

## **EMAIL, NEWSLETTER AND COMMUNICATION POLICY FOR DIOCESAN CENTRAL OFFICES**

The purpose of this policy is to help diocesan personnel effectively communicate with those who collaborate in the work of the Church and those who are served. Good communication requires discipline and planning.

### **Close the Loop**

Communication is effective when the message is clear, complete and properly transmitted by the sender, and received and understood by the recipient. Sending an email or leaving a voice message alone is not effective communication. The loop of communication between the sender and recipient must be closed, and it is the responsibility of the sender to assure the message is received. Emails or messages to groups that require a response should be followed up by a phone call if they are not acknowledged or answered. If an email or voice message to an individual is not acknowledged or answered after two attempts, a phone call to the recipient should be made to assure the message was received. Group transmittals that simply give a notice or share information of a general nature do not require follow up after they are sent.

Diocesan departments or offices allowing registration for events via on-line registration or via email should acknowledge receipt of the registration by a communication to the registrant. On-line registration forms, posters and announcements seeking registrations must contain a notice that the registrant will receive acknowledgement of the registration within seven (7) days and provide the name and contact information of the person to contact if registration is not acknowledged.

### **Bi-Weekly Newsletter**

The Office of Evangelization will prepare a bi-weekly newsletter to all priests, diocesan staff, pastors, deacons, deacon candidates, bookkeepers and secretaries, catechetical leaders, principals, commissioned lay ministers, diocesan finance council, diocesan pastoral council, pastoral associates, and seminarians. The newsletter will be sent via email.

The newsletter will contain timely items to be included in parish bulletins, information about upcoming special collections, department or office communications on programs, upcoming diocesan or parish events and programs, liturgical notes, suggested prayers of the faithful.

Additionally, the newsletter could contain notices from parishes offer items for sale, or items to be given away to interested parishes. The purpose of the newsletter is to get information out in a timely fashion, to alert parishes, offices and others about events and deadlines, and to simply provide information about what is taking place in the diocese to a wide audience.

### **How to submit items for the E-Notes newsletter.**

The e-Notes submission form is found at <http://www.rcdony.org/enotes> . The submission form may also be accessed from the homepage of the diocesan website. Instruction for the submission form:

- a) Provide the information to identify the person who is submitting the item and their contact information.
- b) Be sure to include the name of the person authorizing the submission (pastor/principal/etc.).
- c) Choose the newsletter section in which you want the item to appear.
- d) Choose publication dates for the item (refer to newsletter schedule link) Please note the deadlines for bulletins listed in this portion of the Submission Form and plan accordingly.

- e) Choose number of issues of newsletter in which you want the item to appear.
- f) Choose other places where you would like the item to appear (check the boxes).
- g) Provide the Content of the item.
- h) Upload images or flyers relating to the event (optional).
- i) Provide special instructions or requests relating to the item.

The Diocese reserves the right to reject submissions to the newsletter in its sole discretion.

**Dates of publication for e-Notes newsletter.**

e-Notes will be published every other Thursday, beginning October 15, 2015. The dates for publication of the e-Notes newsletter will be found at a link on the Submission Form page or at [www.rcdony.org.enotes](http://www.rcdony.org.enotes) . The deadline for submitting items for the newsletter will be the Monday prior to publication date. Submissions will only be accepted by means of the Submission Form.

The e-Notes newsletter will be sent to all priests, diocesan staff, pastors, deacons, deacon candidates, bookkeepers and secretaries, catechetical leaders, principals, commissioned lay ministers, diocesan finance council, diocesan pastoral council, pastoral associates, and seminarians. In addition, individuals may sign up to receive a copy on the diocesan website.

**No flipping of emails**

The purpose of the bi-weekly newsletter is to cut down on the number of emails received by our parishes by placing notices, announcements or messages of a general nature to the same audience in a single email. Often personnel at the Chancery receive emails asking that the message be “flipped” over to all pastors or some other group by simply hitting forward and targeting the requested group. This practice will stop. Diocesan personnel will no longer “flip” emails to recipients on our group email lists.

