

DIOCESE OF CORK AND ROSS

Guidance on the use of Digital Online Means of Communication in the Diocese of Cork and Ross



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FIRSTLY

OVERVIEW

The heart of the mission of the Church is to communicate. Christ mandated his disciples to go and tell the Good News. "Go out to the whole world ; proclaim the Good News to all creation." (Mk 16:16)

The retelling and celebrating of this Good News is an essential life-blood of a faith community. We are nourished as people and as a community when we communicate with the Lord and with one another.

The Covid19 pandemic has emphasised the importance of our connectedness when being physically present to one another has been made intermittent and difficult. Church and parish communities use online communication over the internet to fill some of the voids left by the restrictions on physical contact.

This guidance to parishes aims to set out opportunities available to parishes, alert parishes to pastoral applications and best practice for social media, highlight the requirements of civil and church law relating to these forms of communications and make available some online resources which can be consulted.

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DISCLAIMER The information supplied in this document is intended as a guide and you are urged to seek appropriate advice specific to the online communications in your parish. Some of the communication tools referred to have been put in place in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and in addition to that, technology constantly changing. It will be necessary to amend and update this guidance to adapt to our fluctuating environment and to take those technological changes into account.

1 | GENERAL

Social media use has a number of advantages: it's quick, cost effective and reaches a diverse audience who do not engage with traditional forms of communication. This, in turn, helps parishes build new relationships and enhance existing ones.

Live online communication gives a congregation a new door to open onto a world without frontiers. People in their homes, in hospitals and in their cars can connect with and come to know a worshipping community in a church which they can later choose to be part of in person.

Online communication also facilitates concise and frequent messaging which can promote additional engagement. In fact, the potential reach of a social media account is almost indefinite.

However, some advantages of social media are potentially its greatest disadvantages. The potential audience of any social media posting and the speed with which postings can be shared to a wider audience can result in a parish losing control over the context and meaning of a message quickly. In circumstances where the posting is ill-advised, controversial or breaches laws, this can lead to difficulties and, in some cases, to legal repercussions.

A poorly composed or inappropriate message may be read by hundreds of people in a printed parish bulletin but the same message online may be seen by thousands of people in a few minutes! No message should be shared on social media which an individual would not be happy to see printed in a parish bulletin or on a church notice-board.

ADVANTAGES



QUICK



COST EFFECTIVE



**VIRTUAL
CONGREGATION**

POTENTIAL PITFALLS



CONTROL



MIS-REPRESENTATION



**LEGAL
REPERCUSSIONS**

2 | ONLINE ACCOUNT

A parish domain name and its digital media accounts are owned by the parish. When the administration of a domain name, email accounts and profiles of social media accounts) is entrusted to a designated person(s), this is to be authorised in writing by the parish priest/administrator of the parish.

This authorisation must include an acceptance by the authorised person(s) that this authority may be withdrawn at any time and without notice. Each authorised administrator/ editor must be at least 18 years of age.

Ideally, each account should have at least two authorised users with administrative level access.

When available, use two-step authentication for email accounts and social media accounts. This is a security step which allows a code to be sent to a user's own phone to verify the user's identity.



REGISTERED CHARITIES DO NOT PAY A FEE FOR REGISTERING OR MAINTAINING A .IE DOMAIN NAME

3 | ENDORSEMENT

Individuals and organisations who request parishes to publish or share online news about an event or activity are seeking two results:

- A wider audience.
- An effective endorsement by the parish of the event or activity.

Parishes need to exercise due discretion before 'liking' or 'sharing' a post on another forum as the parish's online activity may be understood as an endorsement or support.

Emojies are not be used as they can be misunderstood easily.

4 | COPYRIGHT



The copyright in all images, creative writing, video content and all music is owned by the creator or their designated agent.

It is illegal to use content without the consent of the copyright owner. Hence, you may not download an image from another online site and then upload it to a parish site without consent.

(Giving the name of the copyright owner or using "courtesy of ..." is not a replacement for consent.)

