



**KNIGHTS
OF COLUMBUS**
IN SERVICE TO ONE. IN SERVICE TO ALL.

Member Social Communications Policy

INTRODUCTION

This policy guides members¹ and subordinate units² of the Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus in their use of social communications. This policy applies to subordinate units, members holding office, and members of the Knights of Columbus in their use social communications when a member chooses to identify his association with the Knights of Columbus or to discuss the work of the Knights of Columbus. This policy applies to members as members, not members as agents. Agents should contact Field Management to obtain additional guidance regarding permissible use of social communications in the sale and servicing of financial products and services.

"Social communications" includes, but is not limited to, mobile communications, including text messaging, the internet, the World Wide Web, and social media. Social media includes social networking sites such as Facebook and Linked-In, video and photo sharing sites such as Flickr and YouTube, micro-blogging sites such as Twitter, weblogs, forums, and discussion boards such as Yahoo! and Google Groups, online encyclopedias such as Wikipedia, as well as all websites and/or platforms that allow users to publish user-generated content.

The United States Bishops have recognized that "[s]ocial media can be powerful tools for strengthening community, although social media interaction should not be viewed as a substitute for face-to-face gatherings. Social media can support communities in a myriad of ways: connecting people with similar interests, sharing information about in-person events, providing ways for people to engage in dialogue, etc."³ At the same time, the Holy Father reminds us that "[i]t is important always to remember that virtual contact cannot and must not take the place of direct human contact with people at every level of our lives."⁴

Social communications are powerful tools that, when used in light of the Catholic Faith and the principles of the Knights of Columbus, can build up the Knights of Columbus by encouraging its members to do charitable works and supporting its members in their roles as husbands, fathers, and Catholic men. Members and subordinate units should attract membership by publicizing the many good works of the Knights of Columbus using social communications. Subordinate unit and/or member websites and social media sites are encouraged to "like" or otherwise link to online social communications relating to the Supreme Council, as well as to other websites and social media sites related to the Knights of Columbus, such as *Headline Bistro* and *Fathers For Good*.

¹ Membership in the Knights of Columbus is limited to men who are "practical Catholics in union with the Holy See." This means that an applicant or member accepts the teaching authority of the Catholic Church on matters of faith and morals, aspires to live in accord with the precepts of the Catholic Church, and is in good standing in the Catholic Church.

² "Subordinate Units" of the Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus include local councils, assemblies, state councils, chapters, and territories.

³ *Social Media Guidelines - United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*, available at <http://www.usccb.org/about/communications/social-media-guidelines.cfm> (last visited November 3, 2011)

⁴ *Truth, Proclamation and Authenticity of Life in the Digital Age*, Message of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI for the 45th World Communications Day, June 5, 2011, available at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/communications/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20110124_45th-world-communications-day_en.html (last visited November 3, 2011)

Using Social Communications To Build Up The Knights Of Columbus

- Organize good works and promote the charitable mission of the Knights of Columbus in the community through social communications.
- Post notices of regular meetings and events.
- Post petitions for prayer or request for help in assisting brother Knights or their families.
- Promote the teachings of the Catholic Church and the principles of the Knights of Columbus by including weblinks to sites maintained by The Vatican, <http://www.vatican.va> (last visited November 3, 2011), and <http://www.news.va/en> (last visited November 3, 2011), the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, <http://usccb.org> (last visited November 3, 2011), the Catholic News Agency <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/> (last visited November 3, 2011), and websites maintained by the Knights of Columbus, including <http://www.kofc.org> (last visited November 3, 2011), <http://www.headlinebistro.com> (last visited November 3, 2011), and <http://www.fathersforgood.org> (last visited November 3, 2011).

