

Areté 

CENTRE FOR MISSIONARY LEADERSHIP

# A Catholic Guide to Social Media

# **Social Ministry Manual**

*A Comprehensive guide to using social media for parishes or ministries*



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# THE CONTENT

HELLO & WELCOME	01
WHY DOES SOCIAL MEDIA MATTER?	02
12 STEPS TO ELEVATE YOUR PROFILE	06
CONSENT & COPYRIGHT	09
BRANDING CHECKLIST	12
PLANNING YOUR STRATEGY	13
YEARLY EVENTS TO INCLUDE	14
SMART GOALS	15
SWOT	16
MAXIMISING HASHTAGS	18
ANATOMY OF POSTING	20
CONTENT IDEAS	21
REEL IDEAS	22
TAKING IMAGES WITH IPHONES	24
10 HOOK IDEAS	27
TOOLS & RESOURCES	28
FAQ	29
GLOSSARY OF TERMS	31
CONTACT US	32



# Hello and Welcome!

Our mission at the Areté Centre is to prepare individuals to be influential leaders in their communities. This e-book serves as an extension of our Foundations of Missionary Leadership program, focusing on the value of digital communication skills for effective Christian leadership.

According to a recent Sensis report, 79% of Australians now use Social Media, and this number is growing rapidly. This presents a powerful opportunity for parishes and faith communities to connect, inspire, and share the Gospel and the teaching of the Catholic Church in innovative ways. With this in mind, we hope this ebook provides you with the knowledge, tools, and resources you need to elevate your parish or ministry's digital presence. Using social media with purpose and intention is the key to success, and by using the resources and guidance provided you can confidently embrace your role as disciples and missionaries in this vast and evolving digital landscape.

Thank you to Laura Neeson, Communications Manager at the Areté Centre for sharing her expertise in this e-book.

May God bless your efforts.

*Fr Chris*

Fr Chris Ryan MGL,  
Director, the Areté Centre of Missionary Leadership

# Why Does Social Media Matter?



**Catholics have always used innovative forms of media to share the Word of God. The Apostle Paul, for example, wrote his Epistles, which have been passed down through the ages as a source of wisdom and guidance. Similarly, St Augustine and other early Christian leaders used their writing to inspire and inform.**

During World War II, Saint Maximilian Kolbe, utilised the printing press and radio as a means of communication, earning him the title of patron saint of modern media communications.

More recently, Blessed Carlo Acutis used the Internet to raise awareness about Eucharistic Miracles, while Pope Francis, nicknamed the digital Pope, quickly amassed a million followers on his official Instagram page within one day of launching it.

As Catholics we are called to use whatever means available to us to spread the word of God, and Social Media is a powerful tool that enables us to reach people like never before. It offers us a vast platform to connect, engage, and share the message of faith with a global audience, breaking down geographical barriers.

When used well, this modern-day pulpit can amplify our voices and make a positive impact on the lives of others, so that we can fulfil our mission to spread the love and teachings of God in the digital age.

**“Remember, the purpose of every effort is to disseminate the faith by the written word, the spoken word, and perhaps someday through producing films.**

**-Saint Maximilian Kolbe**



# 12 Steps to Elevate Your Social Media Strategy

## 1. **Determine Your Objectives:**

Begin by clarifying your intentions for your parish's presence on social media. This could encompass elevating engagement, broadening your reach, promoting events, or disseminating spiritual content.

## 2. **Know Your Audience:**

Seek to know and understand your online community. Create a 'persona' to represent your target audience. What are their ages, interests, and social media habits?

## **Select the Appropriate Platforms:**

3. Handpick the social media platforms that align with your goals and cater to your communities needs. Platforms like Facebook and Instagram often resonate well with parishes and school settings. While Instagram & TikTok work well for Youth Ministry.

## 4. **Strategise Content:**

Define the nature of the content you intend to share. This could span event notifications, daily reflections, community updates, and spiritually uplifting messages. Use three pillars ensuring that only 1 in 5 posts is promotional, while the rest offers value.



