



Ss. Cosmas & Damian Roman Catholic School

Acceptable Media Usage Policy



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Please read the following document carefully before signing. This is a legally binding document.

Introduction

These guidelines here forth mentioned are offered on behalf of Ss. Cosmas & Damian School, situated in Punxsutawney, PA, of the Diocese of Erie, PA. The purpose of this document is to outline appropriate use and understandings of Social Media so as to protect the School as well as any and all church personnel. The materials listed in this policy have been synthesized from many different sources as well as inquiries amongst professionals in these areas.

Note that wherever the phrase “church personnel” is located in this document, it refers to anyone – priest, deacon, religious, seminarian, lay employee or volunteer, or council member – who provides ministry or service or is employed by an entity associated with the School and/or parish.

Social Media is defined as any electronic tool that allows for social, interactive, and connective communication allowing for *but not limited to*:

- Video and Photo sharing (YouTube, Instagram, Flickr, Vine)
- Social Networking (Facebook, Twitter, G+)
- Blog, Wiki, Micro-Blog, Podcasting
- Instant Messaging (Kik)
- Texting (iMessage, SMS)
- Web Conferencing (Google Hangouts, Skype, FaceTime)

Ss. Cosmas & Damian School generally views creating or contributing to personal, professional, and official websites, blogs, social networks, message boards, virtual worlds, and other kinds of social media positively. We recognize the desire of many of our employees to participate in online community and encourage this form of networking and idea exchange.

As personnel of Ss. Cosmas & Damian School, you may be seen by our members, attendees, and the general public as an official representative of our Church. This means that while you may view your online presence as a personal project, many readers will associate you and the views you express with us. In light of that, we ask that you observe the guidelines outlined in this document.

Guiding Principles

(Taken from the Social Media Guidelines outlined by the USCCB, June 2014)

"Communication is a means of expressing the missionary vocation of the entire Church; today the social networks are one way to experience this call to discover the beauty of faith, the beauty of encountering Christ. In the area of communications too, we need a Church capable of bringing warmth and of stirring hearts" (Pope Francis' Message for the 48th World Communications Day [WCD], 2014).

Social media is fundamentally changing how people communicate. Our Church cannot ignore it; in fact, it is our responsibility as Catholics to bring the Church's teachings into what Pope Benedict XVI called the "digital continent."

As Pope Francis wrote in the 48th World Communications Day message. . . , "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."

The Church can use social media to encourage respect, dialogue, and honest relationships—in other words, "true friendship" (Pope Benedict XVI's Message for the 43rd World Communications Day, 2009). 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 on digital literacy.

Before beginning work on social media guidelines, consider reading all of the World Communications Day messages issued since 2006, since each message focuses on social media.

Guidelines

Personal

As school personnel of Ss. Cosmas & Damian School, you are seen by our members and outside parties as a representative of the church and school. Therefore, as in all areas of daily life, a church and school personnel's personal social media is a reflection on the church and school, whether or not the church or school is specifically discussed or referenced. If you choose to identify yourself as a Ss. Cosmas & Damian School personnel or to discuss matters related to the church or school on your social media account, please bear in mind that, although you may view your site as a personal project, many readers will assume you are speaking on behalf of the church and school.

Ss. Cosmas & Damian expects our staff to observe the following important guidelines:

1. Notify Your Supervisor
 - a. If you currently have a personal website or weblog, or are considering starting one, be sure to discuss this with your supervisor. Also, if you have any questions, feel free to share them with HR or the Web Department
2. Include a Disclaimer
 - a. On your site, please make it clear to your readers that the views you express are yours alone and that they do not necessarily reflect the views of Ss. Cosmas & Damian Church and School. To help reduce the potential for confusion, we *highly* recommend you prominently display the following notice, or something similar, on the homepage of your site:

The posts on this site are my own personal opinions. They are not read or approved by Ss. Cosmas & Damian Church and School, before posting and do not necessarily represent the views and opinions of Ss. Cosmas & Damian Church and School or the Roman Catholic Diocese of Erie.

