St. Lawrence Catholic Church & School

Ministry Social Media Guidelines & Best Practices

Purpose

Social media is an important tool for sharing the mission, ministries, and community of St. Lawrence Catholic Church & School. These guidelines help ensure that ministry communications are consistent, respectful, safe, and reflective of our Catholic identity.

All ministry social media accounts, posts, photos, videos, and digital communications should represent St. Lawrence with professionalism, charity, and respect.

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1. Social Media Account Management

Ministry Accounts

- Ministries may have different processes and permissions for managing their social media accounts.
- Each ministry should follow the account management and posting procedures established for its specific ministry.
- All active ministry social media accounts should be communicated to the Communications Office.
- Login information should be securely stored and shared only with appropriate ministry representatives.
- When ministry leadership changes, account access should be reviewed and updated.
- The Office of Communications should have access to all ministry accounts.

Posting Permissions

- Posting permissions and approval processes may vary by ministry.
- Each ministry should follow its established process for determining who may create, approve, and publish content.
- Regardless of the ministry's individual process, all content should follow these guidelines and represent St. Lawrence appropriately.
- When questions arise about parish-wide communication, branding, safety, or appropriate social media practices, contact Keishla Espinal.

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2. School-Related Social Media Accounts

All school-related social media accounts, will follow the Class Intercom submission and approval process.

Content Submission & Approval

- All school-related social media content should be submitted through **Class Intercom**.
- Class Intercom is set up in a flow where it will go through the approval of those who need to review and then to Keishla for final approval.

Account Access

- Individuals should not have direct access to school-related social media accounts.
- The President/Leader will be the only person with direct account access.
- The President/Leader access is limited to monitoring and account management functions, including:
    - Monitoring comments and messages
    - Responding to or addressing appropriate comments when necessary
    - Liking appropriate posts from St. Lawrence, St. Lawrence ministries, or school-related accounts
    - Monitoring activity on the account
- The President should not create or publish posts directly to the account.
- All content intended for publication must go through the established Class Intercom submission and approval process.

School Social Media Safety

- Do not use school-related social media accounts to privately communicate with minors.
- Direct Messages (DMs) should never be used to communicate privately with minors.
- Questions from parents or families should be directed to the appropriate official communication channel.
- Do not follow or interact with personal accounts belonging to minors.
- Account likes and follows should remain limited to appropriate St. Lawrence, school, ministry, and religious organization accounts.
- Do not tag minors or their personal accounts.
- Do not tag personal social media accounts. Business, professional, school, ministry, and organization accounts may be tagged when appropriate.

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3. Our Online Presence: How We Portray St. Lawrence

Everything we share should reflect who we are as a Catholic community.

We strive to portray:

- Joy and hospitality
- Faith and prayer
- Community and belonging
- Service and generosity
- Excellence and professionalism
- The dignity of every person

Avoid:

- Content that may appear exclusive, political, controversial, or divisive
- Images that do not represent individuals respectfully
- Posts that embarrass, criticize, or single out individuals
- Poor-quality images or unclear messaging
- Sharing personal information about parishioners, students, or families
- Content that could negatively reflect on St. Lawrence or its ministries

Our goal is not only to announce events but to share the story of God working through our community.

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4. Minors & Media Release Guidelines

The safety and privacy of children and youth are a top priority.

Before Photographing or Recording Minors

- A valid media release must be on file before a child's photo, video, or identifying information is shared publicly.
- Ministries should only use images obtained through approved St. Lawrence events and activities.
- Personal photos taken by volunteers should not be posted without proper authorization.

When Posting Images of Minors

- Do not include a child's full name with their photo.
- Do not share personal details such as a home address, contact information, school schedule, or other information that could compromise safety.
- Do not tag minors or their personal accounts.
- Do not share identifying information about minors in captions, comments, or stories.

Youth Ministry & Student Events

- Follow all applicable diocesan Safe Environment requirements.