On a social media platform, you may 'Share' a post which includes copyrighted material as long as you do not download it to your own device.

Broadcasting of copyrighted music and hymns on a webcam or social media may be an infringement of copyright law.

5 | AGE

The digital age of consent (age at which a person may set up an online account) in Ireland is 16 years. That means that parental/guardian consent is required for anyone under 16 years before using any online service or social media platform.

Young people over 16 are welcome to follow and benefit from a parish's online presence but a parish or parish personnel may not interact online with anyone under 18 years. Minors may 'follow', 'like' or share a parish's online content but it is not permitted for a parish or parish personnel to 'follow', 'like' or share or otherwise interact with a minor's profile or content.



A parish may respond online in a transparent way to questions or comments raised but one-to-one communication, e.g. via Messenger, is not permitted with minors.

In the event that there are concerns over the content of a post by a young person and it is inappropriate for the parish to respond, the Parish / Youth Ministry employee should either: -

- **CONTACT THE PARENT/GUARDIAN; AND/OR**
- **CONTACT THE DIOCESAN DIRECTOR OF SAFEGUARDING; AND/OR**
- **IN AN EMERGENCY CONTACT THE APPROPRIATE AUTHORITIES.**

Parish / Youth Ministry / Catechists or other personnel are not permitted to direct message or accept/send friend requests to young people from their own personal social media account unless the young people are known to them personally outside their role in the parish.

Such personnel are not permitted to follow young people's personal accounts, unless the young person is known to them personally outside their role with the parish.

6 | CONTENT

Computer technology continues to evolve and enable new ways to communicate online. Pan-global companies have developed platforms which they invite users to engage with and they reach every culture and tradition on our planet. The “global village” is here to stay.

Many social media platforms can be used for free. This is because the platform hopes to collect data (images, information, personal profile and interests etc) about users which they can use for advertising purposes.

PARISHES CREATING ONLINE CONTENT OR POSTS MUST ATTEND TO THE FOLLOWING REQUIREMENTS:-



GDPR LEGISLATION

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is an EU law which applies in all member states to protect the fundamental right of individuals in the EU to have their personal data protected.

The Data Protection Commission (DPC) is the national independent authority responsible for upholding these laws in Ireland.

A parish's online platform must comply with the GDPR. The default settings on most online platforms allow for very open collection of each user's data. A parish should modify the settings to conform to best practice which safeguards personal data.



DATA SECURITY & PRIVACY

Review the Settings on each platform you use to keep data secure and private.

For example, do not allow 'tagging' of images with people's names on parish sites.

Ensure that only the parish's authorised users can post an item to the parish page. Decide whether you wish to permit visitors to comment on posts. If comments are open, ensure that the notification settings are turned on and that administrators frequently review and monitor these.



CONSENT OF INDIVIDUALS

Data protection laws may require a parish to obtain the consent of individuals who appear in photos or videos before posting them to a social media account. Copyright law may require a parish to obtain the consent of the photographer / videographer.



SAFEGUARDING POLICY

The Safeguarding policy of the Diocese requires that parental/guardian written consent be obtained before images / videos of minors are posted online.

This also applies to the celebrations of sacraments with school groups.

7 | VOICE AND TONE

Any parish or parish group social media account must be used for parish purposes only and not as a personnel or personal account. Postings should not reflect personal views but rather the ethos and teachings of the Church and should be expressed in the name of the parish community.

Before posting, pause and ask yourself if it is appropriate to post the message, video or photo in question? The following considerations will assist in determining if posting the message is the right thing to do: -

Why am I posting this? Never post anything in anger. Social media should not be used to resolve disputes.

How could this content be interpreted by others? Is it possible that this information could lead to misunderstandings and/or conflict?

Does the message begin with "I ..."? Who is saying this?

Is it necessary to obtain the consent of anyone before I post this message, photo or video? This will apply if someone is referred to by name or if individuals' images appear in the photos or videos. It may also apply if you are posting content that you are not the author of.

