotation that you are providing comment on) may not always require approval from the copyright owner, it is still advisable to get the owner's permission whenever you use third-party materials. Never use more than a short excerpt from someone else's work, and make sure to credit and, if possible, link to the original source. (link to Copyright and Licensing Policy.)

**Use Video Responsibly**

Remember that this may be viewed as endorsing any Web video (whether hosted by YouTube or elsewhere) or other content linked to or from a blog or posting, whether created personally, by other DORAE employees, or by third parties, and the Social Media Policy applies to this content. Also, recognize that video is an area that may be particularly sensitive to others' copyright rights. Generally the owner's permission must be obtained before including third party content such as film clips or songs in personal videos.

**Don't Misuse DORAE Resources**

Personal social media activities must not interfere with work or productivity. Don't use DORAE resources to set-up a personal blogging environment, even if blogging about church related matters.

### **Additional Expectations for Electronic Communication with Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults**

Electronic communications (social networking sites, instant messaging, email, text messaging, cellular phone and the like) will continue to grow in sophistication and usefulness. They are already a preferred means of communication among youth and young adults. Because of the complexity and the inherent dangers of misuse, training in the use of social networking tools and websites is highly recommended.

The following guidelines for ministers in the Diocese of Rochester will help you maintain appropriate boundaries:

#### **General Rule of Visibility and Accountability**

Underlying every guideline supporting the need for healthy boundaries are the twin goals of visibility and accountability. In all cases we must differentiate between confidentiality and secrecy with respect to communications with children and youth, as we do with every person we serve. Parents are to be fully aware of all media being used to keep in contact with their children for ministerial purposes, and parents must have the ability to review all communications.

#### **General Rule of "One to Many" Communication with Youth and Vulnerable Adults**

As in other diocesan communications guidelines, employees must not use any communications technology that is not "one-to-many" when working with youth or vulnerable adults. This should include, but is not limited to, one-on-one contact using cell phones, social networking sites and their internal private messaging tools (inbox), text messaging, instant messaging, chat, or e-mail. In the unanticipated event of a one-to-one communication, copies of all correspondence should be given to the supervisor, and youth and parents should be made aware that any communication through technology is not confidential.

#### **Social Networking Sites – Specific Guidelines for Schools**

Because Catholic Schools and their personnel already have and use existing and approved tools to communicate with parents and students via official school websites, the use of personal Facebook accounts and other social-networking sites to communicate with parents and students is not allowed in those organizations. Use of a professional Facebook account linked to the school's Facebook account is permissible.

#### **Social Networking Sites – Specific Guidelines for Parishes**

Any social networking site set up as a faith community ministry site must be authorized by the faith community and be clearly identified as such by using the faith community's name. For example: St. Mary's Youth Group. Personal social networking sites may not be used for ministerial purposes.

Ministers will be responsible for the content on any authorized social networking site created on behalf of their ministry area. Inappropriate content found on ministry social networking sites --

including the "comment" section found on Facebook and similar social-networking sites -- can be grounds for discipline up to and including termination.

Sites must not allow "friending" or posting by anyone other than the page/site owner or administrator. In other words, the page or site must be one-way communication of announcements, news and upcoming events only. "Bumper Stickers" and "Wall Posting" are not allowed. The page should never be set to confidential status.

**There is to be absolutely no tagging of pictures with youth names or other identifiers, to ensure that these names will not appear in web searches.**

Site must be set to PRIVATE such that only authorized members can gain admittance and the public does not have access to modify the content.

Passwords must be difficult and frequently changed to avoid unauthorized access. The Pastoral Administrator should have a copy of usernames and passwords and is to be notified of all changes. (link to Computer Password Policy.)

Instant Messaging should be turned off.

One of the desired outcomes of social networking is the ability to use collaboration with other ministers to maintain appropriate content and boundaries. It is the diocesan expectation that all ministers will work with one another to ensure the safety of our youth and vulnerable adults in an ever-changing on-line world.