**Growing a strong and vibrant social media presence isn't a race, it's a journey that takes time, patience, and a whole lot of consistency.**

**With a killer social media plan in your back pocket, you can forge stronger connections with your flock, and create an online community that's like no other!**

**5. Craft a Content Calendar:**  
• Create a posting schedule to ensure consistency. More regular posting will result in better engagement. Pre-plan your posts, taking into account the text, imagery, and any relevant keywords or hashtags.

**6. Engage Your Community:**  
• Swiftly respond to comments and messages. Cultivate conversation and engagement. The goal is to build relationships.

**Use Quality Visuals:**

**7.** Leverage quality visual content, like images and videos, to captivate social media audiences. Utilise good quality visuals to tell your parish or ministry's story. People and faces always invite engagement!

**Publicise Events:**

**8.** Broadcast particulars regarding impending parish events, services, and congregational gatherings. Create event pages and make use of Facebook Events to help reach. But don't let event promotion dominate your schedule.

**Foster Sharing:**

**9.** Encourage your followers to save and share your posts by creating content that offer 'value'. When people save and share your content, your organic reach across the platform will increase.



**“Good content is not storytelling. It’s telling your story well.”**

**- ANN HANDLEY**

**10. Monitor and Adapt:** Routinely scrutinise your social media analytics to measure and adjust your strategy. Modify your strategy based on data insights. Once you discover what content resonates with your audience, you can create more content like that.

**11. Prioritise Safety:** Exercise caution regarding privacy and safety concerns. Refrain from divulging sensitive personal data without obtaining consent. A clear social media policy that everyone on your team understands is crucial.

**12. Maintain Uniformity:** Make sure your content is visually consistent through use of colours, font styles, and tone of voice. Ensure everyone on your team is well-briefed in what that is.





# Consent + Copyright

In our digital age, the world of social media offers a vibrant canvas for connecting with a wide audience. However, it's important to maintain both consent and copyright ethics. Let's dive into these key considerations.

## Consent:

### Obtaining Permission:

- Before posting content featuring individuals, obtain their consent. This applies to photographs, videos, and personal anecdotes.
- Express your intent clearly and ensure they understand how their likeness or story will be used.
- Respect their decision if they decline.

### Privacy Matters:

- Safeguard the privacy of your followers and those you interact with.
- Avoid divulging personal information, addresses, or sensitive details without consent.
- Ensure you have consent before sharing personal stories, even if they are inspiring or heartwarming.



# Consent + Copyright Continued

## Copyright:

### Creative Ownership:

- Respect the intellectual property rights of other creators.
- Seek permission or use content that falls under fair use or is in the public domain.
- Attribute the creators whenever possible for images and music
- Obtain proper licenses for usage or opt for royalty-free content

### Quotations and Text:

- When quoting text or using excerpts from articles, always cite the source. Always check the source.

By heeding these principles of consent and copyright, we ensure that our use of social media remains a space of creativity, connection, and respect. Remember, every post is an opportunity to inspire, uplift, and foster positive digital citizenship.

**[DOWNLOAD A SOCIAL MEDIA CONSENT FORM TEMPLATE](#)**



**We don't have a  
choice on whether  
we do social  
media; the question  
is how well we do it.**

**-Erik Qualmann**



# Branding Checklist

1. Write the Parish Mission Statement.



2. Articulate the parish or ministry values.

5. Create a crisis management plan. ✓

3. Identify tone of voice, font & colour palette.

6. Brief your team.

4. Identify list of keywords, hashtags and CTA's

7. Share the brand story.



# Planning Your Social Media Strategy

1. What is your mission statement?



2. List a set of objectives for your social media strategy?



3. Who is your target audience and which platforms are they on?



## EXERCISE # 2

# What Yearly Events Need to be Included in My Strategy

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## EXERCISE #3

# Smart Goals

A SMART goal is one that is clear, measurable, realistic, relevant, and time-bound. By applying these principles, you make your goals more actionable and increase your chances of success because you have a well-defined plan to follow.

