Social Media Policy Guide
for Friars of the Province of Saint Conrad

CAPUCHIN
FRANCISCANS
Electronic communications, including e-mail, websites and social media, have transformed the way people find information and interact with each other. It has become for many an indispensable addition to the communication tools available to people from all walks of life. While electronic communications provide an incredible opportunity for fostering vocations, strengthening relationships with volunteers and benefactors and evangelizing the culture, there is also the potential for miscommunication and even scandal.

In his Apostolic Letter, *The Rapid Development*, Saint John Paul II encouraged the faithful to be bold in using the electronic communications at the service of the Gospel. He writes: “Do not be afraid of new technologies! These rank ‘among the marvelous things’ – *inter mirifica* – which God has placed at our disposal to discover, to use and to make known the truth.”

It is important to remember that our vocation as Capuchin Franciscans is not a job, but a way of life. Anything and everything we say or do in public, including in our use of electronic communications, reflects on the Province, the Order and the Church, either positively or negatively. As such, we should bear in mind the guiding principles of *The Constitutions of the Capuchin Friars Minor* when using electronic communications. The Constitutions state the following:

*In our publications, when using the means of social communication and when we appear in the media, let us express full adherence to gospel values and to the teaching of the Church.*

*Publications and communications that officially represent the Order, both at the local and universal level, must be duly assessed and authorized by the competent superior.*

*Particular care should be taken to ensure that they express the genuine thinking of the Order.*

Regarding instruments of social communication, the prescriptions of universal law are to be observed. When writings about religion or morals are concerned, it should be remembered that permission is also required from the minister.

When it is appropriate, suitable offices may be established at the various levels in the Order so that the apostolate of the communications media may be coordinated, supported, and properly esteemed (Chapter IX).

This Communications, Branding & Social Media Guide is intended to provide the friars with tools and best practices so as to adhere faithfully to the mission of the Province and the Order, to more uniformly promote our spirituality and ministries and to avoid the possibility of miscommunication, misunderstanding and scandal.
Social Media Policy

The Province of Saint Conrad on Social Media

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Social Media Policy

Why a Social Media Policy?

Social media policies at organizations large and small were, as recently as 2012, quite rare. Like telephone, personal computer and email policies of earlier generations they were put in place to guide everyone in the organization through the use of a new technology.

But just as with those earlier policies some organizations held out - refusing to commit the time to develop a policy. And just like those earlier instances some came to regret their tardiness.

Any organization active on social media will sooner or later realize that aside from posting news and updates and engaging with fans and followers, social channels are a great avenue for building brand image and developing a loyal base. Developing a comprehensive social media policy that includes guidelines, best practices and training tips for your friars and Province employees is therefore essential.

Without a clear policy in place, your organization risks being embarrassed by what friars and/or Province employees post and even facing legal issues in case of a misstep or account hack.

Following are 6 important reasons why the Province feels it necessary to implement a Social Media Policy:

1. Educating Friars About Social Media
   A social media policy should make sure that friars are educated to understand the social media platform they are using. This includes, but is not limited to, the site’s terms of use, conditions and limitations. If a friar’s social post or comments violate the site’s policies, this violation not only reflects back on the Province and Order but further limits the Province from future use of the site.

2. Reminding Friars of Blurred Personal/Professional Lines
   The lines between personal and professional have become increasingly blurred. How one represents themselves on a 'personal' social media account can often bleed over to their 'professional/ministerial' interests. The way in which friars represent themselves on their personal social media accounts can often result in negative professional consequences or a negative view of the Province/Order/Church as a whole.

3. Presenting Views in a Professional Manner
   Social media is a great tool to develop a personal brand and identity by establishing a positive reputation. Think carefully when considering posting controversial views, understand the social conventions practiced in different forums (e.g. posting birthday photos on Facebook vs. LinkedIn) and remember that you are an ambassador for the Province/Order/Church, so present your thoughts and views in a professional manner.

4. Respecting Professional Boundaries
   Friars and Province employees need to respect professional boundaries. If a friar dislikes another person, they may try and use information found to discriminate against that person on social media. It could lead to "cyber-bullying," which makes for a hostile digital environment.

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Conflict in the Province or a particular ministry is practically inevitable, but how those issues are dealt with is in each friar’s control. The Province should remind friars that they are still representatives of the Province/Order/Church. Any complaints or concerns they have should be properly addressed and mediated without an online audience of potential benefactors, vocation candidates and volunteers.

