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This Social Media Toolkit was prepared by the Office of Communications of the Diocese of Syracuse to provide our faith community (parishes, schools, and affiliated organizations) with more information about using social media to fulfill the diocesan mission of evangelization.

This information was last updated April 2018. Please contact [nossevoort@syrdio.org](mailto:nossevoort@syrdio.org) with questions about this kit.



## Why social media?

It seems as though everyone is using social media these days – even Pope Francis! Social media is an excellent and cost-effective way to share news, events, photos and videos. The diocese encourages parishes, schools, and affiliated organizations to create and maintain social media accounts on platforms including, but not limited to, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

Social media offers various opportunities to parishes, schools, and ministries: it can function as a place to promote events and share information, serve as a platform for increasing awareness about your organization, and perhaps most importantly, fulfill the diocesan mission of evangelization: to know, live, and share our Catholic faith.

The Church is called more than ever to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. We can do this by sharing the good things that we are doing as a diocese. It is easier than you think to share what's happening in your school, parish, or organization!

### **Social media is...**

- Free
- Dynamic
- Easy to use
- Available to just about everyone
- Where your community is

If you are wondering whether your parish, school, or ministry should be utilizing social media – the answer is usually going to be yes. You should ***not*** begin a social media account, however, if you are unable to properly maintain it. You may be wondering which social media platform is right for your organization. Each social media platform is unique – and each has a different audience.

## “The Big 3:” Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram

### Facebook

In recent years, Facebook users have shifted from high school-age kids, college students and young adults to an older demographic. Despite this, Facebook remains the most widely used platform. Additionally, Facebook advertising is cost-effective, simple, and offers a great return on investment.

*A quick look:*

- 74% of users are women, 62% are men
- 81% of adults 18-29 have an account
- 78% of adults 30-49 have an account
- 65% of adults 50-64 have an account
- 41% of adults 65+ use Facebook, too

### The Basics

- Organizations can build a page (almost like a mini-website) for their parish, school, or ministry with contact information (physical address, telephone, email, website URL), hours, mission statement, and more
- Posts include text, photos, videos, and links
- Users engage with posts through various reactions: like, love, haha, wow, sad, anger, by sharing your posts with their friends, and by commenting
- Schedule posts ahead of time
- Share posts from other pages (like The Catholic Sun, Diocese of Syracuse, USCCB)
- Post events (you can even collect RSVPs)
- View page performance via Insights, including demographics, reach, video views, and more
- Advertise quickly and cost-effectively on a budget
- Can be updated and accessed via smartphone or a desktop

*Good for...*

- Reaching middle-aged adults, Baby Boomers, and parents
- Sharing photos and video
- Promoting events
- Creating a forum for discussion
- Building general awareness of your parish, school, or ministry
- Enhancing your overall web presence

## Twitter

24% of adults use Twitter – and many report that it is where they go for breaking news. Most Twitter users access the platform via the app on the smartphone. The majority of users are between the ages of 18 and 29, so this platform has a younger demographic. Twitter is a great tool for interacting with other Catholic organizations and pushing out news.

### *A quick look:*

- 24% of users are women, 23% are men
- 40% of adults 18-29 have an account

### The Basics

- Posts – called Tweets - can include text, photos, videos, and links
- Tweets are restricted to 280 characters (including links and hashtags)
- Users engage with Tweets by liking, retweeting (sharing) or commenting
- Use of hashtags (# used to identify messages related to a specific topic) important
- Text-heavy, so Tweets with photos tend to stand out
- Considered to be the most labor-intensive platform out of “The Big 3”
- Least social of all platforms
- Success measured by impressions (number of users that have seen your Tweet) as opposed to engagement
- Schedule Tweets ahead of time with programs like Hootsuite or Buffer (cannot schedule within Twitter itself)
- Can be updated and accessed via smartphone or a desktop

### *Good for...*

- Pushing out quick updates, such as an event cancellation
- Sharing links (i.e. to an event on your Facebook page, pastor’s blog)

## **Instagram**

Since 2016, Instagram use has increased by 9%. While this may seem like a small number, use of Instagram is growing at a much faster rate than Facebook and Twitter. Instagram users are younger (the majority are between 18 and 29) but it is becoming a popular platform for Catholic organizations.

