



CHURCH OF THE *Ascension*

COMMUNICATIONS STYLE GUIDE

Here are some quick TIPS and a WRITER'S GUIDE to help give our parish a clear, consistent voice. These are tips to help you write more effectively. Communication is an art, not a science! And grammar is a tool for clarity. If you find "proper" grammar makes it harder for people to connect with your message – break the rules!

If you have questions or need help, please consult us!

TIPS:

- Your first sentence is of utmost importance. If people only read the first sentence, what do you want them to know? Be as brief as possible while still getting your point across.
- Include images when possible. If you do not have a specific image in mind, but have an idea, let us know! We also have been accruing a good amount of photography of our events over the past several years, so if you would like to include a photo of our parish events, let us know.
- Include all photos, graphics, etc. as a separate attachment to an email—please do not paste images into your word doc or other document.
- Excel spreadsheets are preferable over tables in Word.
- The word "Mass," when referring to the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, should always be capitalized.
- There is a difference between Catholic and catholic. The former refers to being of the Roman Catholic faith, while the latter means universal, diverse, and all-embracing.
- Capitalize every noun related to God, including the pronoun "He."
- The word "church" is capitalized only when used in the name of a specific church or denomination.
- Capitalize the names of religions, religious followers, holidays, and religious writings.
- English capitalization rules
 - Capitalize the first word of a sentence.
 - Capitalize names and other proper nouns.
 - Do not capitalize after a colon (usually).
 - Capitalize the first word of a quote (sometimes).
 - Capitalize days, months, and holidays, but not seasons.
 - Capitalize most words in titles. (Ex: A Few Good Men)
 - Only capitalize people's titles when their name is included in the phrase. Example: "I saw an interview with President Joe Biden." But do not capitalize: "Joe Biden is the president of the United States."
- Top 10 principles for plain language
 - Write for your reader, not yourself.
 - State your major point(s) first before going into details.
 - Stick to your topic.
 - Write in active voice.
 - Write in short paragraphs.
 - Use short sentences as much as possible.

- Use everyday words.
- Omit unneeded words.
- Keep the subject and verb close together.

WRITER'S GUIDE

- Our parish's name is: "Church of the Ascension," not Church of Ascension
- When using names like Fr. or St., use periods after the abbreviation.
- Acronyms - On first reference to an organization or other abbreviated entity, use its full name with abbreviation in parentheses. Thereafter, use the abbreviation. Examples: The Multi-Purpose Room (MPR); thereafter, the MPR The School Advisory Board (SAB); thereafter, the SAB.
- Commas - use the serial (Oxford) comma only if it helps clarify your list. Example: I enjoy apples, bananas and grapes. Or: I enjoy apples, peanut butter and jelly, and pizza.
- Phone numbers - use decimal separators or dashes between area code and phone digits. Example: 614.555.4545, ex 123.
- Time of day - use lowercase with periods between the letters. For example: a.m. and p.m. Also drop ":00" for times on the exact hour. Example(s): 1 p.m., 2:45 p.m., and 8:15 a.m.
- Calendar dates - January 31, 2014. If text follows, use a comma after the year. Do not abbreviate the Month. Do not use ordinal numbers for dates. Example(s): December 3, not December 3rd.
- Numbers - use percentage symbol, do not spell out percent. Example: 5% not 5 percent. Only use ordinal numbers to indicate grades or the order of days. Example(s): 4th graders, 6th grade class OR 1st Sunday, 3rd week in November
- Quotation marks - all punctuation should go inside the end quotation mark. Example: St. Francis said, "Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible."
- Spacing - use a single space after the end of a sentence.

Please contact the Communications Ministry team if you have any questions or need clarification.