6. Representing the Province/Order/Church on All Platforms
A social media policy should apply to all platforms, and ultimately everything friars post online. Some friars may believe that while they use LinkedIn and Twitter for professional purposes, they use Facebook for personal use and can, therefore, post indiscriminately. However, they are still and always representatives of the Province/Order/Church, and inappropriate posts may damage the reputation of one such organization, as well as their own.
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Every day, people discuss, debate and embrace topics related to the Catholic Church, religious life and the Capuchin Franciscans in countless online conversations. We recognize the vital importance of taking part in these conversations in order to foster vocations, to evangelize the culture, and to increase awareness of our Capuchin life and ministries. However, our participation in social media must be done in a way that is consistent with our life and values as members of the Capuchin Province of Saint Conrad. This Social Media Policy Guide has been developed to help empower our friars to participate in this new frontier of electronic communications, represent our Province, and share the uniquely Capuchin Franciscan approach to following Christ.

The vision of our Province to grow online and offline is guided by certain shared values that we live by, as a Province and as individuals:

- Catholicity - we are faithful sons of the Catholic Church
- Gospel Brotherhood - we are lesser brothers to all
- Integrity - we strive to be authentic followers of St. Francis
- Accountability - we answer to one another as brothers
- Quality - we strive to do everything to the best of our ability
- Safety - we strive to foster healthy relationships, create safe environments and maintain healthy boundaries with minors.

The Province encourages all of its friars to explore and engage in social media at a level at which they feel most comfortable. Approach the online world of social media in the same way you would the physical one - by using sound judgment and common sense, by adhering to the values of the Church, the Order and the Province, and by following the Province Code of Conduct and all other applicable policies.

Policy:

1. Friars may have personal social media accounts for their own individual use. They must be ever mindful, however, that nothing is really 'private' on the Internet and that whatever they post, like or share will reflect in some way on themselves, the Church, the Order and the Province. A religious is a public person and will remain a public person whether in a ministry setting or posting on social media. Friars should refrain from posting, re-posting, liking, sharing or commenting on anything that might reflect negatively on the Church, the Order or the Province.

2. In their use of social media, the friars, as Gospel brothers, should remain mindful of their core identity as Capuchins: the priority of prayer, a spirit of minority, radical poverty (personal and communal), austerity, joyful penance and love of the Lord’s cross. Striving for integrity and authenticity, the friars should refrain from posting anything that would be in contradiction to these core values. These include the following:

   - Strong or radical political views
   - Anti-church sentiment
   - Racist or prejudicial views

This Social Media Policy is intended to outline how these values should be demonstrated in the social media world and to guide your participation in this area. It is critical that we always remember who we are as friars and as a Province and what our role is in the social media community.
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- Frivolous, inane, low-brow or inappropriate humor
- Anything that may be construed as cyber-bullying or any other form of harassment, vulgarity or intimidation
- Anything that may be construed as being of a sexual and/or pornographic nature (including conversations)
- Negative comments about a Province friar, friary or ministry
- Internal dialog or conflicts between friars, benefactors or those to whom we minister (these conversations should never be played out on any social media sites. Rather such communications should remain private, on the phone or face-to-face.)
- Anything involving a minor (see #8, 9, & 10)

3. Friars should never create official Province social media accounts (i.e., using the 'Province of Saint Conrad' name and/or logo) without consultation with the Communications Office and the permission of the Provincial Minister. In this way, we avoid a vast and confusing multiplicity of social media sites in which our message is diluted, our audience left confused, and monitoring of best practices and safe environment is neglected. Similarly, the Communications Office should be informed of any blogs, new or ongoing, or any other social media platform which has garnered a large audience.

4. Friars who are part of a Province-sponsored ministry and wish to create a social media account for said ministry should only do so after consultation with the Communications Office and the permission of the Provincial Minister.

5. Generally, friars may publish content about their ministry on their personal account, but are again recommended to publish these communications on the public Province ministry account.

6. Friars should approach all communications on social media as public and have the same identity, regardless of a public or private account. This reflects their seamless private and public presence as a member of the order.

7. Video in particular is a powerful digital medium and the one most preferred and clicked upon in social media today. For this reason, great discernment and care should be taken before posting videos. Consider three questions for discernment: 1) If a vocation candidate viewed this video would they be disheartened by inauthentic expressions of Capuchin prayer, poverty, fraternity or joy? 2) Mindful that our actions reflect on all the friars in our province, if another friar saw this video would they be angry, hurt, offended or scandalized? 3) Remembering that all our media communications need to be edifying and evangelical for all our publics, would any of our viewers be confused or disconcerted by this video? If you would answer “yes” or “maybe” to any of these questions, do not post the video.