<b>S</b>	<b><u>SPECIFIC</u></b> What do I want to accomplish? (What, Who, Where, When, and Why.)	
<b>M</b>	<b><u>MEASURABLE</u></b> How will I know when it is accomplished? who is responsible for them?	
<b>A</b>	<b><u>ACHIEVABLE</u></b> How can the goal be accomplished?	
<b>R</b>	<b><u>RELEVANT</u></b> Do these goals align with our mission statement?	
<b>T</b>	<b><u>TIME BOUND</u></b> When can I accomplish this goal?	

## EXERCISE #4

# SWOT ANALYSIS

A SWOT analysis helps you understand your Parish or Ministry's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Fill in the following sections:

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS



**“Use social media  
more like a pulpit;  
use social media less  
like a bulletin.”**

**-Brady Shearer**

# Maximising Your Instagram Presence with Hashtags

**Hashtags can be a powerful tool to expand your audience and enhance your Instagram posts.**

These simple yet effective tags help categorise and organise content, making it easier for users to find posts relevant to their interests. Here are some tips to help you use hashtags effectively and boost your Instagram presence.

## 1 Relevance

Use hashtags that are relevant to the content of your post. If you're posting about scripture, use scripture-related hashtags. Irrelevant or 'spammy' hashtags can negatively affect your account's credibility.

## 2 Be Specific & Strategic

Mix popular and niche hashtags. Popular hashtags like #love or #instagood may have millions of posts, making it harder for your content to stand out. Niche hashtags with fewer posts (e.g., #getformedformission) can help you reach a more targeted audience interested in your specific content.

## 3 Branded Hashtags

If you have a brand or campaign-specific hashtag, use it consistently across your posts. This can help create brand recognition and encourage user-generated content.

## 4 Location-Based Hashtags

If your content is location-specific, consider adding location-based hashtags. These can help you connect with people interested in that location.



# Hashtags Continued

## 5 Limit the Number

Instagram allows up to 30 hashtags per post, but it's not necessary to use all of them. Using too many hashtags can make your captions look cluttered and 'spammy'. Aim for a mix of relevant hashtags, and don't overdo it.

*Instagram's algorithm also considers engagement factors, such as likes, comments, and shares, when determining the visibility of your posts.*

*While hashtags can help, it's essential to create engaging and high-quality content to encourage user interaction.*

*Lastly, Instagram's policies on hashtags may evolve, so it's a good idea to stay updated on any changes in their guidelines regarding hashtag usage.*



## 6 Create Your Own Hashtag:

Consider creating a unique and memorable hashtag for your brand or campaign. Encourage your followers to use it when sharing content related to your brand at events to create a gallery of user generated content that you can repurpose later.

## 7 Test & Analyse

Experiment with different hashtags and monitor the performance of your posts. Instagram Insights can provide valuable data on which hashtags are driving the most engagement.

# What to Post and How often



**Instagram Reels:**  
**5-10 seconds** for fun ones  
**20-45 secs** for educational  
**2-3** times per week  
**Can be shared to FB**



**Single Static Images:**  
**1-2** times per week.  
**Can be shared to FB**



**Instagram Stories:**  
**3-7** photos and/or video frames per day .  
**Can be shared to FB.**



**Instagram Carousel:**  
**5-10** slides/ use Hooks for 1st page  
**2-3** times per week  
**Can be shared/ not ideal for FB**



**Highlights: 5-6 on profile:**  
Include things like Mass times, FAQ's, homily snippets. **Instagram only**



**What about Facebook?**  
Reels/ static posts/ stories **can be shared to FB.**



# Content Ideas



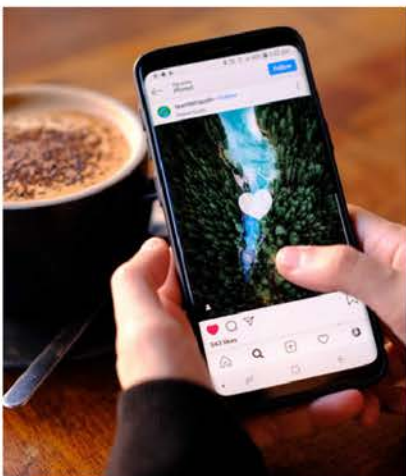
## Single Post Ideas

- Engaging Questions: What's your Fave bible verse?
- Book Reviews
- Inspiring Quotes
- Saint Feast Celebration
- Parishioner Stories
- Local Community News: Introduce the "lollypop" man at the school crossing
- Exciting Updates
- Event Promotions
- Local Community Spotlight: cross promote with local business
- Fun Quizzes "guess the saint"



