

ROW 1/31/18

What is your policy on seminarian's social media usage?

The Diocese of London, Ontario

We have an official internet usage policy which covers aspects of social media as well. We encourage seminarians to use social media. Any issues are discussed on a monthly basis with their formation advisor. If you would like a copy of our internet policy please let me know

The Diocese of Las Vegas

We don't have a written policy for seminarians regarding use of social media, but we have certainly thought about it, as there have been a few challenges in this area. If we did develop one, we would begin with the policy we already have in place for all employees of the diocese. Then, we would hold seminarians to an even higher standard, and emphasize that they should assume anything they post will be seen by anyone. My feeling is that we would not want to prohibit nor discourage the use of social media by our seminarians; responsible management of it's use is a reality in today's world, and so we want our seminarians, as part of their formation, to learn to use it wisely.

The Archdiocese of Seattle

As public representatives of the Church, participants are expected to use appropriate discretion in internet and entertainment choices that reflect the Archdiocesan mission and policies.

Website creation, blogs, etc. should be done with the understanding that such sites are in the public domain and should reflect the appropriate dignity expected of the public behavior of representatives of the Archdiocese of Seattle.

Misuse of the internet or entertainment choices especially those that contain sexually explicit, racist, violent or other offensive material can lead to dismissal or other corrective action. (p.28)

It should also be noted that we are in the process of selecting a third-party company to run social media background checks on our seminarians every year. I have more information on the companies we've talked to if anyone else is interested in that too!

The Archdiocese of Baltimore

Our policy is that all of the seminarians must “friend” the Vocations Director if they are on Facebook or follow our page on Twitter or Instagram. This allows us to see what they are posting. We do not allow them to be friends with minors unless these are their own family members. In the past, we have encouraged them to see themselves as pastors when they posts – public figures of the church. We tell them to be cautious not to post anything that would not be appropriate to this and to inform their friends to not tag them in these types of posts. We encourage them to work on being less self-focused in their posts and to try to examine any narcissistic tendencies. This is harder for millennials who have grown up with social media and making their lives public. We have found that they do not always realize that they are being narcissistic when they post, so it is about educating them in this as well.

The Diocese of Orange

In public venues or public forums, including social media sites, seminarians must represent the Diocese, the Bishop, and the Church with an appropriate decorum that reflects, first and foremost, “all things in charity.” Therefore, seminarians must use good moral judgment regarding the use of all media, particularly the use of the internet. Sound prudence will dictate the web sites and social media one visits or participates in, as well as the amount of time expended on such activity.

Web browsing, emails, chat rooms and blog sites are public modes of communications. It is expected that seminarians will act in full accord with the tenets of our faith when using any form of communications or other “social” media. The following rules apply to such social media sites:

- Do not “friend” anyone that a seminarian does not know or trust.
- Do not communicate with any non-family member under the age of 18 after 10:00 p.m.
- Ensure that actual time spent on the site is reasonable and moderate.

Seminarians may have and maintain a Facebook and/or Twitter account. Maintaining such sites is contingent upon accepting a “friend” request from the Vocations Director. Seminarians must use extreme prudence when posting photos or other content or when commenting on content

posted by others. In addition, we live in world in which any moment can be captured and immediately posted through a variety of social media outlets. This reality reinforces the caution that seminarians, at all times and in all things, represent the Bishop, the Diocese, and the Catholic Church.

The Diocese of Tallahassee

In response to your inquiry of seminarians and social media, we don't have a hard fast rule, however, if we do see anything or if anything is reported to us that is contrary to the behavior befitting a seminarian it becomes a formation issue and it is brought to their attention for discussion. Most of the time the seminary will catch this and use it as a tool for their formation. We allow them some flexibility in their social media, however, it always needs to be consistent with their role as a seminarian.