- Adults should never communicate privately with minors through ministry social media accounts.
- Do not use Direct Messages (DMs) to communicate privately with minors.
- Social media interactions involving minors should remain public, appropriate, and ministry-related.
- Questions or requests from minors should be directed to the appropriate official ministry communication channel and, when necessary, a parent or guardian.

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5. Photography & Video Standards

The quality of our photos and videos reflects the quality of our ministry.

Image Requirements

- Use clear, well-lit photos.
- Capture authentic moments and interactions.
- Avoid blurry, dark, or pixelated images.
- Capture people actively participating rather than posed photos only.
- Be mindful of what is visible in the background, including personal information or sensitive materials.

Avoid:

- Photos where people are intentionally looking away or appear uncomfortable
- Empty rooms or poorly framed photos
- Screenshots of photos from other platforms
- Images that could embarrass or portray someone disrespectfully

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6. Video Guidelines

Video Quality

- Record vertically for Instagram Stories and Reels.
- Record horizontally for YouTube, livestreams, or presentations.
- Use good lighting and avoid filming with bright windows behind subjects.
- Keep videos steady; use a tripod when possible.
- Record clear audio whenever possible.

Recommended Video Length

- Reels: 15–30 seconds

- Event highlights: 30–60 seconds
- Announcements: Under 60 seconds when possible

Video Content Should:

- Have a clear purpose.
- Begin with an engaging moment or message.
- Show participation, emotion, and community.
- Include captions or text when appropriate.

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7. Social Media Formatting & Content Guidelines

Instagram & Facebook

- Portrait images: 1080 × 1350 pixels recommended
- Square images: 1080 × 1080 pixels

Reels

- Vertical format: 1080 × 1920 pixels
- Use captions or text overlays when appropriate.

Creating Engaging Content

- Flyers generally do not perform as well on social media.
- Avoid repeatedly posting the exact same content.
- Find creative ways to promote events through photos, videos, Reels, and engaging captions.
- Keep captions clear, concise, and engaging.
- Include important information such as who, what, and when.
- Do not include exact dates in general social media captions when involving minors or school related events. Direct followers to the appropriate official communication channel for exact dates and additional details.
- When sharing information involving minors, make sure the content follows St. Lawrence guidelines and applicable media-release requirements.

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8. Branding Guidelines

Use:

- St. Lawrence-approved logos when appropriate

- Approved colors and fonts
- Consistent naming for St. Lawrence Catholic Church and St. Lawrence Catholic School
- Consistent visual and written branding

Avoid:

- Creating unofficial logos
- Using outdated graphics
- Mixing unrelated branding styles
- Altering St. Lawrence logos in ways that change their appearance

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9. Event Promotion & Content Submission

- Events and promotional content should be submitted to Communications as far in advance as possible.
- Each ministry may have different procedures for submitting and publishing content.
- Follow the specific submission and approval process established for your ministry.
- Include relevant information such as:
    - Event name
    - Date and time
    - Location
    - Description
    - Registration information or link
    - Contact information
    - Photos or graphics when available

Promoting Events

When appropriate, share:

- Event previews
- Invitations
- Behind-the-scenes preparation
- Event highlights
- Thank-you messages
- Photos of participation
- Stories of impact

Avoid overwhelming followers with repeated reminders of the same event. Consider different content formats and messages when promoting an event more than once.

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10. Comments, Messages & Online Interactions

Ministry accounts should:

- Respond with kindness and charity.
- Direct questions requiring staff assistance to the appropriate office or official communication channel.
- Avoid arguments or debates online.
- Never use social media to engage in private conversations with minors.
- Direct parents, guardians, and families to official communication channels and forms when appropriate.
- Never share private or confidential information through comments or messages.

Handling Inappropriate Comments

- Do not delete comments simply because someone disagrees.
- If a comment violates community guidelines or is inappropriate, the comment may be hidden.
- If an account repeatedly posts inappropriate or unkind comments, the account may be blocked.
- When possible, document serious or concerning interactions before removing or blocking an account.