Is the information that I am considering posting confidential in any way? Confidential information should never be published.

The above considerations also apply to forwarding or sharing postings by others.

Before sharing, you should stop and check the above.

BE RESPONSIBLE

When in doubt about the content or tone of a post, leave it out.

8 | LIVE STREAMING

LIVE-STREAMING A LITURGY IS NOT THE SAME AS LIVE-STREAMING A LECTURE.

An attendee at a lecture is listening but is otherwise passive. A congregation for a liturgy — even online — is called to be an active participant, to respond to prayers, to reflect on the Word of God, to build their sense of belonging to the People of God. The choice of technology used to serve this connecting and building of the parish community needs to serve this.

When possible, the liturgy should visibly and audibly include the participation of more than the priest. The presider should overtly acknowledge the online presence of a virtual congregation in word, gesture and eye-contact with the camera.

There are at least three ways of live streaming liturgies and other events from a church or a parish building to an online congregation or audience. Each requires that the church have a stable broadband connection.



USING A PARISH DEVICE

Using a parish device (iPad, iPhone, etc) to connect and live-stream to the parish website or to third-party platforms, eg. YouTube, Facebook, Instagram.



THIRD PARTY PROVIDER

Contracting a third party provider to install a web cam and to also host the live-stream on their servers.



PARISH INSTALLATION

A parish installs a video mixer with more than one camera attached. The output is streamed to the parish website or to third-party platforms, eg. YouTube, Facebook, Instagram.



Display a sign at the church porch and in the sacristy advising people that the liturgy may be live-streamed.

Where possible, mark the seating area where the congregation may be visible on a live-stream so that occupants will know.

Cameras should be directed towards the sanctuary and not facing the congregation.

Live-streaming should end soon after the liturgy

LIVE STREAMING



or event has concluded.

Where a live-stream goes out over social media and comments are permitted, these should be monitored and noted.

9 | PLATFORM SPECIFIC ISSUES



Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are the only social media platforms currently approved for use by parishes and parish ministry groups in our diocese. YouTube and Vimeo are approved as video-sharing or live-streaming platforms.



THE DIOCESE **DOES NOT APPROVE OF SNAPCHAT OR TIKTOK** FOR PARISH USE



FACEBOOK & MESSENGER

Facebook is the most used social media platform in parishes. Its ease of use and interactivity make it attractive. Note that there are three dimensions of Facebook which interact but which a parish needs to differentiate between:

- **A FACEBOOK PAGE:** This may look and feel like a standard Facebook Profile but it is different. There are no 'friends' of a page. People choose to "Like" or "Follow" a page so that they can regularly see its content. All content placed on a Facebook Page can be viewed by everyone. All posts are public. People don't need to be Facebook users in order to see a page's content — they just need the name of the page. An advantage of using a Page for a parish is that the page can be assigned several administrators, editors and contributors – each using their own private account settings and passwords. A Facebook Page is much more suitable for parish use and it is diocesan policy that a parish Facebook presence is on a page — not on a profile.
- **A FACEBOOK PROFILE:** This is where an individual creates an identity for their own personal use on Facebook and then "invites" their acquaintances and others of their choosing to be Facebook 'friends'. In turn, they get to see what their 'friends' post on their profiles. Each post has individual settings which normally mean that only one's Facebook 'friends' see that post. Its set-up requires answers to questions about age, gender, education, etc which are clearly not applicable to a parish. Only people who are registered Facebook users can see a profile's content — so that's a big limitation for parishes. Another limitation is that it only has one name and password to log in and out.
- **MESSENGER:** This is a messaging forum which is also owned by Facebook. It provides an email-like platform which allows two Facebook users to message one another privately. An individual user can also use it to send a message privately to a page. Note that the same platform is used to read and reply to messages to either one's personal profile or the parish page. (Note the guidance about age-appropriate use of this feature.)
- Facebook and Messenger can be fully used on a desktop computer or a mobile device using their apps.