*A quick look:*

- 40% of adults 30-49 have an account

### The Basics

- The app is designed for use on smartphones. Instagram is accessible via other devices, like desktops and iPads, but functionality is limited
- Customize by utilizing a business account and include a brief description of your organization, contact information, and a link to more information
- Posts can include text, photos, videos (currently cannot include hyperlinks in post captions)
- Followers engage by liking (double-tapping post) and commenting
- Followers can share posts using apps like “Repost”
- Schedule posts ahead of time programs like Hootsuite or Buffer (cannot schedule within Instagram itself)
- Connect your account to Facebook and Twitter, saving time and effort
- Utilize the new Stories feature to share more content, including live video, and post photos/video with cool effects, like Superzoom
- Advertise via your Facebook Business account
- Take advantage of new Highlights feature to showcase specific posts and generate brand awareness

*Good for...*

- Sharing photos of parish life
- Inspiring and evangelizing
- Taking advantage of user’s short attention spans with brief video
- Reaching a younger demographic

## Timesaving Tips + Tools

Many organizations are tentative to dive into social media because of they feel that the amount of time required to create, launch, and monitor new accounts is simply too much. Churches – which often operate with limited staff and budget – may be especially hesitant. Fortunately, there are many ways to save time while still maintaining a necessary social media presence.

### **Schedule posts in advance**

The ultimate time-saver is the ability to schedule multiple posts ahead of time. Facebook allows you to schedule posts directly on your page; Twitter and Instagram do not offer this capability from within the platform, but you can use programs like Hootsuite or Buffer to schedule Tweets and Instagram posts. Block off an hour at the beginning of the week and use that time to schedule social media posts – not only will you save time, but you will improve the consistency of your message and ensure that your accounts are up to date and relevant across the board. You can even schedule events ahead of time.

See: <https://www.facebook.com/help/389849807718635>

### **Create a content calendar**

(and refer to calendars that already exist, like the USCCB Liturgical/Daily Readings Calendar) Planning is an excellent way to cut down on time spent creating last-minute content. Take five or ten minutes during the weekly staff meeting to discuss upcoming events, Liturgical celebrations, etc. and make note of what you want to highlight on social media. Creating a shared content calendar in Google fosters collaboration and raises awareness of important happenings. For parishes, this is especially helpful during Advent and Lent.

See: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/index.cfm>, <http://www.usccb.org/about/divine-worship/liturgical-calendar/index.cfm>

### **Connect your accounts**

By linking your Instagram account to your Facebook page and Twitter profile, you can save time by posting on all three platforms – without navigating to three different accounts. This not only cuts down on time, but also keeps your message consistent.

See: <https://help.instagram.com/356902681064399>

## Get organized

Some folks prefer to use a social media management program like Hootsuite or Buffer to manage all of their accounts in one place. These programs allow you to schedule posts across all of your platforms and in many case, also monitor post performance. Hootsuite and Buffer offer free plans – with some restrictions (for example, Hootsuite only allows you to schedule 30 posts ahead of time and Buffer will only permit you to manage three accounts). If your parish, school, or ministry has tasked one person with managing all of your social media accounts, tools like these will likely be a great help.

See: <https://hootsuite.com/plans/free>, <https://buffer.com/>

## Take advantage of free design tools

It is now easier than ever to create eye-catching social images online without spending a dime. Websites like Canva give even the most novice graphic designer the ability to create social media graphics, Facebook cover photos, Twitter and Instagram posts, and more – free.

See: <https://www.canva.com/create-a-design>

## Save time by sharing

Apps like Repost allow you to share Instagram posts from other accounts with just a few clicks (and it's free!) The diocesan Instagram account often reposts photos and video from the USCCB and diocesan parishes. See a great Facebook post? Use the share button to share it to your organization's page. On Twitter, simply hit the retweet button.

See: <http://repostapp.com/>

## Don't reinvent the wheel

As Church, we have a unique advantage when it comes to existing content. We have daily readings from the Bible, the saint of the day, the Pope's social media channels, and on a local note, daily news from The Catholic Sun, weekly emails from the diocese and videos on the Syracuse Catholic Television YouTube channel. Whether you are just starting out on social media, or are just looking for worthwhile content to share, these sources are a reliable place to find great Catholic content.

See: <https://www.franciscanmedia.org/source/saint-of-the-day/>, <http://thecatholicsun.com/>, <https://www.youtube.com/user/syrdio>, [https://twitter.com/pontifex\\_en](https://twitter.com/pontifex_en), <https://www.instagram.com/franciscus/>

## Promoting events

Many organizations find social media to be worthwhile simply for promoting upcoming events. Creating a Facebook event gives you the opportunity to cast a wide net in terms of exposure, and what is especially great about social media is that your followers do much of the work for you. When one person indicates they are interested in your upcoming event, all of their friends will see it. Facebook events allow you to collect RSVPs and create discussions. You can also schedule events ahead of time, share an event to multiple pages, and send a co-host request to other pages (like the diocesan Facebook page and The Catholic Sun). Remember that promotion does not stop once the event is over. It is important so share photos and video from the event, thank folks for coming, and remind people of future events.