Social Communications General Principles

- Remember that the Laws of the Knights of Columbus apply to social communications.
- Read and follow the terms of use of the website or social media site you are using.
- Know your privacy settings. Check and re-check your privacy settings frequently.
- Remember that social communications are not a replacement for in-person human interaction.
- Prayerfully consider how you conduct yourself in your use of online social communications.
- Use prudent judgment and practice Christian charity.
- Honor human dignity and maintain a culture of respect, dialogue, and friendship in social communications.
- Understand that social communication is a dialogue, not a monologue.
- Listen to what others are saying and then respond.
- Be polite and respectful of others' opinions, especially when you find yourself in disagreement, and even in times of heated discussion and debate.
- Think before you post! The reputation of the Knights of Columbus as well as your own reputation depends upon you conducting yourself as a Catholic Gentleman, both online and offline. What you post is forever. Do not share something online that you might later regret or would otherwise not want the entire world to know. Ask yourself: "*Am I pleasing God by posting this?*", "*Would I want my mother to see this?*", or "*Would I want to read about this on the front page of the morning paper?*"
- Do not pick a fight. Be the first to acknowledge and correct your own mistakes. Apologize when you are wrong and seek forgiveness.
- Use discretion and resolve disputes and controversies privately and/or offline.
- Less is more. Keep it simple and to the point. Avoid "oversharing"- too much information given about any one (usually personal) subject matter.
- Be honest and transparent. When you make a reference, identify a source for the reference. Where possible, link back to the source. Do not alter previous posts without indicating that you have done so.
- Do not post hateful, defamatory, racist, or pornographic content, which is offensive to human dignity and Christian charity.

- Do not post any material that incites violence or illegal acts or is otherwise offensive to human dignity and Christian charity.
- Do not disclose personal data, such as a person's social security number, in social communications.
- Respect privacy, trademarks, copyright, and other applicable laws when posting content in social communications.
- Do not communicate with minors directly. Always communicate with and through the parents or legal guardians of minor children.
- The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, effective April 21, 2000, applies to the online collection of personal information from children under 13. These rules spell out what a website operator must include in a privacy policy, when and how to seek verifiable consent from a parent and what responsibilities an operator has to protect children's privacy and safety online. For more information on how to comply with The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, please visit <http://business.ftc.gov/privacy-and-security/children%E2%80%99s-online-privacy> (last visited November 3, 2011)
- Be sure to have permission from a minor's parent or guardian before contacting the minor via email, social media, and/or internet or before posting pictures, video, and other information that may identify that minor.
- Learn how to disable geo-location "tagging" that cameras may automatically embed in digital images.
- If you use social communications to communicate with children under age 18, parents must have access to everything provided to their children. For example, parents should be made aware of how online social communications are being used, be told how to access the sites, and be given the opportunity to be copied on all material sent to their children via social networking (including text messages).
- Members are strongly encouraged to save copies of conversations whenever possible, especially those that concern the personal sharing of a teen or young adult. (This may be especially important with text messaging.)

GUIDANCE FOR MEMBERS

As a member or an officer, you may participate in social communications without declaring your association with the Knights of Columbus. This policy does not apply to personal use of social communications where you make no reference to the Knights of Columbus. If, however, you identify yourself as a Knight in social communications, you need to be clear that you are participating in your own name, not as an official representative of the Knights of Columbus. Despite all the care you may take not to hold yourself out as an official representative of the Knights of Columbus, any statements, images or material you post online may still be viewed as being made on behalf of the Knights of Columbus. When you participate in social communications and refer to your membership in the Knights of Columbus, you should keep in mind the following:

- When you discuss Knights of Columbus-related matters in social communications, identify yourself by name, council name and number, and, when relevant, your role within the Knights of Columbus.
- When identifying yourself as a Knight in social communications, check that your profile and related content reflects the Catholic identity and mission of the Knight of Columbus.
- Be sure that any information about the Knights of Columbus you share is informed, factually accurate, and complies with the Laws, official policies, programs, and/or initiatives of the Knights of Columbus. When in doubt, refer to the Supreme Council's website at www.kofc.org/
- Do not import digital images of the trademarked name and emblem of the Knights of Columbus from the Knights of Columbus Supreme Council website to your personal profiles or postings online without express authorization. Instead, simply “like” or otherwise link to Supreme Council social media sites and/or other official Knights of Columbus websites, which will signal your association with the Knights of Columbus by, in most cases, causing the name and emblem of the Knights of Columbus to appear on your website or social media site.
- Although you may not be an official representative, you nevertheless become an online ambassador of the Knights of Columbus in your online engagements when you reference your association with the Knights of Columbus. When identifying yourself as a Knight online, your conduct informs what others think about the Knights of Columbus. Conduct yourself as a Catholic Gentleman at all times. Protect your good name and the good name of the Knights of Columbus by your thoughtful engagement in social media.
- Encourage discussion of the good works and charitable mission of the Knights of Columbus with an aim to attracting members. Remember that the Knights of Columbus is a Catholic men's fraternal service organization whose mission is to witness to our Catholic principles of charity, unity and fraternity by performing spiritual and corporal works of mercy locally and throughout the world. The Knights of Columbus believes that the best way to renew society and build a true “civilization of love” is through the personal witness of its members to the love of Jesus Christ. The Knights of Columbus gives no more compelling witness to the love of Jesus Christ than when its members are united in fraternal bond performing charitable works.
- Avoid making negative judgments about persons and organizations in connection with your membership in the Knights of Columbus. Avoid topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory — such as politics. Do not use ethnic slurs, personal insults, personal attacks, obscenity, or engage in any conduct unbecoming of a Catholic Gentleman.
- When expressing a personal opinion in the context of an online discussion relating to the Knights of Columbus, write in the first person. Be clear that, although you are a member of the Knights of Columbus, you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of the Knights of Columbus. Use a disclaimer when necessary to ensure that your opinion is understood to be