- b. We recommend a disclaimer if your site is published under your name, even if it is entirely personal and does not mention Ss. Cosmas & Damian Church and School or your employment, as readers will inevitably connect your personal life to your professional life.
3. Maintain Confidentiality
 - a. Ask permission before reporting on conversations or meetings that are meant to be private or for internal use only. Do not disclose any information, pictures, or videos that are confidential or proprietary to Ss. Cosmas & Damian Church and School. This includes information that will become public, but has not yet been announced or posted. Any employee who violates our policies regarding confidentiality will be subject to serious discipline, up to and including immediate termination of employment.
4. Respect the Church and its Staff
 - a. Since your site is a public space, we expect you to be respectful to the church and our leaders, employees, volunteers and members. Any employee who uses a personal website to disparage the name or reputation of the church, its practices, or its pastors, officers, employees, volunteers or members will be subject to serious discipline, up to and including immediate termination of employment.
5. Respect Copyright
 - a. Do not use Ss. Cosmas & Damian Church and School's logos or images on your site or reproduce church material without first obtaining written permission from the pastor.
6. Respect Our Beliefs
 - a. When working for a church, it is important to remember that employment decisions will be made based upon our Catholic beliefs. If your personal website displays inappropriate images or reflects personal opinions or life-style choices that are contrary to the Catholic Church's religious beliefs, you may be subject to discipline, *up to and including immediate termination of employment.*
7. Follow the Employee Handbook
 - a. Be sure to conform to the rules of the Employee Handbook, especially as it relates to harassment and illegal activities (including, and not limited to, spam and piracy). As with other forms of communication, do not engage in personal, racial or sexual harassment, unfounded accusations, or remarks that would contribute to a hostile workplace. For more information about Ss. Cosmas & Damian School's Policy Against Harassment, see Human Resources.
8. Use Common Sense
 - a. Use common sense in all communications, particularly on a website accessible to anyone. What you say on your site could potentially be grounds for dismissal. If you would not be comfortable with your manager, co-workers, or the executive team reading your words, do not write them.

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCE SHOULD IMAGES/PICTURES/VIDEOS OF STUDENTS AND/OR STAFF SHOULD BE POSTED ON PERSONAL SITES/SOCIAL MEDIA/OR ANY OTHER ONLINE SHARING METHOD WITHOUT EXPLICIT WRITTEN PERMISSION FROM PARENTS OF STUDENTS AS WELL AS WRITTEN PERMISSION OF STAFF. THIS MUST THEN BE APPROVED BY THE ADMINISTRATION. IGNORANCE OF THIS REQUIREMENT COULD CAUSE TERMINATION OF CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT.

Official/Professional

Purpose of Church Communications

The purpose of church communications is to inform the members and friends of Ss. Cosmas & Damian School, newcomers to the area, and others residing within the local community, including Catholics, Christians of other denominations, members of other faith traditions and all people of good will, of the programs, events and activities taking place at or being sponsored by the School, in a manner of communication reflective of Ss. Cosmas & Damian School's mission and goals.

Ownership

It is to be noted that at no time is personal ownership to be assumed with any of the Social Media communications as well as any other forms of communication. All forms of communication for the School in an official manner are owned by the School. If the pastor were to wish to remove any *form/format* of communication or any *specific* communication, he has the right to do so. Any official posts must be approved by the Pastor or those that the pastor so wishes to delegate authority to approve official messages of Ss. Cosmas & Damian Church and School.

Responsibility

Ss. Cosmas & Damian's pastoral staff have the sole responsibility for editorial policies governing certain print and electronic publications of the School.

In order to maintain the integrity and quality of information being delivered, the pastoral staff will:

- Include, in an unbiased way, content that supports or fulfills the above stated purpose.
- Take reasonable precaution to protect the privacy of all
- Edit material that is too long or that needs correction in grammar, spelling, or style and may refuse material that is not appropriate.
- Ensure that submission requirements and deadlines are clearly communicated to pastoral staff.

Duties of Official Authors and Moderators

Moderators of official Ss. Cosmas & Damian social media are responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy. All comment and response areas should be moderated if possible and consistent with the goal of the forum. Leaders responsible for such areas should review and approve comments prior to posting, and should not post any comments that do not meet our standards for civility, misrepresent the position of the School, the Church, or Diocese, or that include profanity, defamatory language or speech that is otherwise inappropriate or off-topic. In an unmoderated forum, leaders should delete any comments or content that does not meet the standards of this policy as expeditiously as possible. Anonymous comments should be avoided except in circumstances where anonymous or pseudonymous speech is essential to the protection of the identities of the vulnerable. All moderation functions should reserve the right to ban repeat offenders. Moderators who permit users to post materials such as documents or photographs should make clear to users that the site will not archive those materials or be responsible for preserving them.

Prohibited Use of External Communications

1. **PARTISAN COMMUNICATION:** Church communication may not be used for partisan political messages. Association, representation or endorsement of, or by, any political candidate, party, or campaign, whether actual, inferred or implied is prohibited.
2. **ADVERTISING:** No aspect of church communications may be used to promote any activity resulting in financial gain of a staff member, parishioner, or business, with the exception of sponsored advertising which supports the cost of printing the Sunday bulletin.
3. **UNAUTHORIZED COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS:** Unauthorized websites, blogs, social network sites, direct mailings, and use of the School name and/or logo are not permitted. Only members of Ss. Cosmas & Damian pastoral staff shall maintain external communications channels on behalf of the School.

Spokespersons

Only authorized Ss. Cosmas & Damian staff spokespersons such as the Pastor, pastoral staff, and departmental directors may communicate directly with members of the media on behalf of the parish or school.