TWITTER

This social media platform got its name from the fact that originally a message on it could only have 60 characters. It's now 280 characters! And this paragraph is now 195 characters long!

- SO BREVITY IS A NECESSITY. And #hashtags play a key role.
- Here, too, a Twitter account has followers and an account can follow others. A Tweet can also be liked and retweeted (with or without commentary). A Tweet may include an image or video or a link to a file on a media-sharing platform like YouTube.
- The culture of Twitter may be less attractive to parishes because the interaction tends to be less nuanced and more confrontational at times. However, the **Good News needs to be proclaimed in the noisy streets as well as in the quiet chapels.**
- It's easy to upload a short Tweet and then realise it needs to be edited — but Twitter doesn't permit this. You can hide a tweet but it is isn't deleted and, by the time you hide it, it will have been seen by many. So think and type twice and Tweet afterwards.



INSTAGRAM

Instagram is owned by the same people as Facebook and Messenger. It is preferred by people who like images and video more than text. Each post on this platform must have an image or video. A parish accumulates "followers" on Instagram and then all your content appears on their 'wall' when they use the App. A post can only be made from the App — not on a desktop computer.

- Instagram may be your parish's first encounter with hashtags! These are words preceded by a # which help group posts on a similar topic so when people find one post about #corkandross they can click on the hashtags to see all posts about that topic.
- It is also possible to link a Facebook Page and an Instagram account so that you can post once and the content will appear in both.
- Instagram has grown rapidly because it is visual (short posts work best) and it is interactive (you will need to interact with other users in order to grow a following).
- Instagram has a relaxed culture until you post something inappropriate. (Attend to age and privacy issues raised above)

9 | PLATFORM SPECIFIC ISSUES



WHATSAPP

This messaging platform is an application which runs on smart phones and on desktop computers (with a phone connected). It uses people's mobile phone numbers.

- A parish can create a WhatsApp group, for example, for all Ministers of the Word. Then a message sent to the group goes to all members. However, the phone numbers of all group members are disclosed to all group members. If the person has a photo on their WhatsApp profile this is also shared with all members of a group. This has implications for GDPR compliance. Members must consent to be part of the group.
- Group members should also be made aware that all the conversations and comments are seen by all members of the group.
- Safeguarding protocols also require that a group is not a blend of adults and minors. These need to be separate. Parish personnel should only communicate directly with the parent/guardian of a minor.

10 | ONLINE RESOURCES

Data Protection Act 2018 <https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/act/2018/7/eng/enacted/a0718.pdf>

Data Protection Commission website www.dataprotection.ie

Webwise (Irish Internet Safety Awareness Centre): <https://www.webwise.ie/>

Common Sense Media <https://www.common sense media.org>

National Online Safety UK <https://nationalonlinesafety.com/guides>

The Digital Parish (A Resource of the Irish Bishop's Conference – on Facebook)
<https://www.facebook.com/digitalparish>

Safeguarding resources for Parish from the diocese
<http://corkandross.org/safeguardingchildren/#Resources-for-Parishes>

Diocesan Policy on Social Media and broadcasting <http://corkandross.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Guideline-T009-V-01-Use-of-Social-Media-to-Broadcast-Mass-and-Prayers.pdf>

Guidelines, principles and how-to guides from the Bishops Conference
<https://www.catholicbishops.ie/digitalhub/>

11 | CONTACTS

Safeguarding Office of the Diocese: <http://corkandross.org/safeguarding-children/>

Data Protection Office of the Diocese: <http://corkandross.org/data-protection-officer/>

Diocesan Office: info@corkandross.org

'THE INTERNET, IN PARTICULAR, OFFERS IMMENSE
POSSIBILITIES FOR ENCOUNTER AND SOLIDARITY. THIS
IS SOMETHING TRULY GOOD, A GIFT FROM GOD.'

(- POPE FRANCIS, JUNE 2014.)

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