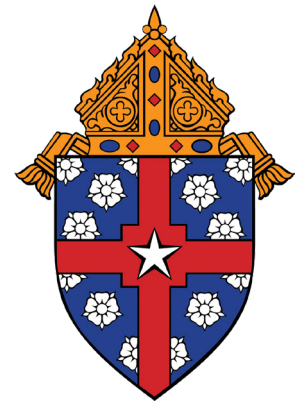


ARCHDIOCESE of GALVESTON-HOUSTON

# NEWS MEDIA POLICY

Office of Communications  
1700 San Jacinto St. • Houston, TX • 77002  
713-659-5461  
[www.archgh.org](http://www.archgh.org)



**Revised: January 8, 2018**



# TABLE of CONTENTS:

- I. Purpose
- II. Policy
- III. Archdiocesan Spokespersons
- IV. Media Inquireis
- V. Archdiocesan- Versus Parish-Initiated Media Outreach to Major News Outlets
- VI. Sensitive or Controversial Issues
- VII. Breaking News
- VIII. Secular Media and Funerals
- IX. Commercials, Documentaries or Films at Parishes, Schools or Archdiocesan Facilities
- X. Personal Points of View
- XI. Secretariat for Communications Contacts

---

## **ARCHDIOCESE OF GALVESTON-HOUSTON SECRETARIAT FOR COMMUNICATIONS CONTACTS**

**Media Relations Manager, Jo Ann Zuniga:**

713-652-8213 or [jzuniga@archgh.org](mailto:jzuniga@archgh.org)

**Secretariat Director for Communications, Jonah Dycus**

1700 San Jacinto St.

Houston, TX 77002

[www.archgh.org/mediarelations](http://www.archgh.org/mediarelations)

Main Office: 713-659-5461

Fax: 713-659-3444

## **Purpose**

Through its outreach to the news media, the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston seeks to ensure that the message of Christ's boundless love, as lived and proclaimed by the faithful, reaches the widest possible audience of Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

A robust presence in the news media – via print and web stories, television, radio and community calendars – makes evident to the wider public the vital work of our local Church, affirms the relevance of the Catholic faith in our modern culture and emboldens believers in their walk with Jesus.

It also ensures that the voice of the Church is heard in the public square where its moral and social teachings can influence thinking and opinion-making on the important issues of our day.

## **Policy**

The Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston gives a high priority to inquiries from the news media and seeks to respond quickly, efficiently and accurately to requests for comment, information and interviews with Archdiocesan clergy and staff.

The Secretariat for Communications is responsible for the Archdiocese's media relations. Parish or school staff, priests, religious and Archdiocesan ministries must notify the Communications Director before responding to media inquiries and before initiating contact with any of the major news outlets\* in the Houston or Galveston media market. Schools should also refer to the Catholic Schools Office policy on media for additional guidelines from the CSO.

## **Archdiocesan Spokespersons**

The Secretariat for Communications is responsible for conveying official messages of the Archdiocese to the local and national news media.

Should media contact an Archdiocesan department, parish or school, the Archdiocesan Communications Office will collaborate with those entities to discern who may be the most appropriate person to reply to the media, depending on the nature or content of the inquiry.

## **Media Inquiries**

All media inquiries to parish or school staff, Archdiocesan clergy or religious, Archdiocesan ministries and administrative departments should be referred immediately to the Secretariat for Communications and to the appropriate pastor, principal, ministry director or department head. An appropriate response to a media inquiry would be, "I am not the appropriate person to respond to your question at this time, but I will give your request to the pastor/principal/department head/Communications Office and someone will respond to you promptly."

Please take down the reporter's name, news organization, story topic, deadline, e-mail and phone number.

## **Community News Coverage**

Many of our parishes and schools have well-established relationships with smaller community newspapers that routinely publish event announcements, photos and stories produced by parish staff or volunteers. Parishes and schools are free to submit those items without notifying the Secretariat for Communications unless the submission includes information of a sensitive or controversial nature.

As a courtesy to the Communications Secretariat, parishes and schools actively seeking coverage of an event by a reporter or editor with a community newspaper, website, radio or television station are asked to notify the Secretariat for Communications before initiating contact or issuing press releases and advisories.

The Archdiocese encourages parishes and schools to participate in outreach to community news media in drafting and submitting news releases, articles, calendar items and photos, as well as conceptualizing and planning coverage opportunities.

## **Archdiocesan- Versus Parish-Initiated Media Outreach to Major News Outlets**

Most media outreach of Archdiocesan-wide significance is initiated through the Secretariat for Communications. This includes issuing press releases and media advisories about Archdiocesan ministries, events and points of view, as well as contacting individual editors and reporters for coverage of Archdiocesan ministries, events and points of view.

Parishes, schools and ministries seeking coverage by major news outlets\* should coordinate with the Secretariat for Communications before initiating contact (with the exception of events submitted for inclusion in community or event calendars).

Parishes and schools are asked to draft their own press releases and advisories regarding parish/school news, but as a courtesy to the Archdiocesan Communications staff, parishes and schools are asked to submit those news releases to the Office of Communication prior to issuing them to major news outlets.\* Ministries, schools and parishes should not initiate contact for coverage with the major news outlets before notifying the Secretariat for Communications.