8. There are risks with social networking, especially with blurring boundaries of personal and professional relationships. Friars should use their personal accounts primarily for communicating with relatives and friends on a social level. Friars are strongly encouraged to never get into debates on social media communications, as these communications present a risk to the friar and the Province.

9. Friars using social media sites, especially those in a ministry that involves minors, must set very strict privacy settings on their personal account. The Province’s Digital Media Manager is available to assist in understanding these settings. This helps to ensure that youth and children do not have access to private and personal information.
and personal information.

10. Friars should not accept minors they serve in ministry as ‘friends’ on their own Facebook accounts nor interact with them privately on social media sites.

11. Friars posting images on social media sites, must keep the following strictly in mind:
   ▪ Images or videos of minors may not be posted on any social networking sites without written parental/guardian permission. A copy of the photo parental release form can be obtained through the Communications Office.
   ▪ Images or videos of adults may not be posted on the public ministry social media sites without signed permission from the individual. A copy of the photo release form can be obtained through the Communications Office.
   ▪ At public gatherings (i.e. Mass, public celebrations, etc.) friars should make a public statement stating that pictures or videos will be captured and will be published publicly to ministry sites. This will give an opportunity for adults and parents or guardians of minors to opt out of the pictures or videos.

12. Confidentiality does not change according to the medium; what the Province considers private and confidential within the life of the Province, the Order and the Church remains so in the use of social media. Private conversations, confidential processes and/or closed meetings must be safeguarded with the same care and respect in the use of social media as anywhere else.

13. Assume that whatever you post is permanent. Participation in social media, as has been demonstrated by recent events in the news surrounding Facebook, should be considered a permanent contribution to the electronic world. Anything posted to a social media site, blog or other Internet site - even if later deleted - is still available, archived and usually searchable.

14. Friars are encouraged to use social media to promote the spirituality, charism, ministries and fraternal life of the Order in a spirit consistent with the Capuchin Franciscan Province of Saint Conrad. This would include the following:
   ▪ Posting quotes or writings from the lives of the Capuchin saints (always keeping in mind possible copyright violations)
   ▪ Writing articles about the Capuchin life that inform and inspire
   ▪ Informing our audience about upcoming Province events
   ▪ Posting videos of Province events (i.e. Solemn professions, Masses, Brown Robe Benefit, etc.)
   ▪ Anything else that helps to inform, inspire and promote an authentic Capuchin Franciscan lifestyle!

15. Social media allows you to communicate incredibly fast and have your message go viral in seconds. This makes it difficult to fix an inaccurate message once you’ve shared it. The best thing to do is double check all content before you share it, both for accuracy and to make sure it fits into the Province’s overall social media strategy, our Code of Conduct, and any restrictions that may apply to your content based on local law (images with minors, etc.) and the platform you are using (such as terms of service for the site upon which you are sharing).
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Definitions

Social Media - any of a number of various platforms which enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. These include, but are not limited to, the following: Facebook, Google+, Instagram, Tumblr, Twitter, Reddit, Snapchat, YouTube, and LinkedIn.

Province Account - an account created by the Communications Office in collaboration with the Provincial Minister as an 'official' social media platform of the Province.

Personal Account - a private social media account created by an individual friar for personal use.

Facebook - the largest and most popular social media platform on the Internet. Used by people of all ages, including almost every institution and corporation, Facebook is a social networking site which allows users to have 'friends' and to share written content, photos and videos. In addition, it allows users to like or comment upon another's posts, to create fan pages and groups which may be public or private. The Province has a public fan page at: facebook.com/CapuchinFriars and a private, vocation group at facebook.com/groups/capuchinvocations.

Twitter - a social networking platform which allows users to posts 'tweets' - written messages of up to 140 characters - and to 'follow' individuals or groups so that their tweets automatically show upon their Twitter home page. The Province has a public Twitter account at: twitter.com/CapFriars.

YouTube - a video sharing site which allows users to upload video files and to view the uploaded video files of others users. YouTube is now so popular that its viewership exceeds that of network television. The Province has a public YouTube channel at: youtube.com/capuchinfranciscans.

Instagram - a photo sharing site extremely popular with youth and young adults which allows users to upload square-sized photos or videos. Users may choose to follow a certain person or group. In addition, Instagram now allows users to post 'temporary' videos similar to Snapchat. The Province has a public Instagram account at: instagram.com/capfriars.

Note: There are many other social media platforms which the Province does not make use of, including: Snapchat, Tumblr, LinkedIn, Vimeo, Pinterest, Reddit, etc. If an individual friar chooses to make use of one of these platforms, his behavior there should also be guided by the principles outlined in this Social Media Policy.