



USE OF THE INTERNET AND EMAIL GUIDELINES

Overview

These guidelines pertain to the access and use of the Internet and email **on computers belonging to the diocese or parishes, and connected to internet providers paid for by church funds.** In addition, all existing laws and policies apply to conduct on the Internet, especially those that deal with intellectual property protection, privacy, pornography, sexual harassment, information and data security, and confidentiality.

While internet access has the potential for priests and deacons to do their work faster or smarter, there is justifiable concern that it can also be misused. Such misuse can waste time, potentially violate government laws or church policies, garner negative publicity for the church and potentially expose it to significant legal liabilities. This policy is designed to facilitate understanding of the expectations for the proper use of these resources.

The Internet is a worldwide network of computers that contains millions of pages of information, and as a form of modern technology and communication the Internet is effective in the performance of business and a valuable method of research for information.

However, users are cautioned that many of the pages accessible through the internet include offensive, sexually explicit, and inappropriate material. In general, it is difficult to avoid at least some contact with this material while using the internet. Even common search requests may lead to sites with highly offensive content. Additionally, having an e-mail address on the internet may lead to receipt of unsolicited e-mail containing offensive content. The ease of access and the availability of information can also result in violation of copyright or entitlement laws. Users accessing the internet do so at their own risk and the diocese or parish is not responsible for material viewed or downloaded by users from the internet, or illegal behavior or conduct by users.

To minimize these risks, use of the internet and email by priests and deacons of the Diocese of Owensboro is guided by the following:

Permitted Use of Computers, Networks, Internet and Email

Computers and networks that are the property of the diocese or parish are to be used for legitimate church business purposes. Priests and deacons have a responsibility to use computers and networks belonging to the diocese or parish, the Internet, and email in a professional, lawful and ethical manner. Users are cautioned that the same appropriate behavior should be used for their personal computers and internet access.

Unacceptable Use

In particular, the following is deemed unacceptable use or behavior by priests and deacons:

- deliberately visiting Internet sites that contain obscene, hateful or pornographic material
- posting, storing, transmitting or disseminating unlawful material, including without limitation, child or other pornography, any content, data or other material which is libelous, obscene, hateful, unlawful, threatening, or ethnically offensive, defamatory or which in any way constitute a criminal offense
- using the computer to perpetrate any form of fraud; or software or music piracy
- using the Internet or email to send offensive or harassing material to other users
- downloading commercial software or any copyrighted materials belonging to third parties, unless this download is covered or permitted under a commercial agreement or other such license
- hacking into unauthorized areas
- creating or transmitting defamatory material
- undertaking deliberate activities that waste time or network resources
- introducing any form of computer virus into the computer or network

Improper use of the computer, network, or the Internet has the potential to result in disciplinary action, and civil and/or criminal liability.

Summary

These guidelines do not contain all of the “do’s and don’ts” of internet usage. While these guidelines list examples of improper usage; morality, good judgment and common sense are essential to the appropriate use of the Internet. Use of the internet and email must ensure that it complies with current legislation, and does not create a risk or scandal to the church through misuse and inappropriate behavior.

Priests or deacons who have concerns about any form of internet addiction or improper use thereof are encouraged to contact the Bishop or Vicar of Clergy for counseling referral, or seek counseling on their own.