

Parish Communications

Syndicate-Once Policy

A one-page policy template that deaneries, dioceses, or clusters of parishes can adopt (and adapt) to eliminate duplicate content across organisational levels. Names where each content type originates, where it syndicates to, and who owns each.

Drafted collaboratively across two or three meetings. Signed by the relevant stakeholders. Reviewed annually.

THE TEMPLATE

PAGE 1: THE POLICY

Syndicate-Once Policy

[Parish of / Deanery of / Diocese of] [name]

Date adopted: _____

Review date (annual): _____

SECTION 1: PRINCIPLE

Every piece of communications content originates at one level and is linked from others rather than republished, to respect the time of those who create it and the attention of those who receive it.

Duplication of content across levels (Holy See, diocese, deanery, parish, ministry) costs editorial time, produces inconsistency when the original is updated, and dilutes the reader's attention. A single home for each piece, referenced from elsewhere, serves everyone better.

SECTION 2: ORIGINATION TABLE

CONTENT TYPE	ORIGINATES AT	SYNDICATES TO	RESPONSIBLE PERSON OR ROLE	EXCEPTIONS
Papal communications (encyclicals, addresses)	Holy See	All levels	Link and short summary only	Major feasts may warrant fuller treatment
Bishops' conference communications	National conference	All diocesan and parish levels	Link and summary	Local translation may be needed
Diocesan pastoral letters	Diocese	All parishes in diocese	Diocesan comms; parish curator links	None
Diocesan events (major feasts, ordinations, Chrism Mass)	Diocese	All parishes	Diocesan comms	Parish may add local context
Diocesan appeals (finance, vocations, charity)	Diocese	All parishes	Diocesan comms	Parish may add local framing

CONTENT TYPE	ORIGINATES AT	SYNDICATES TO	RESPONSIBLE PERSON OR ROLE	EXCEPTIONS
Safeguarding communications	Follow diocesan safeguarding officer instruction always	N/A: follow instruction	Safeguarding officer	No exceptions
Deanery events	Deanery	All parishes in deanery	Deanery coordinator	Full detail usually appropriate
Parish liturgical schedule	Parish	Parish site only	Parish curator	None
Parish newsletter	Parish	Parish site only	Parish curator	None
Ministry updates	Ministry (submitted to parish curator)	Parish site	Ministry originator, curated by curator	Shared to deanery if of wider interest
Financial reports	Parish	Parish site only	Parish finance committee	None

Adapt this table to your specific organisational structure. Add rows for content types not covered. Remove rows that do not apply.

SECTION 3: HOW TO HANDLE EXCEPTIONS

When a piece of content legitimately should cross levels, the default is to link, not to copy.

When copying is necessary (for accessibility reasons, for parishioners without internet access, for printed materials), attribution is required. The curator at the receiving level takes responsibility for keeping the copy accurate if the original changes.

When content originates at a parish but is of wider deanery or diocesan interest, the parish offers it upward through the deanery coordinator or diocesan comms. The parish retains the original; the deanery or diocese links or summarises.

When two levels are legitimately producing content on the same topic (for example, both diocese and parish responding to a local tragedy), coordinate editorially before publishing. Separate voices on the same matter can serve well if they are aligned; they can confuse if they are not.

SECTION 4: SIGNATURES

This policy is adopted by the following representatives. Changes to the policy require the agreement of those who have signed.

Priest (or priests): _____ *Date:* _____

Deanery coordinator (if applicable): _____ *Date:* _____

Diocesan communications lead (if applicable): _____ *Date:* _____

Review responsibility: _____

PAGE 2: GUIDANCE NOTES

COMMON EDGE CASES

Jointly-organised events (deanery retreats, shared catechesis, combined penance services):

The originating body is the one that initiated the event and is carrying the administrative load. Other participating parishes link rather than reproduce. All parishes should have visible presence of the event in their own communications, but not by duplicating the content.

When the Holy See issues something that is also being communicated by the bishops' conference:

The local bishops' conference usually issues the reference translation and contextual guidance. Parishes generally link to the conference version rather than to the Vatican source directly, unless the Vatican source is in a language parishioners will read. Parish may add a one-paragraph summary framing the significance locally.

Content that originates at a parish but is of wider interest:

A parish initiative that grows beyond the parish (a charitable project, a pilgrimage, a successful catechetical programme) may be shared with the deanery or diocese. The parish retains the original. The deanery or diocese asks permission to link or summarise. Credit flows back to the originating parish.

Urgent communications (weather closures, safeguarding notices, pastoral emergencies):

Syndication-first principles apply less strictly in emergencies. The priority is getting the communication out through whichever channel will reach the affected people fastest. Coordinate editorially as time allows, not as a blocker.

Social media content:

Social media often requires native posting rather than linking. In this case, each level that posts should post in its own voice, not copy from another level's post. A diocesan Facebook post about a major feast and a parish Facebook post about the same feast are legitimately different, even if both reference the same underlying reality.

WHAT TO DO IN THE FIRST SIX MONTHS AFTER ADOPTION

Audit current duplication. List the content currently being reproduced across levels. For each, identify the originating level and commit to converting the duplicates to links or summaries at the next update.

Build the linking habit. Curators at every level practise linking rather than copying. In the first months this may feel awkward; it becomes second nature.

Communicate the change to readers. Parishioners may notice that certain content now lives at a different level and reaches them through a link. A short note explaining the shift helps: "The bishop's pastoral letter now lives on the diocesan website; we link to it here so you always have the current version."

Review at six months. What is working? What is not? Adjust the table in Section 2 based on experience.

IF THE POLICY MEETS RESISTANCE

Adopting this policy is itself a parish change. The Change Proposal Template (T3) may be useful for structuring the conversation if resistance emerges.

Common objections:

"But our parishioners want to see the content here, not on the diocesan website." Test this rather than assume it. Many parishioners are happy to follow a link if the link works and the content is genuinely the same.

"But we lose our voice if we only link to diocesan content." The parish's voice comes through in its own originating content (newsletter, homilies, parish life), not in reproducing what is originated elsewhere. Syndicate-once protects parish voice by focusing it on what is genuinely the parish's own.

"But this is more work for the parish secretary." It should be less, over time. The initial audit takes a morning; after that, linking takes seconds, where copying and maintaining duplicates takes hours.

Based on the True Light Digital Formation framework. For the cornerstone essay on which this policy is based, see truelight.digital/formation/rhythm-and-restraint/.

True Light Digital publishes this template as part of its free Formation library. If your deanery or diocese would value support in building wider communications infrastructure, please contact us at sean@truelight.digital. If not, we hope this template serves you well on its own. That is the goal.