See: <https://events.fb.com/>

## Growing your audience

Social media is an indispensable tool for parishes, ministries and Catholic schools because it is free marketing. You can put your social media fans and followers to work for you by creating and sharing engaging content that is relevant and timely. Of course, before you put them to work, you need to gain an audience (community). The best way to do this is to post quality content on a consistent basis.

There are many methods for growing a social media following, but without a regular posting schedule and good content, none of them will work.

**Follow relevant accounts:** social media is about connections. By following related and authoritative accounts, you increase the likelihood that those accounts will follow you back. That relationship between two social media accounts is important for two reasons – first, it lets other social media users know that your account is sharing consistent and quality content, and second, it lets Google (and other search engines) know that your organization is worthy of higher rankings in search results because you have a relationship with other authoritative organizations. Example of authoritative Catholic accounts include the USCCB and their affiliated ministries (For Your Marriage, USCCB Vocations), Catholic Charities USA, other dioceses (especially if they are verified accounts), well-known Catholic speakers, other bishops, etc.

**Engage with other accounts:** take time (even if it is ten or fifteen minutes each week) to engage with the accounts you follow. Leave a thoughtful comment and like or share a post. This is a simple way to ‘be seen’ by other social media users and accounts.



**Use hashtags:** a hashtag (# - pound sign) identifies messages related to a specific topic. Hashtags identify trending (the most talked about) topics on social media. By getting in on the action, you are increasing visibility of your account(s). Hashtag use does not always have to be serious business. For example, if it's National Hot Dog Day, grab some dogs and take a photo of Chancery staff. When you post the photo, use #NationalHotDogDay – any social media user who clicks on the hashtag will see your post. You can also come up with your own hashtags, and use them each time you post. For example, during the Year of the Family here in the Diocese of Syracuse, we use #YearOfFamily when posting on social media. We also use #SyracuseDiocese.

**Take a grassroots approach:** promote your social media accounts on *and* offline. Include an announcement in every bulletin that encourages parishioners (and visitors) to visit your social media accounts. If you are new to social media, create a bulletin insert that announces your new initiative and includes the URLs of new accounts. Put links to your social media accounts on the homepage of your website. At events (at the parish, and within the community) hand out business cards with your social media accounts listed on the front and your website URL and additional contact information on the back.

## Advertising

Social media advertising is cost-effective and, in most cases, very easy to do.

See: <https://www.facebook.com/business/products/ads>, <https://business.twitter.com/en/solutions/twitter-ads.html>

## Other social media platforms

There are numerous social media platforms besides “The Big 3.” Popular platforms include Snapchat, YouTube, LinkedIn, Periscope, Flipagram, etc. There's no reason a parish, ministry, or school cannot have a presence on more than just Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, but remember, social media marketing involves a significant (at least at the onset) time investment, and in order to be successful, you must be able to post quality content on a consistent basis. You also need to know your audience – if you are a rural parish with an older community, Facebook is probably the platform for you. If you are an urban parish with many young families and a large college student population, Instagram and YouTube may be your best bet. Not only do all social media platforms meet the needs of different audiences, they are all designed to promote different content.

If you have questions about the suitability of a particular social media platform for your parish, ministry, or school, please contact the diocese.

## Measuring success

It doesn't make sense to invest time or money into a marketing strategy if you cannot measure its success. Most social media platforms offer analytics that can help you measure successes and determine the return on your investment – be sure to sign up with a business account in order to access analytics. It's important to take time to review these tools regularly.

So, what indicators signal success? What should you be paying attention to?

**Facebook:** within the Insights tab, Page Views, Reach, and Page Engagements are the three indicators worth focusing on. For parishes and schools, demographics will also provide an important look at who is visiting your page and where they're coming from. See

<https://www.facebook.com/business/news/audience-insights>.

**Twitter:** impressions (number of times a Tweet appeared) are the best indicator of Twitter performance. Engagements are also important, as they signal the quality, relevance, and timeliness of the content you're sharing. See <https://business.twitter.com/en/analytics.html>.

**Instagram:** it is worthwhile to monitor profile visits, as well the performance of individual posts (for example, how many people visited your profile after viewing an individual post and how many people a post reached). See <https://www.facebook.com/business/help/1533933820244654>.

It is also a good idea to measure the success of all promotional efforts by asking people how they heard about you. For example, did they find your parish on Facebook? Consider asking this question when registering new parishioners.

