

DIOCESAN COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Background: Over fifteen years ago, in response to the concern about the multiplication of mailings from Diocesan offices and agencies, the monthly leadership mailing was established. Once each month a general mailing has been prepared to send to all the pastoral leaders in the diocese. This effort has proved helpful. It is a significant amount of work to prepare and it at times each of the 250+ mailings has a cost in excess of \$2.50.

Recent developments in electronic messaging services have made it possible to add an additional level of communication. It has been the informal policy of the Bishop's Office to provide "e-mail" notices about significant information and at times e-mail has been used to send background information and news items to those who have been identified as having e-mail addresses. Sometimes this information was then sent to all on the mailing list as hard copy. Sometimes this has not been done on the judgment that the information as mailed would no longer be timely.

The Present Situation: After consultation and review of the goals of the Diocese and the local communities, it seems to be appropriate to establish a policy about the communication of information which will take into account the most efficient and effective way of communicating the information between the Bishop, the Diocesan Offices and the local Parish communities. Today the availability of e-mail has become universal throughout the diocese and the cost of on site computers makes the technology available to all. Some may not be as proficient or skillful in this area, but we seem to be challenged now to move forward in the most effective and cost efficient way possible.

Policy #1: E-mail Capability: Every Parish and Diocesan institution and program are required to establish local web access by January 1, 2001 . This capability includes not only the establishment of computer capability for web access, but also the identification of the person or persons whose pastoral responsibility requires access to shared information. This responsibility includes the expectation that their job description will be expanded to include the requirement to regularly review the e-mail received.

Policy #2: Official E-Mail Address on Diocesan Server: By January 1, the Diocese will have the hardware that will allow it the capability to assign every parish and institution an official e-mail address on the Diocesan server to maintain the stability of the e-mail program. All priests and deacons will be assigned an individual e-mail address; women religious, principals, directors of religious education, youth ministers and others who are involved in the leadership of programs will be assigned an e-mail address on the diocesan server. Access to this server and its e-mail function will require web access through a local ISP. (Sample address: jdoe@dioceseofspokane.org) An e-mail address book will be held in the Computer Office. This address book will include identification of addresses in the following categories: Parishes, Institutions, Priests, Deacons, Parish Secretaries, Principals, and Seminarians. This will enable delivery of mail to categories as established.

Access to the diocesan e-mail mailboxes will be restricted to those who have a diocesan e-mail mailbox. All of these mailboxes will be closed to external mail in both directions unless the mail box holder asks that the mail box be opened to access from the web. In addition, box holders may also request that mail can be sent from their e-mail address.

Policy #3: Official Communications: All those who are listed on the diocesan server will be able to send material to the individuals and groups on the server. For anyone outside of those who are listed on the

diocesan server to send information to a group will require that the information be sent to the Computer Office to be forwarded to those for whom the communication is intended.

Normally material should be sent in a standard e-mail format. There should be no expectation that all box holders will be able to open attachments sent in some other format.

Policy #4: Preparation of Material: The preparation of material for the Advisory is the responsibility of those who seek to distribute the information. Ordinarily text information will be best sent as direct e-mail by the office which has prepared the material. The Computer Office will be available to scan other material into picture format to be distributed. This material must be presented to the Computer Office "scan-ready". The Moderator of the Curia will make the final decision if there is question regarding the content to be sent by those outside of the system. The benefit of the doubt will always be given to providing information.

Policy #5: Material to be mailed: Some materials will not readily be able to be e-mailed. It will be the responsibility of the office desiring to present such material to be responsible for its own mailing. The Leadership Mailing will cease as of December, 2000.

The Bishop's Office will send hard copy of his communications or official diocesan communications to retired priests who do not have e-mail capability. There should not be expectation that material outside of these categories will be provided.

Policy #6: Hard Copy: Unless there is specific notice that hard copy will follow, the responsibility of downloading and maintaining hard copy of the materials sent belongs to the receiver. This requires some discretion of judgment about the need for the local entity to have hard copy or to use hard copy of the materials.

Policy #7: Policy Books: As soon as possible after the establishment of the server, the Diocesan Policy Books will be permanently placed on the server. Instructions for viewing, reviewing, or downloading these policy manuals will be provided to all those who now have access to these policy manuals. The Policy Books are: The Diocesan Policy Manual (green binder), the Personnel Policy Manual (blue binder- in three formats: Diocese, Parish, and School versions) and the School Policy Manual, which is already located on the School Web site.

Approved November 9, 2000

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Bishop of Spokane