## Carousel Ideas

- Lessons Learnt/ Problem & answer
- Lent & Advent Tips
- Before & After (Alpha Testimonials, building. renovations)
- Formation Series (a deep dive into the Psalms)
- Did You Knows
- Catechism Made Simple
- Catholic Teachings
- Bible trivia
- Quotes related to your mission or ministry
- For School settings replace bible content with academic research and insights linked to your programs & initiatives



## Story Ideas

- Day In The Life
- Time Lapses Of Event Setup
- BTS Moments
- Funny Skits
- Vox Pops
- Inspirational Quotes
- Trending Audio
- BTS
- Countdowns
- Sneak Peaks
- Q&A Sessions
- Guest Takeovers
- Shoutouts
- Meet The Team
- Daily Quotes
- Praise & Worship Picks

See next page for detailed Reel Ideas



## 10 Reel Ideas for Social Media

- Virtual tour of your Church, school or physical setting**  
Take your audience on a captivating virtual tour of your parish church. Highlight the beauty of the architecture, sacred art, and meaningful symbols within the church.
  
- Behind the scenes preparing for Mass, or important event**  
Provide a sneak peek into the preparations and rituals that happen before Mass. Show how the altar is set, candles are lit, and vestments are prepared. For Schools, showcase preparation for a school event, or film students doing a guided school tour with a fun timelapse mixed in.
  
- Saint of the Week**  
Create short reels featuring a different Catholic saint each week. Share their inspiring life story and how their faith can be relevant today.
  
- Q&A with your Parish Priest, Ministry Leader, Principal**  
Host a Q&A session with your parish priest. Invite followers to submit questions, and the priest can provide answers and insights.
  
- Meet our Parishioners, Students, Staff**  
Introduce parishioners, students, staff or ministry members and have them share what they love most about your community or setting.

# 10 Reel Ideas for Social Media

- Ministry Highlights**  
Showcase the vibrant activities and events organised by your parish's different ministries. For schools, different academic or co-curricular programs etc
  
- Sunday Reflections**  
Share a brief reflection on the Sunday Gospel reading. Encourage viewers to contemplate the Word of God and its relevance in their lives.
  
- A Day in the Life**  
Offer people a 'look behind the curtain' of your Parish Priest, staff, and volunteers. Use humour and authenticity.
  
- Testimonies & Testimonials**  
Capture heartfelt testimonials from parishioners about how their faith has impacted their lives. Share testimonials and reviews from parishioners/ school parents/ students about what they love most.
  
- Catholic Traditions Explained**  
Create short educational reels explaining various Catholic traditions, such as the difference between Sacraments and Sacramentals, the Stations of the Cross, or the true presence in the Eucharist.

*Remember to keep your reels engaging, visually appealing, and in alignment with your mission statement and values. Use relevant hashtags and encourage interaction from your audience by asking questions or inviting comments or including a call to action (CTA).*



## 12 TIPS FOR TAKING QUALITY IMAGES WITH YOUR IPHONE

Elevate your social media game with high-quality iPhone photography with just a few simple tweaks to your iPhone.

If you want to improve your social media presence, avoid using low-quality images.

Luckily, there are simple techniques you can master to enhance the quality of your iPhone photography and take your social media game to the next level.

We've compiled 12 tips to help you get started.

Remember, taking great photos is also about personal style and creativity, so don't forget to have fun and explore your own unique way of capturing moments with your iPhone.