## Diocesan guidelines

Per the diocesan handbook:

- There should be at least two (2) administrators with access to your social media accounts to allow for rapid response and continuous monitoring of the page(s)
- Store passwords and login credentials safely and provide access to more than one designated adult
- Abide by diocesan guidelines at all times
- Abide by copyright, fair use and financial disclosure regulations
- Do not divulge confidential information
- Do not quote individuals or post photos/videos of individuals without prior written consent
- Do not post photos of minors without obtaining parent/guardian written consent (do not identify any minor children by name)
- Practice Christian charity and remember that you are a representative of your faith and the Diocese of Syracuse at all times

### **Social networking with minors**

Parents must have access to all online content provided to their minor children. Parents must be made aware of how social media is being used in your parish, ministry, or school, be told how to access any and all social media pages, and given the opportunity to see all content provided to their children via social media sites (including messaging apps and email). For more information, see the diocesan employee handbook or visit [ftc.gov](http://www.usccb.org/about/communications/social-media-guidelines.cfm) and search for Children's Online Privacy Protection Act.'

See: <http://www.usccb.org/about/communications/social-media-guidelines.cfm>

### **Photos of minors**

It is the policy of the Diocese of Syracuse that photos of minors may not be taken or distributed without obtaining written consent from the parent or guardian. It is also our policy that minors should not be identified by name online.

## Safe Environment considerations

In today's online world, many parents have concerns about their children's digital footprint. The Diocese of Syracuse and its parishes, schools, ministries, and affiliated organizations are dedicated to protecting children, young people, and vulnerable adults and providing a safe environment online and off. The Office of Safe Environment offers more information related to the safety of children, young people, and vulnerable adults on our website: <https://syracusediocese.org/safe-environment/resources/>.

### **Important resources:**

<https://syracusediocese.org/assets/PDFs---Diocesan-Offices/Safe-Environment/Diocesan-Child-and-Youth-Protection-Policy.-January-2016.-PDF.pdf>

<https://syracusediocese.org/assets/PDFs---Diocesan-Offices/Safe-Environment/Diocese-of-Syracuse-Code-of-conduct.pdf>

If you have questions about diocesan social media guidelines, please contact the Office of Communications. If you have concerns about content shared on social media by a parish, ministry, or school (or a representative of a parish, school, or ministry) please contact the Office of Safe Environment at 315-470-1421 or [safeenvironment@syrдио.org](mailto:safeenvironment@syrдио.org).

## Resources available to you from the Office of Communications

Launching social media initiatives in your parish, ministry, or school can be overwhelming, but the Office of Communications is available to assist you each step of the way.

*Contact our office if you need...*

- Assistance getting started with any social media platform
- Answers to questions regarding diocesan social media guidelines
- Help promoting an upcoming event or social media post
- Suggestions for content sources
- Help with social media analytics

### **Contact information:**

Nicole E. Ossevoort, Communications & Social Media Specialist

315-459-7170

[nossevoort@syrдио.org](mailto:nossevoort@syrдио.org)

## The Catholic Sun and Syracuse Catholic Television

Both The Catholic Sun – the award-winning diocesan newspaper of the Diocese of Syracuse – and Syracuse Catholic Television are available to all parishes, schools, and ministries. Additionally, both are great sources of social media content. The Diocesan Communications Kit includes more information.

See: [www.thecatholicsun.com](http://www.thecatholicsun.com), <https://www.youtube.com/user/syrдио>

## Socialize with the Diocese of Syracuse

Please visit <https://syracusediocese.org/offices/communications/diocesan-social-media/> for a list of diocesan social media.

What we say and how we say it, our every word and gesture, ought to express God's compassion, tenderness and forgiveness for all. Love, by its nature, is communication; it leads to openness and sharing. If our hearts and actions are inspired by charity, by divine love, then our communication will be touched by God's own power. As sons and daughters of God, we are called to communicate with everyone, without exception. Communication has the power to build bridges, to enable encounter and inclusion, and thus to enrich society. How beautiful it is when people select their words and actions with care, in the effort to avoid misunderstandings, to heal wounded memories and to build peace and harmony. Words can build bridges between individuals and within families, social groups and peoples. This is possible both in the material world and the digital world. Emails, text messages, social networks and chats can also be fully human forms of communication. It is not technology which determines whether or not communication is authentic, but rather the human heart and our capacity to use wisely the means at our disposal. The internet can help us to be better citizens. Access to digital networks entails a responsibility for our neighbour whom we do not see but who is nonetheless real and has a dignity which must be respected. The internet can be used wisely to build a society which is healthy and open to sharing. This is a gift of God which involves a great responsibility.

*~ Pope Francis, Communication and Mercy: A Fruitful Encounter, January 24, 2016*