



# DIOCESE OF SALFORD

## Digital Guidelines for Parishes

Bringing the Church's teachings onto a digital platform allows parishes to connect with various social media channels to allow parishioners to engage in and receive information about different events, saints, feast days, and relevant Catholic news in and around the diocese.

Social media is different from other forms of 'traditional' media: It is instant, interactive and conversational, and the opportunities and risks with it come hand in hand. Despite its differences, parishes should consider all the safeguards they would usually adopt when establishing a new team or project within the parish.

### **Establishing a Site**

Websites or social networking profile pages (also called accounts, fan pages, or group pages) are the centre piece of any social media activity. The following are recommended guidelines for the establishment of a site.

- Site administrators should be adults.
- There should be at least two site administrators (preferably more) for each site, to allow rapid response and continuous monitoring of the site.
- Do not use personal sites for parish programs. Create separate sites for these. This includes Facebook.
- Passwords and names of sites should be registered in a central location, and more than one adult should have access to this information.
- Abide by copyright
- Don't cite others, post photos or videos of them, link to their material, etc., without their approval.

### **Take a step back**

Before posting on social media, it is always good to take a step back and to consider:

- Would I want this in the media?
- Could what I post be taken out of context?
- Could this bring myself, the Diocese or the priesthood into disrepute?
- Is this my story to share?
- Am I breaching any copyright by my post?
- Am I citing others or posting photos or videos of others, without their permission?

In conversations with others on social media, it is always good to be respectful and sensitive to the type of language being used, especially when discussing topics others may find controversial and objectionable. Offensive and inappropriate comments even made in jest, may lead to complaints

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or allegations.

It is important to remember that anything that is posted online is there permanently and may be shared by others widely. Even if it is deleted later on, it may have been seen, copied and republished elsewhere and who it is viewed by may then be uncontrollable. Be careful not to disclose personal information.

### **Safeguarding and the legal framework**

The informal nature of social media can make it seem personal and private; it is not. It is important to be aware of the legal and safeguarding responsibilities that come with personal social media accounts, including defamation, data protection, and the recent broadening of hate crime legislation, and to be aware of how posts and comments may be viewed by others.

Social media sites are now an alternative way of contacting individuals; It is important, therefore, that a professional distance, especially with children, young people and the vulnerable, is maintained at all times. Communicating via private message is like meeting an individual in private. It is always best to try and operate in the open, sending messages to groups, not individuals, and not to accept friend requests from under 18s or vulnerable people. If your youth work includes an element of social media, try to keep all your communications public and only send messages to whole groups, rather than to individuals.

As regards to posting photographs online on social media accounts, it is best practice not to photograph and post photographs of anyone, without their express consent, especially children and vulnerable adults. **If in doubt, don't.**

### **Further advice is available by speaking to:**

The Diocesan Communication Manager on [communications@dioceseofsalford.org.uk](mailto:communications@dioceseofsalford.org.uk) or 0161 217 2001.