



Diocese of Scranton

300 Wyoming Avenue
Scranton, Pennsylvania 18503

Speaker Policy & Guidelines

Rationale

- Canon 386 § 2 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.
- Instituting a speaker policy is not censorship, rather implementing consistent policies and guidelines allows the Diocese 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, Schools, Institutions and Offices and Catholic Organizations within the Diocese cannot promote or sponsor a speaker unless he or she is approved by the Bishop.

Speakers to Which 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 of the Roman Catholic Church, in virtue of their office
- 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
- Staff of Diocesan parishes, schools and institutions, including:
 - Parish Staff Members (paid or volunteer)
 - Catechists
 - Catholic School Administrators and Teachers

General Guidelines:

- Catholic clergy and laity who have the responsibility of engaging speakers for spiritual and educational programs in parishes and other groups throughout the Diocese are urged to be vigilant that these speakers communicate the authentic teaching of the Catholic Church and foster genuine spiritual growth in the Catholic faith.

- Before anyone is scheduled as a speaker, it must be clear that the individual enjoys the endorsement of his/her current Bishop. In the case of a religious, the individual must also have the endorsement of his/her current proper religious order.
- All non-exempt speakers 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. Specifically, they must present proof that a criminal record check was completed by their diocese and that they have attended a workshop on preventing child abuse. This may be submitted either on letterhead or in the form of a certificate.
- Only after the Bishop of Scranton has given the necessary approval, may the event(s) be scheduled and publicly advertised.
- *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 letter of approval from the Bishop.

Procedure

- Before an invitation is extended to the speaker, a request must be submitted to the Office of the Chancellor. While preliminary contacts with a proposed speaker are often made prior to extending a formal invitation, it is expected that approval from the Bishop is secured in advance of making any arrangement with a proposed speaker.
- Information that needs to be secured, includes:
 1. Speaker's Name and Topic(s). It should attest to the speaker's fidelity to the Magisterium, and the conformity of the topic to the pastoral direction of the Diocese.
 2. In the case of a lay person, a Letter of Support from the speaker's Bishop establishing that he/she is a Catholic in good standing.
 3. In the case of a cleric or religious from outside the Diocese of Scranton, a Letter of Good Standing from the speaker's Ordinary or proper religious superior attesting that the speaker is a cleric or religious in good standing.
 4. Proof that a criminal history background check was completed by the speaker's diocese and that the speaker has attended a workshop on preventing child abuse. This may be submitted either on letterhead or in the form of a certificate.
- The information will be reviewed via an internal Diocesan process. If information is missing or if there are any questions, the individual making the request will be contacted. Likewise, when a decision is reached (approved or denied), the individual making the request will be notified.
- Questions regarding this policy are to be directed to the Office of the Chancellor at (570) 207-2216.