



# VIDEO AND STREAMING POLICY

Diocese of St. Petersburg

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## Video & Streaming Policy

Nearly half a century ago, Pope St. Paul VI wrote the following about modern communications: “The Church would feel guilty before the Lord if she did not utilize these powerful means that human skill is daily rendering more perfect. It is through them that she proclaims ‘from the housetops’ the message of which she is the depositary. In them she finds a modern and effective version of the pulpit. Thanks to them she succeeds in speaking to the multitudes” (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, #45).

In 1997, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops promulgated its “Guidelines for Televising the Liturgy,” where it states, “Being a part of the Sunday worshiping assembly is not always possible for all members of the community. Some people have been hospitalized, homebound, or imprisoned and do not have the opportunity to be physically present with a regular worshiping community.”

Recognizing the need to evangelize and serve the homebound, the Diocese of St. Petersburg is embracing modern communication methods to build the Kingdom of God and to share the Gospel message via the tools available through internet and video technologies.

This policy provides guidelines for diocesan entities to follow when recording video and/or streaming video via the internet.

## General Provisions

Watching recorded, televised and streaming liturgies does not satisfy a Catholic’s sacred calling that is described in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*; “On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass” (#2179). A full screen graphic at the start of Mass could welcome viewers, invite them to worship with the parish community in person and inform them that viewing of the Mass does not satisfy the obligation for the faithful to participate in Sunday Mass, unless there are extenuating circumstances, which should be discussed with one’s pastor.

Sample Script/Text for Pre-Mass Message (*During a time that there is no dispensation from Sunday Mass obligation*)

*Welcome to the celebration of the Mass from (insert name of parish). We are glad you are praying and worshiping with us today. As Catholics, we believe that participating in the Mass fulfils God’s commandment to keep holy the Sabbath. Also, we believe that this obligation is not a burden, but a total gift. God’s Holy Spirit, active in our lives, leads us to worship in spirit and in truth within the assembly of God’s people. If you are able to be present in our church, or in one of the other churches of our Diocese, we invite you to join us! Otherwise, we encourage you to speak with your pastor about your circumstances.*

Churches should consider the needs of the gathered faithful who are physically present for the liturgy first and foremost. Therefore, all decisions relating to the videotaping and streaming will put the interests of the physically present ahead of the virtually present. (*During a time that there is no dispensation from Sunday Mass obligation*)

If your parish is live streaming or posting a pre-recorded Sunday Mass, it is essential that you have the appropriate music license to do so. This includes posting the words to songs for the music. Unless the music is in the public domain, a copyright violation can be costly.

A disclaimer should appear on the live stream or video webpage indicating that the video is the property of the Diocese of St. Petersburg and entity name. Any duplication or retransmission without permission is prohibited.

## Privacy Concerns

It is important to maintain the spirit of Church policies related to the protection of vulnerable populations, the privacy of our members and the dignity of each individual who may be involved in a live streamed, recorded or televised Mass or other event.

The Diocese of St. Petersburg recognizes the legal standard which regulates the right to videotape and broadcast persons in public situations. Specifically, the legal standard provides for the acceptance of individuals to be videotaped or broadcast in places where cameras are plainly visible. However, desiring to fully inform our members, recognizing potential limitations of some persons to be viewed on broadcast or videotape and respecting the privacy of our members, the Diocese of St. Petersburg adopts the following guidelines:

- **Notice of Streaming and Videotaping**  
Parishes should adopt a specific Mass or Masses which will be regularly streamed and notice of these Masses will be provided to parishioners. Immediately prior to the start of any liturgy or event, an announcement will be made to the congregants/participants that streaming and/or videotaping will be taking place. This notice also should be included in the written Mass program (if applicable) and bulletins on a regular basis. This gives parishioners the option to choose a different Mass time or request other accommodations.
- **Image Consent Forms**  
When showing a wide view of the congregation or community, individual consent forms for minors would not be required. However, for individuals and small groups who would be seen in close-up, image consent releases should be collected from parents or legal guardians for those under the age of 18. For example, image consent release forms must be signed for altar servers, children's choir members and children who are part of the Offertory procession.

- **General Consent Signage**

In place of individual consent forms for minors seen in close-up shots, such as mentioned above, an entity may instead display posters or large signage indicating that all individuals are providing image consent by entering the premises. The correct wording for this signage is as follows:

*By entering these premises and attending this event you understand that your likeness and/or voice may be photographed, recorded, filmed or videotaped. Upon entry you consent to the unqualified right to use such pictures and/or recordings and grant to the Diocese of St. Petersburg the perpetual right to use your likeness, image, photograph without compensation for broadcast or exhibition in any medium and to put the finished pictures/recordings to any legitimate use without any limitation and releases the Diocese from any such use and waives any claims that may arise as a result of such use.*

- **Suggested Accommodations**

For those members of the congregation who choose to opt out of image consent or simply do not wish to appear in the video, parishes should provide seating that will not be in view of the camera.

- **Identity of Participants**

The Eucharistic Celebration is one in which participation of the congregants is a key element. However, we also wish to respect the privacy of congregants and volunteer liturgical ministers. While names of priests, deacons, religious and other paid members of the parish staff may be specifically identified in a title graphic incorporated in the broadcast or streaming of a Mass, the names of individual congregants and volunteer liturgical ministers will not be used in any title or graphic unless necessary for an event and in that case, only with the consent of the individual.

## **Use of Titles and Graphics**

The action within the celebration of Mass should be the primary focus of the broadcast for the web viewer as it is for the congregation present. Therefore, titles and graphics should be used tastefully and in a limited manner. Screen graphics and titles may be used during webcast liturgical celebrations. However, their use will be limited to introductory frames, closing frames and title graphics identifying the name and position of the homilist. Graphics identifying the homilist shall only be used at the start of the Homily.

## Videotaping Other Events

### Liturgical events

Liturgical celebrations in the Catholic Church are meant to be public. In some situations, they may be limited to immediate family members and/or close relatives and friends. Depending upon entity policy, the videotaping of such events for the private use of those who take part in the celebration, or for streaming over the internet or broadcast media, or for the purpose of creating keepsake DVDs or downloadable content may be permitted. In these cases, an image release form for all minors must be obtained or the general signage for image consent is required as described above.

Large venue celebrations such as group confirmations or first receptions of the Eucharist usually involve broader parish participation. On such occasions, depending on entity policy, it may be preferable for the entity to hire professional personnel for photography, videography, or other recording and to make that content available to parishioners or other appropriate parties for individual use and/or purchase. In these cases, an image release form for all minors must be obtained or the general signage for image consent is required as described above.

### Ongoing Discernment

It is recognized that as issues arise and as technologies expand, additional guidelines will need to be created so that the integrity and spirit of the guidelines already provided will be maintained. The intent of all policies is to honor the privacy of our members, to protect our vulnerable population and to advance the primary mission of the Church. This mission is summarized in Matthew 28:19, where Jesus said, “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”