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11. Following, Liking & Interacting With Other Accounts

Ministry social media accounts should maintain a thoughtful and appropriate online presence.

Likes

Ministry accounts should only like posts from:

- St. Lawrence Catholic Church
- St. Lawrence Catholic School
- St. Lawrence ministry accounts
- Appropriate religious organizations

Following

Ministry accounts should follow accounts that are relevant and appropriate to St. Lawrence, its ministries, or the Catholic community.

This may include:

- St. Lawrence accounts
- St. Lawrence ministry accounts
- Catholic organizations
- Diocesan organizations
- Appropriate religious organizations
- Appropriate ministry leaders

Avoid following accounts that may be controversial, inappropriate, or inconsistent with the values and reputation of St. Lawrence.

Do not follow or interact with accounts simply because they are trending or popular.

Do not follow or interact with personal social media accounts belonging to minors.

Review the account's existing likes and follows periodically to ensure they continue to reflect the ministry and St. Lawrence appropriately.

Do not tag personal social media accounts. Business, professional, school, ministry, and organization accounts may be tagged when appropriate.

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12. Audio & Trending Content

- Use audio that is appropriate for a Catholic parish and family audience.
- Review trending audio before using it.
- Do not use audio containing profanity, suggestive or inappropriate language, or themes that do not align with St. Lawrence values.
- Avoid audio associated with content that may be inappropriate or controversial for a parish audience.
- Trending audio can change quickly, so previously used audio does not automatically make it appropriate for future content.
- When in doubt, choose clean, instrumental, faith-based, or otherwise appropriate audio.

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13. Consistency Is Key

- Maintain consistency in posting and communication.
- Plan content ahead of time when possible.
- Use consistent branding, messaging, and visual quality.
- Avoid duplicate or conflicting posts across St. Lawrence accounts.
- Coordinate with Communications when content will be shared across multiple St. Lawrence accounts.

- Keep the overall social media presence welcoming, organized, and reflective of the ministry.

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14. Content Ideas for Ministries

Good content includes:

- Ministry moments
- Volunteer highlights
- Faith stories
- Behind-the-scenes preparation
- Scripture reflections
- Invitations to upcoming events
- Community celebrations
- Service opportunities
- Stories of impact
- Photos and videos that show authentic community life

Remember: People connect with people. Share the faces and stories that make St. Lawrence a community.

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15. Responsibility

By managing or contributing to a ministry social media account, volunteers and staff are expected to:

- Follow these guidelines.
- Protect the dignity and privacy of others.
- Protect the safety of minors.
- Represent St. Lawrence faithfully online.
- Use good judgment when posting, commenting, following, liking, sharing, or interacting with other accounts.
- Follow the specific posting and management procedures established by their ministry.

Questions regarding social media should be directed to:

Keishla Espinal
Communications Director
St. Lawrence Catholic Church & School
Email: kespinal@stlawrence.org
Phone: (813) 875-4040 ext. 255

Before You Post: Quick Checklist

- Do I have permission to share this photo or video, including a valid media release for any minors?
- Does this content reflect the mission and values of St. Lawrence Catholic Church & School?
- Is the photo or video clear, well-lit, and high quality?
- Have I avoided sharing personal or identifying information about parishioners, students, or minors?
- Does the caption clearly communicate who, what, and when without unnecessary exact dates or personal details?
- Is the caption accurate, welcoming, and free of spelling or grammar errors?
- Have I tagged only appropriate St. Lawrence, parish, school, or ministry accounts and never minors or their personal accounts?
- Is the content appropriate for a Catholic parish and family audience?
- Is the audio free of profanity, suggestive language, or inappropriate themes?
- Am I interacting only with appropriate accounts?
- Am I avoiding private communication with minors, including DMs?
- Would I be comfortable seeing this post on the parish website or in front of the pastor, parishioners, and visitors?
- Am I following the specific posting and approval process established by my ministry?
- If I am unsure about something, have I followed my ministry's established process or contacted the appropriate person for guidance?