yours and not that of the Knights of Columbus. A disclaimer is required when you (1) identify yourself as a Knight of Columbus and (2) express an opinion online.

The disclaimer should provide as follows:

The opinions expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Knights of Columbus.

OR

The views expressed on this site are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Knights of Columbus.

The point is to let people know that you are speaking for yourself, not on behalf of the Knights of Columbus. This disclaimer also should be used when a member makes a politically leaning post or comment online in the context of his association with the Knights of Columbus.

- Post and discuss only publicly available information. Do not disclose confidential or other proprietary information concerning the Knights of Columbus or anyone else. Members should never, for any reason, discuss ceremonials (other than event reminders) online.
- Protect your privacy, your council/assembly's privacy, and the privacy of the Knights of Columbus. Do not publish or report on conversations that are meant to be private or internal to members of the Knights of Columbus. Do not disclose other people's personal information online.

GUIDANCE FOR SUBORDINATE UNITS

When setting-up a website and/or social media site for a subordinate unit, officers should designate a site administrator. The site administrator is responsible for ensuring that the site and its content are in compliance with this policy. Social communications sites set-up by subordinate units should reflect the Catholic identity and mission of the Knights of Columbus. This means that the administrator should ensure that:

- The site maintains compliance with the Member Social Communications Policy.
- The site identifies the subordinate unit name, number, and geographical location.
- The site links to the official homepage and social media sites maintained by the Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus.
- The site is silent on or leaves blank any section that asks about political views. Social communications dedicated for use by subordinate units are not a proper forum for political debate and/or commentary. Discussion should focus on the good works and charitable mission of the Knights of Columbus.
- The site posts a brief and immediately apparent statement defining the purpose of the site for users:

The Knights of Columbus is a Catholic men's fraternal service organization whose mission is to witness to our principles of charity, unity and fraternity by performing spiritual and corporal works of mercy locally and throughout the world. All posts and comments should be marked by Christian charity and respect for the truth. They should be on topic and presume the good will of other users. Discussion should focus on the good works and charitable mission of [council/assembly name and number]. No ads please. By posting any comments, you agree to read and follow the Knights of Columbus Member Social Communications Policy [hyperlink]. The administrator reserves the right (but is not obligated) to remove posts that are abusive, illegal or disruptive, or that otherwise fail to conform to the Member Social Communications Policy and may terminate a user's access to this site for any breach of this policy.

BREACH

- A subordinate unit and/or member may be directed to take down online content that the Supreme Council deems in violation of the forgoing policy. Failure to take down such content will constitute a breach of the policy.
- Breach of the foregoing policy may constitute a violation of the Laws of the Knights of Columbus, which may be punishable by the penalties of suspension and/or expulsion from the Knights of Columbus.

UPDATES

This Member Social Communications Policy will be updated continually as new technologies and social networking tools emerge — so check back once in awhile to make sure you are up to date. The Social Communications Team, consisting of Fraternal Services, Communications, eBusiness, and the Supreme Advocate's office, is responsible for reviewing acceptable use of emerging technologies and for updating this policy. If you have questions regarding this policy, you may contact any of the members of The Social Communications Team.