# 01

**Clean the Lens:** Start by ensuring your iPhone's camera lens is clean and free from fingerprints or smudges. A clean lens ensures your photos are sharp and clear.

# 02

**Focus and Exposure:** Tap on the screen where you want to focus, and your iPhone will adjust both focus and exposure accordingly. You can also manually adjust the exposure by sliding your finger up or down after tapping.

# 03

**Use Gridlines:** Turn on the gridlines in your camera settings. This helps you compose your shots using the rule of thirds, which means placing key elements or subjects off-center, at the intersections of a grid that divides the image into thirds horizontally and vertically. This creates a more visually appealing composition.

# 04

**Steady the Camera:** Stability is key to clear photos. Use both hands to hold your iPhone, or consider using a tripod or a stable surface for longer exposures.

# 05

**HDR Mode:** High Dynamic Range (HDR) mode captures multiple photos with different exposures and combines them for a balanced image. Use HDR in high-contrast scenes for better results.

# 06

**Portrait Mode:** If you have an iPhone with dual or triple lenses, experiment with Portrait Mode for stunning depth-of-field effects, perfect for portraits.



# 07

**Use Natural Light:** Good lighting is essential. Whenever possible, use natural light. Soft, diffused light, such as during the "golden hour" (early morning or late afternoon), often produces the best results. Keep the sunlight behind you.

# 08

**Avoid Digital Zoom:** Avoid using digital zoom, as it degrades photo quality. Instead, move closer to your subject or use photo editing tools to crop afterward.

# 09

**Experiment with Angles:** Try shooting from different angles to add creativity to your photos. Get down low for unique perspectives or shoot from above for flat lays.

# 10

**Turn off Flash:** Use the iPhone's flash sparingly, as it can often create harsh lighting and unflattering shadows. Opt for natural or soft artificial light whenever possible.

# 11

**Crop & edit your images:** Crop your images to draw the focus tighter on the subject of the image and eliminate unnecessary background space and adjust the exposure settings using your iPhone photo app before posting.

# 12

**Practice, Practice, Practice:** Lastly, practice makes perfect. Experiment with different settings, explore various shooting modes, and practice framing and composition to develop your photography skills.

[Click here to read: "How to edit photos like a pro" article](#)





# 10 Hook Ideas

## TO STOP THE SCROLL

*Below are a few simple ideas to help you 'hook' your audience and stop the scroll. These are tips and information of value that you can offer your audience, and are a great way to disciple people online.*

- "Have your children lost interest in faith?"
- "5 simple steps to... "
- "Don't start your morning without doing this"
- "Tips for evangelising your friends and family"
- "What to say to someone who's grieving"
- "3 Prayer life hacks to help you get 'unstuck'"
- "3 tips to reading the bible"
- "How to grow in holiness"
- "How many times does Jesus show up in the Old Testament?"
- "Can you name this saint?"

# Your Tools & Resources

We have curated and created a list of useful tools and resources to help you with your social media efforts. Below you will find a list of links that take you to copies of templates and free resources that you can intergrate into your strategy today.

## RESOURCES #1

- [Free Catholic Stock Images](#)
- [Step by Step Facebook Ads](#)
- [How to create Reels](#)
- [Step by Step Instagram Boost](#)
- [Royalty Free Music](#)
- [Best Free Video editing Apps](#)
- [Canva Design Principles](#)
- [Social Media Study/Stats](#)



## RESOURCES # 2

- [Click to Convert Presentation](#)
- [Social Media Consent Form](#)
- [Content Planning tools](#)
- [How to create a Social Media Policy](#)
- [December Content Strategy](#)  
**[PLEASE DOWNLOAD A COPY OF THIS SHEET. DO NOT MAKE CHANGES TO ORIGINAL](#)**

# FAQ's

## **Which Social Media Platforms should I be on?**

Choose platforms that align with your goals and your audience. Facebook and Instagram are often effective for parishes or schools, as they allow visual content sharing, event promotion, and community engagement. If you're in Youth Ministry, consider TikTok

## **How often should I post on Social Media?**

Consistency is crucial to success! To achieve consistency, create a content calendar and plan your content ahead of time. While it's important to post regularly, it's more important to ensure that you are posting relevant, inspiring, and engaging content. Posting every other day is the minimum to ensure your reach grows.