It is in the best interest of Ss. Cosmas & Damian to maintain relations with the media in an open, pragmatic manner, and respond promptly to their legitimate interests.

1. All media requests should be recorded accurately and passed on in the following order:
 - 1) Pastor
 - 2) Pastoral Staff
 - 3) Departmental Directors
 - Media requests include inquiries for interviews, commentary and information, and include all media – TV/Radio, newspapers, magazines, local/national media and internet sites.
2. Authorized Ss. Cosmas & Damian spokespersons will respond on behalf of the School, or assist in identifying the appropriate person from staff to handle the response.
3. *Ministry **volunteers** are not authorized to speak to reporters without advance knowledge and coordination with the appropriate staff spokesperson or communications personnel. Volunteers who are approached by the media should be instructed to direct all media calls to the appropriate staff spokespersons or communications personnel.*
4. All media calls are to be reported to the staff for follow-up and archiving. Provide the reporter's name, media outlet and telephone number, the anticipated publication date, and the subject of the story.

Crisis Communication

Communication from a School office regarding unexpected events or serious incidents must be approved by the Pastor or business office, and channeled through the Diocesan office of

Communications. Written communication as such is prepared in collaboration, or following the appropriate protocol established by the Diocese of Erie.

In the event of an extreme crisis, the situation and the School must be handled immediately through the Diocesan Office of Communications:

Anne-Marie Welsh

Diocese of Erie Director of Communications

awelsh@eriercd.org

Phone: (814) 824-1167

Fax: (814) 824-1170

Youth and Young Adult Communication

Church personnel of Ss. Cosmas & Damian Church and its affiliates will comply with all aspects of the *Policy for the Protection of Children* of the Diocese of Erie. Employees, clerics and volunteers are forbidden to post or distribute personal identifiable information, including photos and/or video, of any child under the age of eighteen without verifiable consent of a parent or guardian. Personal identifiable information includes full name, photos, home address, email address, telephone number or any information that would allow someone to identify or contact a child. Verifiable consent can take the form of a release/permission form, an email from a parent or guardian, or spoken permission by a parent or guardian in the presence of another adult. The Diocese of Erie and its affiliates will review alleged violations of the *Policy for the Protection of Children* of the Diocese of Erie, on a case-by-case basis.

When Communicating with Children Using Social Media or Other Electronic Communication:

- There must be at least two adults with administrative rights for each Social Media account used for ministry communication.
- Personal Social Media accounts must not be used for ministry communication. Adults must not initiate or accept “friend” requests with children using their personal profiles on Facebook and other social media platforms.
- The primary purpose of such communication shall be for providing information related to a ministry or event and not for socialization or other personal interaction. Counseling of children through such communication methods is strictly forbidden.
- Parents must be notified of the methods of communication which are used in each particular ministry and must be granted access in such communications.
- Social Media/Network or other electronic communication may not be used to communicate with children who have not reached the 9th grade, but instead should be directed to their parents.
- Children may “Like” public Facebook pages and other official social media accounts for a ministry where children are involved.
- When children form their own Social Media groups, adults should not join these groups.
- As a general rule, neither personal nor ministry Social Media accounts should be used to contact children individually. If children contact particular adults engaged in ministry, the

ministry account should be used to reply by sending a group message (i.e., when the personal contact was for information relevant to all in the group). When the contact is such that a group response is not appropriate, the adult is to avoid using a personal Social Media account to respond. In those unusual cases where Social Media is used to respond, adults should maintain hard, printed copies of all such messages and submit a copy of all transcripts to the pastor and pastoral staff **immediately**.

- Acceptable hours for communication with children via other electronic communications shall be between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. Communication outside of the acceptable hours may be used only in emergency situations or to communicate time sensitive information related to the ministry or ministry related event.
- On line “chatting” with children is not permitted.

Enforcement

Ss. Cosmas & Damian Church and School, its affiliates and their respective administrators intend to enforce the policy set forth here and expect church and school personnel to comply. Failure to comply with any of the provisions of the Media Policy will be grounds for discipline, *up to and including termination*, for an employee, or removal from position, if a volunteer.

Ss. Cosmas & Damian Church and School and its affiliates reserve the right to make changes to this policy **at any time, even without notice**, and at its sole discretion, and interpret and administer the policy in light of changing circumstances and events. Ss. Cosmas & Damian Church and School gratefully acknowledges the generosity of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in granting the use of its social networking policies and guidelines as a resource in the development of this policy.

Ss. Cosmas & Damian School Acceptable Media Usage Policy

Acknowledgement Form

I, _____ acknowledge receipt of the Acceptable Media Usage Policy

and I further acknowledge that I have read the document, understand my obligations as outlined in the

document, and agree to abide the terms of the document while associated with/employed by Ss.

Cosmas & Damian Church and School.

Signature

Date

Signature of Principal

Date

Signature of Pastor

Date