



ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE
OF CHARLESTON

SECRETARIAT OF COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Media Communication Policy

PREAMBLE

The Secretariat of Communications and Public Affairs is directed to ensure that the Diocese of Charleston's mission, response to media inquiries, and presentation of events are represented with one, unified voice in a manner that promotes evangelization of the Catholic faith. The Secretariat will seek to ensure a clear, consistent, accurate, authoritative and timely message is communicated to the public on behalf of the Diocese and the Bishop.

DEFINITIONS

Church Personnel: For the purposes of these guidelines, the following are included in the definition of "church personnel": Bishops, priests, deacons, religious, and lay employees involved in the work for the Diocese, its parishes, schools and affiliated organizations.

Secretariat of Communications and Public Affairs: the Secretariat includes the following diocesan offices: office of communications, *The Catholic Miscellany*, and South Carolina Catholic Conference.

POLICY

In order to efficiently and effectively ensure a unified message, all Church Personnel are required to comply with the following media communication policy. Good communication among all personnel will assist this Secretariat in working with reporters and may preempt any negative reports in the media.

Accordingly:

- All media inquiries should be directed to the Secretary, whose contact is below, or his designee. Church Personnel are to advise any media reporter: "The Diocese of Charleston's policy is to refer all media inquiries to the Secretary of Communications and Public Affairs."
- Church Personnel are to contact the Secretary immediately, and generally within one hour, after being approached by the media regarding a controversial issue. Church

Personnel are expected to cooperate with the Secretary to assist in preparing a response.

- Church Personnel should not feel pressured or be compelled to answer questions immediately upon request.
- Responses to the media can only be issued by the Secretary if authorized by a Vicar General or the Bishop. The Secretariat of Communications and Public Affairs will work with that designated official to prepare him or her to respond to the media inquiry in appropriate situations.
- In the event a reporter and camera crew show up unannounced at a parish or school regarding a controversial story, the pastor or administrator and the parish or school staff shall act with courtesy and professionalism. However, it is important to note that the media is not permitted access to our property unless we deem it appropriate. The Administrator shall contact the Secretary immediately and inform him or her of the identity of the reporter or photographer and the purpose of their inquiry and to obtain guidance on next steps.
- Letters to the editor of publications may not be submitted without the approval of a Vicar General. The Secretariat of Communications and Public Affairs should be utilized as a resource in drafting these letters.

This policy covers all external news media including broadcast, electronic and print.

MEDIA CONTACT

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Secretariat of Communications & Public Affairs
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In the event of the Secretary is not available, please contact:

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Office of the General Counsel and Real Estate
efowler@charlestdiocese.org

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