## **How do we balance promotional posts with spiritual and educational content?**

Aim for a 80/20 rule: 80% informative, spiritual, and engaging content; 20% promotional. Focus on building relationships and trust.

## **Do I need to use Hashtags? If so, What Hashtags do i use?**

Hashtags play a significant role in boosting your Instagram presence and expanding your audience reach. By using them, your content becomes categorised and organised, which makes it more discoverable to users interested in the same niche. You can create your own hashtags, use a blend of trending hashtags and more niche ones. Remember to experiment, measure and adjust.

Check out our article on Hashtags on page 16 of this e-book.

# FAQ's

## **Do we need to advertise on Social Media?**

The answer depends on your goals. If you have an event that is open to the public or if you're a school that wants to promote an open day, advertising is an effective and inexpensive way to reach your target audience. Plan your call to action, make sure all the relevant information is in the ad, and offer one next step for the audience to make the engagement process simple for them.

## **Are there any emerging trends in social media that could be particularly beneficial for my parish/ ministry/ school ?**

Social Media is an ever evolving landscape! In 2023, the emerging trend is short form videos. AI platforms want and will help push this type of content through their algorithm. That doesn't mean that all of your content should be in this format but that it should be incorporated into your strategy!

## **How do I optimise my Instagram profile?**

Your Bio should contain some key essentials. If you have a physical campus or parish, make sure that your address is in your Bio. Make sure that your keywords are in your description. Tell people who you are and what you do! If you choose to use linktree rather than your website link, ensure that your linktree is updated regularly, and that you try to keep it to 5 links or less.

Including multiple links in your bio without using a linktree, and directing people to your website can improve your Google SEO ranking.

# Glossary of Terms

**Hashtag:** A keyword or phrase preceded by the "#" symbol used to categorise and discover content on social media platforms.

**Keyword:** A word or phrase that summarises the main topic or subject of content, used for search engine optimisation (SEO) and to improve content discoverability.

**Feed:** The main stream or page where you see updates, posts, and content from people or accounts you follow.

**Handle:** A user's username or account name on social media, often preceded by the "@" symbol. (@arete\_centre)

**Engagement:** The interaction and activity on your social media posts, including likes, comments, shares, and clicks.

**Follower:** A user who subscribes to your social media account to see your updates in their feed.

**Like:** A way to express approval or appreciation for a post by clicking a "like" button or icon.

**Comment:** A response or message left on a social media post by a user.

**Share/Retweet/Repost:** The action of sharing another user's post on your own profile, which can expose it to a wider audience.

**Algorithm:** A set of rules and calculations used by social media platforms to determine what content appears in a user's feed and in what order.

**DM (Direct Message):** A private message sent from one user to another within a social media platform.

# Glossary of Terms

**Bio:** A brief description or profile information about a user or account on social media.

**Trending:** Topics, hashtags, or posts that are currently popular and widely discussed on a social media platform.

**Influencer:** A user with a significant following and the ability to impact the opinions and behaviours of their audience.

**Geotagging:** Adding a location to a post to show where it was created or to associate it with a specific place.

**Meme:** A humorous image, or video that spreads rapidly on social media (goes “viral”).

**Analytics:** Data and statistics that provide insights into the performance and engagement of social media posts and accounts.

**Impression:** The number of times a post is displayed in a user's feed or timeline, regardless of whether it's clicked or engaged with.

**Story:** Temporary content that disappears after a set period, often used on platforms like Instagram and Facebook.

**Call to Action (CTA):** A prompt or instruction, often in the form of text or a button, that encourages the audience to take a specific action, such as clicking a link, making a purchase, or signing up for a newsletter.

**Reach:** The total number of unique users who have seen a particular social media post or content.

**UGC (User-Generated Content):** Content created by users or customers that showcases your brand, often shared or reposted by the brand.



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