

## **§277 POLICY PROHIBITING THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY CLERGY IN CONNECTION TO VIOLATIONS OF THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT OF THE DECALOGUE**

*With human interaction increasingly taking place in the digital sphere through various means of social communication, questions of clerical continence and the due prudence toward persons whose company endangers this obligation as described in can. 277 §§1-2 CIC-83 must now be understood to extend beyond physical personal interaction to include digital interaction and other means of social communication.*

*The use of means of social communication by clergy designed to facilitate violations of the sixth commandment of the Decalogue with an adult constitutes a violation of perfect and perpetual continence and the due prudence called for in can. 277 §2 CIC-83, risking also the possibility of scandal. Indeed, the use of any means of social communication by clerics to communicate with an adult in a manner, or to an end, inconsistent with Catholic moral teaching can give rise to scandal.*

*While the more-grave delicts of violations of the sixth commandment of the Decalogue with a minor, with a person who habitually has an imperfect use of reason, or with those who are afforded similar protections under the law are subject to separate legislations, including Book II, Policy §100 [Clerical Sexual Abuse of Minors: Policies for Education, Prevention, Assistance, and Determination of Fitness for Ministry](#), the Diocesan Bishop has promulgated this policy as particular law establishing more specific norms concerning the obligation of clerical continence in accord with canon 277 §3 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law.*

**277.1. Policy** It is the policy of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois that a cleric who creates an account, makes use of an account created by another person, or engages in any activity on any means of social communication specifically designed to facilitate violations of the sixth commandment of the Decalogue with an adult is to be punished with a just penalty according to the gravity of the offense.

**277.2. Policy** A cleric who creates an account, makes use of an account created by another person, or engages in any activity on any other means of social communication, with the goal of establishing contact for the purpose of violating the sixth commandment of the Decalogue with an adult, is to be punished with a just penalty, according to the gravity of the offense.

**277.3. Policy** A cleric who sends, intentionally receives or solicits sexually explicit material from another party, whether words or images of adults, by any means of social communication, whether in analog or digital format or in print media, is to be punished with a just penalty, according to the gravity of the offense.

***Procedures:***

- a) The use of social media or other behavior that violates standards of safe environment for children, and other immoral or unethical conduct, actions, or lifestyles by non-clergy personnel that has an adverse impact on the Church, the Diocese, or the employee’s job, or becomes publicly scandalous as determined by the Diocesan Bishop, is addressed in the policy on “[Standards of Conduct](#),” Book II, §503.
- b) Allegations of clerical sexual misconduct with minors are addressed by canon 1398 of [Book VI of the Code of Canon Law \(revised 2021\)](#), the [Normae de delictis reservatis](#) of Pope Benedict XVI (2010) with [modifications](#) to both the substantial and the procedural norms of the *motu proprio* issued by Pope John Paul II (2001) [Sacramentorum Sanctitatis Tutela](#), on the more grave delicts reserved to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and Diocesan Policies and Procedures Book II, §100 – [Clerical Sexual Abuse of Minors: Policy for Education, Prevention, Assistance, and Determination of Fitness for Ministry](#).
- c) All Church personnel and volunteers working with minors are required to follow Diocesan Policy §200 [Policy on Working with Minors](#).
- d) Violations of the policies contained herein may also be referred to the Diocesan Special Panel on Clergy Misconduct pursuant to Book II, Policy §120 [Policies and Procedures for the Operation and Support of the Special Panel on Clergy Misconduct](#).