



Diocesan Speakers — Policy and Procedures

Diocese of Scranton
300 Wyoming Avenue
Scranton, Pennsylvania 18503

Rationale

- Canon 386 §2 of the *Code of Canon Law* requires the Diocesan Bishop to defend the integrity and unity of the faith.
- When a speaker is provided with a forum in our parishes, schools or other institutions, the faithful have a right to expect that what they hear will be consistent with the teachings of the Church and with the pastoral direction of the Diocese of Scranton.
- The faithful also have the right to expect that any approved speaker is in compliance with the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* as set forth by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.
- A speaker policy is not censorship, rather implementing consistent policies and procedures allows the Diocese of Scranton to avoid difficult or embarrassing situations, such as cancelling a speaker, and ensures that the Bishop exercises his canonical authority.

Premise

- **Speakers who are being considered to give a presentation on faith and morals must be approved by the Diocesan Bishop before an invitation is extended.**
- Diocesan parishes, Catholic schools, diocesan institutions, diocesan offices and Catholic organizations within the Diocese of Scranton cannot promote or sponsor a speaker unless he or she is approved by the Bishop for that event.

Speakers for whom this policy applies

- Any speaker under consideration to give a presentation on matters of faith and morals who does not fall in the exempt category below.

Speakers who are exempt from seeking approval

- Cardinals and bishops in communion with the Holy See
- Priests and deacons of the Diocese of Scranton who are in good standing
- Members of religious communities (whether priests, deacons, brothers or sisters) officially established in or serving in the Diocese of Scranton
- Staff of Diocese of Scranton, its parishes (including parish staff members who are paid or volunteer), schools, and affiliated agencies

General guidelines

- Approval of a speaker is event specific. Parishes, schools, diocesan institutes, offices, organizations, and retreat centers must follow the approval process each time they intend to invite a speaker to the Diocese of Scranton.
- Catholic clergy and laity who have the responsibility of engaging speakers for spiritual and educational programs or events in parishes or other groups throughout the Diocese of Scranton are urged to be vigilant that the proposed speakers communicate the authentic teaching of the Catholic Church and foster genuine spiritual growth in the Catholic faith.

- Before anyone, including Catholic clergy and religious, is given permission by the Diocesan Bishop to speak publicly within the Diocese of Scranton, it must be clear that the individual enjoys the endorsement of his or her current proper bishop or religious superior. For laity, he or she must enjoy the endorsement of his/her current proper bishop and/or pastor.
- All speakers (except those who are exempt from seeking approval) must present certification from their home diocese that they are in compliance with their diocese's policies for safe environments for children and young people.

Procedure

- Before an invitation is extended to a speaker, a request from the inviting party addressed to the Bishop of Scranton must be submitted to the Chancellor at least two months prior to the event. While preliminary contracts with a proposed speaker are often made prior to extending a formal invitation, it is expected that approval from the Bishop of Scranton is secured in advance of making an arrangement with a proposed speaker.
- Information that needs to be included with the request includes:
 - Speaker's name and topic(s). The letter should also attest to the speaker's fidelity to the Magisterium and information about other dioceses in which the speaker has presented on this topic and when.
 - The proposed speaker's ***curriculum vitae***
 - For clerics and religious proposed as speakers, the request for the Bishop of Scranton's permission must also be accompanied by a ***Letter of Good Standing/Testimonial of Suitability for Ministry*** from the speaker's superior or ordinary. If this letter does not acknowledge that the priest/deacon/religious is in compliance with his/her diocese's safe environment policy, a separate certificate or letter attesting to this is needed.
 - For Catholic lay people proposed as speakers, he or she must submit a letter of endorsement by his/her bishop and/or pastor verifying he/she is a faithful practicing Catholic in union with the Church.
 - If the proposed speaker is not Catholic, the letter of support should come from his/her pastor or another person who can attest to the proposed speaker's character and suitability. In addition, if the proposed speaker is not a Catholic, the speaker should provide written assurance that his or her presentation will not conflict with Catholic teaching. As with Catholics, non-Catholics are required to provide proof of safe environment training and provide clearances (see below).
 - All lay people (except those who are exempt from seeking approval), must present certification from their home diocese that they are in compliance with the diocese's policies for safe environments for children and young people. Specifically:
 - Verification from the speaker's home diocese that he or she has attended the diocesan approved child abuse training (VIRTUS or a similar program);
 - Criminal and Child Abuse Clearances from the speaker's state of residence. This may be submitted by copies of the documents, which must be current, or by affirmation of these clearances in the letter of endorsement for the speaker.
 - If any of the above is not in English, please also submit an English translation.
- After being received by the Chancellor, the information will be reviewed *via* an internal diocesan process prior to the Bishop of Scranton deciding if he will grant approval. **The event may be scheduled and publicly advertised only after the event organizer has been notified by the Chancellor that the Bishop of Scranton has given speaker approval.**
- *The Catholic Light* will not accept ads for or requests to publicize programs regarding spiritual talks, programs or services unless the request is accompanied by the notification of the Bishop of Scranton's approval of the speaker for that event.

Questions regarding this policy are to be directed to the Office of the Chancellor at 570-207-2216.