**\*Major news outlets are considered the following: The Houston Chronicle, The Houston Press, The Galveston County Daily News, KTRK- ABC 13, KHOU-CBS 11, KPRC-NBC 2, KRIV-FOX 26, KXLN- Univision 45, KTMD-Telemundo 47, KTRH 740 AM, KUHF 88.7 FM**

## **Sensitive or Controversial Issues**

All inquiries from television and radio stations, newspapers (including small community newspapers), websites or blogs regarding sensitive or controversial topics must be referred immediately to the Secretariat for Communications and the employee's pastor, principal or supervisor. The Director of Communications will consult with Archdiocesan leadership and legal staff, if appropriate, to draft a suitable statement. Such matters may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Lawsuits, pending litigation or issues that could significantly expose the Archdiocese to litigation.
- Personnel issues, including potential assignments, hiring or firing decisions.
- Allegations of criminal activity or misconduct by lay staff, teachers, school employees, volunteers or clergy, such as theft, sexual abuse, and drug abuse.
- Specific legislative or political issues on which the U.S. Bishops Conference or Archdiocese has taken a public position.
- Parish financial affairs or fiscal policies or operations, such as budgeting or insurance coverage.

## **Breaking News**

In the event of breaking news, reporters may come to a parish, school or other Archdiocesan property unannounced to seek comment from parishioners, staff and clergy or for background video footage and photos.

Reporters and news trucks should not be allowed on parish property or within parish or Archdiocesan facilities without the express authorization from the parish pastor, principal or facility manager.

Parish and Archdiocesan facilities are private property. As such, a pastor, principal or facility manager has the right to ask reporters to leave the premises if they so choose.

Please immediately notify the Secretariat for Communications when journalists come to a parish, school or Archdiocesan facility without a prior appointment and refer all questions and requests for comment to the Archdiocesan Media Relations Manager.

Reporters are permitted to gather on sidewalks and public property adjacent to parishes and schools. They are also free to approach parishioners for comment. Parishioners, school parents and volunteers are free to offer comment to the media if they choose.

Please remember that news media should be treated with respect when asking them to leave church property. Since your words and actions may be recorded and could be aired or published as part of a news report, please remember to behave in a professional manner.

The following language could be used when asking media to leave church property:

“We appreciate your interest in the Archdiocese. As a policy, we do not allow media onto Archdiocesan property and we respectfully ask you to leave the premises at this time. I am not the appropriate person to respond to your questions, but we will give your request to the Archdiocesan Communications Office and someone will respond to you promptly.”

“At this time, we do not allow news media onto our property without authorization from the Archdiocese. Unfortunately, I must ask you to leave. We will give your request to the Archdiocesan Communications Office and someone should be able to help answer your questions very soon.”

## **Secular Media and Funerals**

The media may contact parishes from time to time to request coverage of tragic deaths and funerals of local Catholics. The needs of the grieving families and respect for their privacy are the primary considerations when considering allowing media to cover a funeral at a parish.

When media place such a request to the parish, please consider: calling the Director of Communications to discuss the request; advising the family of the request and asking how they would like the parish/Archdiocese to respond; asking if parish hospitality ministers could assist with handling cameras/press (should the family agree to allow media at the funeral). If the family declines the media request, please advise the media that the family has asked for privacy at this time. If possible, you may ask the family if you could provide the press with a copy of the funeral service program or contact information for potential family friends who may be able to be interviewed regarding the deceased.

## **Commercials, Documentaries or Films at Parishes, Schools, or Archdiocesan Facilities**

On occasion, media companies or individual filmmakers producing documentaries, films or commercials contact parishes, schools, offices or departments to ask to film a video production at an Archdiocesan facility. All such requests must be sent to the Secretariat for Communications. In general, the Archdiocese does not allow filming on any of its properties. Please ask for the company/individual making the request to provide a written explanation detailing: their media company; their purpose and intent of their video; their affiliation with the Archdiocese (if it exists); their media background; the dates for filming; and any forms/contracts they need completed to film on Archdiocesan property.

Please stress to these individuals/companies that no production at an Archdiocesan site is considered until a written request is submitted to [jzuniga@archgh.org](mailto:jzuniga@archgh.org) and that all requests are subject to approval. It may be worth noting to inquirers that in general, the Archdiocese does not allow filming on any of its properties at this time.

## **Personal Points of View**

All employees have a right to their personal points of view. When not officially speaking on behalf of the Archdiocese, however, employees who choose to identify themselves as a parish or school staff member or Archdiocesan employee in Letters to the Editor, public forums or meetings, radio or television interviews should make clear that their views are their personally held opinions and do not represent the views of the Archdiocese or the Roman Catholic Church.

---

## **ARCHDIOCESE OF GALVESTON-HOUSTON SECRETARIAT FOR COMMUNICATIONS CONTACTS**

### **Media Relations Manager, Jo Ann Zuniga:**

713-652-8213 or [jjuniga@archgh.org](mailto:jjuniga@archgh.org)

### **Secretariat Director for Communications, Jonah Dycus**

1700 San Jacinto St.

Houston, TX 77002

[www.archgh.org/mediarelations](http://www.archgh.org/mediarelations)

Main Office: 713-659-5461

Fax: 713-659-3444

