

POLICY FOR PUBLIC SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS WITHIN THE DIOCESE OF COLUMBUS

Introduction:

As all of us engage in our pastoral work at the Diocese of Columbus, it is vital to ensure that the speakers we consider are of genuine benefit to the people we serve. A good speaker vetting policy supports the fidelity and orthodoxy of Catholic Church teaching. It helps to foster Christian unity and avoid doctrinal confusion among our people. This is to assure that all presentations affirm the carefully established plans and goals of the Diocese of Columbus' parishes, schools, apostolates, agencies, and offices – in other words, that they forward our goal of genuinely building God's kingdom. With these goals in mind, this policy describes in specific steps how to achieve these vital goals in our pastoral work and ministry.

A. General

1. The following policies apply to any engagement (including fundraisers and commencements) within the Diocese of Columbus that includes a public speaker. "Public speaker" is defined as anyone who gives a formal or informal talk, speech, reflection, presentation, address, or other form of verbal communication at any event sponsored by or associated with the Diocese of Columbus, its offices, agencies, parishes, elementary and secondary schools, and Catholic lay apostolates within the diocese.
2. Any speaker hosted by an institution (office, agency, parish, school, or apostolate) if Catholic must be an active practicing Catholic in good standing.
 - a. If priests, deacons, diocesan or parish employees, or registered parishioners of the Diocese of Columbus in good standing are invited to speak, they are exempt from the vetting process.
 - b. The hosting institution is responsible for collecting a letter of good standing from the speaker's diocese or religious community, including clergy, religious, and laity.
 - c. In general, if a non-Catholic presenter is to be scheduled to speak at an event sponsored by a Catholic institution in the Diocese the official vetting process is through the Bishop's Office and with explicit permission of the Bishop or his delegate.
3. Under no circumstances is a candidate actively running for political office or an officeholder to an elected or appointed political position permitted to speak at any event sponsored by a Catholic institution in the Diocese for campaign purposes. A speaker may be invited provided his or her public positions are not at odds and do not undermine Church teaching.
4. Before a potential speaker is proposed and invited, the person responsible for hosting the speaker must first have reviewed all related materials of the proposed speaker. The speaker vetting process is to be completed before any invitation to speak is extended and the event scheduled. If requested, the Diocese may provide assistance in this review.
5. The content and subject matter of talks hosted by a Catholic institution within the Diocese of Columbus must never contradict the official Magisterial teachings of the Catholic Church on faith and morals. Acceptable subjects for the content of talks may include personal testimony of the Catholic faith, explanation of specific truths of the Catholic faith, ecclesial documents (i.e., papal, conciliar, or episcopal conference documents), or the pastoral application of the Church's teaching or a Magisterial document. The Catholic institution that sponsors a speaking engagement is responsible for obtaining a commitment (written) from the proposed speaker that they adhere to the original topic and subject matter agreed upon for the talk. It is prudent to utilize a formal speaking agreement or contract with paid speakers.

6. Additional policies regarding specific entities and some particular exceptions are described in sections C-F.
7. These policies take effect on November 3, 2023. Any event already scheduled for after that date is grandfathered.

B. Official Process of Vetting

1. The process of vetting applies only to those institutions established in the following sections.
2. The hosting institution must provide the following to the Bishop's Office by email via the Sr. Director for the Department of Evangelization Dr. Marlon De La Torre at: (mdelatorre@columbuscatholic.org):
 - a. A letter of good standing from a bishop or religious superior of the proposed Priest or Religious speaker. The letter is to be requested and obtained by the sponsoring institution. If the proposed speaker is a layperson, a letter of good standing from their bishop or pastor is to be provided.
 - b. The speaker's current curriculum vitae,
 - c. The written source(s) (books or articles on the topic authored by the speaker) that form the basis for the talk (if available); and a short-written summary of the purpose and content of the talk. The written summary may be written by the person responsible for hosting the talk.
 - d. Six months should be planned for the process of vetting; however, no invitation or scheduling should happen until after the vetting process is completed and approval is granted.
 - e. The process will also include an internet and social media search of the individual.
3. The Sr. Director for the Department of Evangelization is responsible for confirming the overall vetting process which includes a review of the Pastor's initial vetting of the speaker in question, the speaker's *letter of recommendation*, curriculum vitae, sources, topic, and summary. Once all materials are collected, the vetting process will take about two to four weeks depending on the volume of requests.
4. All speaker approvals are valid for six months from the date of approval. Note: Exceptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