When persons outside of the diocesan offices send us an email with a request to forward it to a particular group, the recipient will forward the message to Marika Donders (Editor) to be included in the next bi-weekly newsletter, if it is determined that is appropriate by the Editor. If the item received is time sensitive and cannot wait until the next newsletter, the Editor may direct it to the appropriate department or office head. The department or office head will evaluate the necessity, quality and completeness of the message and decide if it will be sent out to the requested group. The message will be considered a message from that office and that office will be responsible for assuring the completeness and quality of the message sent out to the group.

If a message received from outside the diocesan offices is not sent out to the requested group or included in the newsletter, it shall be returned by the Editor or responsible office or department head to the sender with an explanation of the reasons the email is being returned.

**Individual Group Emails**

At times, it is necessary to send individual messages to various groups. Every department or office head may authorize such individual group emails. Circumstances warranting the use of authorized emails is that the message is too particularized or specific to be included in the bi-weekly newsletter, there is a timeframe that requires its transmission sooner than the next newsletter, or for some other important reason. Examples include an email to pastors from the Bishop, public advocacy announcements from the NYSCC, notices to priests or deacons about their annual convocations.

## **Plan your messages for newsletter or group emails.**

There are five steps to planning your communications to avoid mistakes and to be clear and effective in your communications:

1. Determine what you hope to accomplish with the message and how will you measure its impact?
  - is the message intended to simply convey information (if so, should it be included in the newsletter?) or does it demand a response?
  - when is the message complete? (for information conveyance – when sent; if action required – upon response)
2. Know what else is going on that may impact your message
  - is this the right time to send this message?
  - is this a busy time for the recipient?
  - will my message interfere with an already scheduled event?
3. Select your audience carefully. Who do you need to communicate this message to?
  - some recipients are necessary
  - others should be informed only
  - is the message addressed to a specific audience – or is it general (why not include in the newsletter?)
4. Time your message properly.
  - include it in the newsletter, if appropriate, several times before an event, program or deadline.
  - determine frequency of message & dates it is to be sent.

**A rule of thumb should be that if the information can be included in the newsletter (e.g. bulletin announcements, directions to get documents off Pastoral Documentation, general announcements, dates of events) it should be placed in the newsletter in timely fashion.**

### **Email Do's and Don't**

#### **Do**

Keep it short, focused, and sweet

Draft clear, action-oriented lines

Create mobile-device friendly messages

The subject line is very important

#### **Don't**

Don't use attachments

Don't send emails without first testing to make sure everything works

Don't send emails when people are not likely to open them

Don't send email when message would be better face to face

- Always include a subject line. Ninety percent of recipients scan their emails, categorize them, and read them later. The subject line is most useful to get the recipients' attention.
- Create a short and succinct subject line. Try to use less than ten words.
- Create a subject line that pertains to the message.
- Do not be vague or general.
- Use professional business writing in email subject line. (Not "Hi")
- If action is required, indicate it in subject line or in text body.
- Use status categories in subject line; such as: "informational", "action", "time sensitive", "low priority".
- Avoid overuse of "high priority", "urgent", "important".
- If you do not receive a requested response after two emails, pick up the phone and talk to the person directly.

### **The Body of the Message**

- Use standard business greeting in business related emails. It is better to be more formal than run the risk of offending the recipient.
- Do not abbreviate. Compose an email in the same manner you would compose a letter.
- Do not use emoticons (ex. Smiley face) in the body of the message.
- Spellcheck your emails and proof read message before sending. Make sure it contains who, what, when, where and why as necessary.
- Include a call to action if recipient is expected to respond. Tell them how to respond and to whom to respond. The call to action should come in the first three lines of the message and include a deadline.
- Limit number of topics to one where possible (except newsletters).
- Limit number of lines to six, if possible.
- Make proper use of capitals and lower case.
- Do not send jokes by email.
- Arrange message by paragraphs, use bullets to delineate separate items, try to limit message to one screen.

### **Bad Email Habits**

- Let your reader guess why they are receiving this email.
- Use capital letters to express your anger or displeasure.

### **From/To Addressing**

- Always fill in the "to" line last, just before you hit send.
- Send emails only to people who need it or should receive it.
- Key elements to include in the signature: Name, position or company, phone number.
- Skip quotations or personal information unless there is a compelling reason.

### **Send/Receive: Final Checklist**

- Check spelling
- Check tone
- Is message complete, attachments attached?
- Addressed to proper person