



COURAGEOUSLY
Living the Gospel

Publication Guidelines for the Diocese of St. Petersburg

As we seek to build the Kingdom of God in our communities, effective communication is essential in order to nurture positive relationships that reflect the love we share as sons and daughters of the living God.

Therefore, in our ministries, it can be helpful to create publications that communicate a particular topic. These guidelines are offered to assist you with planning and designing your materials. By following these guidelines, you will be following best practices and effective communication principles that align with our Catholic faith.

1. Identify the Topic

- a. Before creating a publication, it's important to understand your intended purpose or goal. Examples can be:
 - i. Provide an annual accounting of financial stewardship, pastoral ministry, and/or outreach.
 - ii. Invite your community to support a particular effort, also known as a Call to Action.
 - iii. Encourage your community to learn about a particular topic.
 - iv. Provide practical information related to ministry operations, such as a manual or training guide.
- b. Things to consider when deciding on a topic:
 - i. Is the topic clearly defined?
 - ii. Is the subject of current interest?
 - iii. Does the topic advance your mission?
 - iv. Does the topic reflect the Catholic faith and the moral/social teachings of the Church?

2. Identify the Format and the Audience

- a. Publications can be printed, online or both.
 - i. Examples of a printed publication include a newsletter, bulletin, or brochure.
 1. Keep in mind that printed publications can become outdated very quickly.
 2. Printed publications are ideal for timeless content and important information that can stand out from the constant stream of digital information.
 3. Printed publications can be helpful when trying to reach older demographics who are not likely to go online for information.
 - ii. Examples of digital publications include a blog, website, e-newsletter, e-magazine and/or PDF.
 1. Digital publications are ideal for time-sensitive information that needs to be available quickly and inexpensively.
 2. Digital publications can be helpful when trying to reach younger demographics who prefer digital over print.
- b. Who are you trying to reach with your publication? Identifying your key audiences will help you determine the format(s) needed for your publication and what design elements might be needed.
 - i. Does your audience prefer to read in another language? If one of your key audiences predominantly speaks Spanish, it's helpful to offer your publication in that language.
 - ii. Does your audience have difficulty reading small print? If so, large font sizes would be recommended.
 1. Examples of audiences you are trying to reach could be all parishioners, members of a particular ministry, parents of Youth Ministry students or Catholics in your community who don't belong to your parish.

3. Create the Content

- a. Content can be an article, letter, highlighted quote, photo, graphic, infographic, chart, hyperlink, bullet points, logo, etc.
 - i. Through your content, speak charitably with a tone of love and compassion. Pope Francis said that the way we speak reveals what is in our hearts. Ideally, our words and images can express our thoughts and feelings honestly and respectfully, and bless God and others, he noted, while on the other hand they can also feed prejudices, harm or even destroy our brothers and sisters through gossip or slander, which "can be sharper than a knife." ([Read article about the Holy Father's comments on speaking charitably.](#))
 - ii. Does the content suit the intended audience? Are you speaking in a way that they will understand? For example, the unchurched will have difficulty understanding acronyms or difficult terms.
 - iii. Is the content well organized and coherent? Does the publication have an introduction, helpful breaks, and a conclusion? Is the material clear, logical and interesting?
 - iv. Are the photos a good resolution so that they don't appear pixelated? Recommended minimum resolution for printing is 300 DPI (dots per inch). Also, for a 5" x 7" print, the image resolution should be 1250 x 1750 pixels for optimal viewing. For digital, a typical monitor is 1920 x 1080 pixels in size; to fill the monitor without blurring the image, you need an image that is 1920 x 1080 pixels in size. Wikipedia describes a pixel as "the smallest controllable element of a picture represented on the screen."
 - v. Do the photos/images represent the diversity of the Church? In the Diocese of St. Petersburg, Mass is celebrated in multiple languages. Our community is comprised of people of all ages, ethnicities, and abilities. Also, Catholic means universal. Therefore, we are called to reflect this reality in our images. (Please refer to [this webpage](#) for our Social Communications Policy regarding the use of photos of minors and our Photo Usage Guidelines regarding copyrights.)
- b. Keep in mind these writing tips:
 - i. Use active voice.
 - ii. The tone and attitude should affirm the dignity of each person.
 - iii. Write interesting and relevant headlines.
 - iv. Keep it short and to the point.
 - v. Use bullet points, short sentences, and short paragraphs.

4. Sharing Content

- a. When sharing articles, graphics, or photos, communicators should consider the source.
 - i. Is the source reputable and authentically Catholic? For expressions of faith and moral teaching to be authentic, they must be in harmony with the doctrine and practice of the Catholic Church. Media outlets designed to be specifically Catholic but which are not directly operated by legitimate ecclesiastical authority need approval from their bishop.
 - ii. Sourcing may need to be done, depending on how content is shared. For example, if you share an article on Facebook, there is no sourcing needed as it's imbedded into the shared post. However, if you plan to share that same article in a print publication, sourcing, and permission to share it will be needed.
 - iii. Consider sharing content from the Diocese of St. Petersburg over other sources. For example, sharing an article from www.GulfCoastCatholic.org would be preferred instead of sharing a similar article from a national source.

5. Design the Publication

- a. Avoid these Common Mistakes:
 - i. Stock images that look artificial.
 - ii. Poor quality images.

- iii. Text over busy backgrounds.
 - iv. Border art and article separators.
 - v. Too many font styles and sizes.
 - vi. Using all caps.
 - vii. Underlining.
 - viii. Too many italics and too many bold words.
 - ix. Failure to proofread.
 - x. Not enough white space.
 - xi. Not giving your information hierarchy or proper organization.
- b. Perhaps the biggest mistake you can make as a designer is to miss the entire point of design itself. “Design” is often confused with “decoration,” but it’s actually about responding to problems. The problem is we need to communicate to people and communication is difficult because of “roadblocks.” People are distracted. People are overloaded with information. People speak many languages. Cultural differences lead to breakdowns in communication. Design is supposed to bring down the roadblocks and get the message delivered.

6. Evaluate the Publication

- a. If you have an online publication, check the number of visits or downloads by viewing your website analytics.
- b. If you have distributed a print publication, ask for feedback via email, a QR code or voice call. Also, check the analytics for webpages that were mentioned in the publication to see if you can attribute an increase in website traffic to your publication.
- c. Also, if a publication promotes an event or a call to action, determine if these efforts were successful and if the publication contributed to that success.

7. Resources:

- a. The Office of Communications of the Diocese of St. Petersburg is a resource for you. Contact communicate@dosp.org.
- b. [Canva.com](https://www.canva.com) is an online platform that provides design templates and stock images. If you need assistance with Canva, contact communicate@dosp.org.
- c. [Picmonkey](#), [befunky](#), [Vectr](#) and [Piktochart](#) can help you create graphics and collages.
- d. [Seven Steps to Effectively Communicate a Message](#)
- e. [Media Evangelization Guide](#)

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