C. Diocesan Offices

1. In general, it is not the responsibility of Diocesan offices to host speaking engagements on behalf of Diocesan parishes.
 - a. Presentations offered by Diocesan offices will also abide by the official Diocesan vetting process where applicable and needed.
 - b. Administrative presentations offered by Diocesan offices are exempt from these requirements. Because of the nature of the talks, the speakers may be non-Catholic.
 - i. Such topics would cover matters such as educational theory or pedagogy, finances, and business matters, building and structural management, human resources and employment matters, insurance, safety and security, and safe environment compliance.
 - ii. These presentations must not contradict Catholic teaching in any way, and it is the responsibility of the directors and moderators to ensure this.

D. Parishes

1. The process for vetting speakers for all parish speaking engagements is left to the discretion of the Pastor in keeping with the requirements listed in section A1-7.

E. Schools

1. All elementary school speaking engagements are to follow the requirements of A 1-7. After an initial review from the Superintendent of Schools or designated Associate Superintendent (where applicable), the Pastor (if applicable) provides final review and approval. If the elementary school is diocesan, final review and approval is provided by the Department of Evangelization.

2. All high school speaking engagements are to follow the requirements of A 1-7. They are first required to contact the Superintendent of Catholic Schools of their intent to bring in a speaker and seek the Superintendent's approval for a speaker before proceeding with the vetting and approval process.

a. All talks/speakers hosted by the diocesan high schools are required to abide by the official vetting process.

b. In those cases where the Department of Catholic Schools hosts a technical talk on education through the Catholic high school, it is the responsibility of the Superintendent of Catholic Schools to ensure that the speaker and talk do not conflict with the Magisterial teachings of the Catholic Church on faith and morals as outlined in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

F. Lay Apostolates

1. All Catholic lay apostolates or separate Catholic 501c3s are required to abide by the requirements of A 1-7. However, the process of vetting speakers is entrusted to the bishop's appointed liaison for the apostolate (If/where applicable).

G. Approved Partners List

1. The Department of Evangelization shall maintain an active list of Apostolates for use by each Diocesan office and agency to help them accomplish their mission.

2. Entities included on the list must adhere to the teachings of the Catholic Church as taught in the Catechism of the Catholic Church be authentically Catholic and operate in the Diocese of Columbus with the approval of the Ordinary, in a manner consistent with Church teaching and praxis.

3. Entities included on the list must be Child Protection Compliant with all pertinent personnel.

4. Listed entities that are already part of the official Diocesan structure, such as Diocesan offices and agencies, are automatically approved for inclusion on the list.

5. Those entities that wish to be listed as partners that are lay apostolates shall be vetted by the Department of Evangelization before inclusion in accordance with the steps described in sections F and G.2. of this policy.

Speaker Approval Process Recommended Checklist

(Per Section B, 1-4)

1) Request from the speaker and/or provide the following:

a. Resume or Curriculum Vitae (if available)

b. Letter of Good Standing from Pastor, Superior, or Bishop

c. Short Bio

d. Photo (if available)

e. Written sources on the topic to be presented

f. Written summary (maximum 500 words) of the purpose and content of the talk

e. Safe Environment Status (Where applicable)



2) Provide the following information:

a. Title and a brief description of the Presentation, and its objectives, aim, or purpose.

b. Name and date of the event

3) Send all the above (confirmed documents and information) via e-mail to Dr. Marlon De La Torre, Senior Director for the Department of Evangelization: mdelatorre@columbuscatholic.org and (cc: Liz Christy, Associate Director for the Department of Evangelization: echristy@columbuscatholic.org)



Sample Letter of Good Standing

Date: _____

I hereby affirm that _____ is a parishioner in good standing
Speaker's First and Last Name

at _____ in _____
Parish Name *City, State*

Signature of Pastor/Bishop _____

Print name of Pastor/Bishop _____

Notary Public _____ My Commission Expires _____