

COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS

Office of Public Information
Diocese of Phoenix

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A. Introduction and Overview

We live in an age where communication has become a complex endeavor. The message we send about Christ's saving grace, the fullness of life in our parishes, as well as the Church's stance on many issues of justice and morality, compete with the sensationalism of everyday events.

Throughout history, the Church has been the first to use the tools available at the time to communicate as far and as wide as possible. The first book ever printed was the Bible. Today, we have come a long way from the first printing press to encompass technologies that were unheard of as little as 20 years ago.

In order to spread the good news, we are called as members of the Universal Catholic Church to use any and all means available to communicate the message of Christ's lasting salvation. We are called to be disciples and profess our faith. We are called to reach out to tell the stories of life in our parishes that bring out Christ's message in everyday life. To not use the tools and technologies at our disposal to tell Christ's message to awaken the power of faith is a disservice to all.

In *Aetatis Novae*, practical steps are outlined for dioceses in this process. They are:

- 1) to equip Church leaders to understand, interpret and speak the "new language" of the news media culture;
- 2) to equip all Church ministries with media literacy skills;
- 3) to comprehend and respond to the social justice significance of the new media age and its impact on the development of peoples and cultures;

- 4) to equip Church leaders and ministers with skills to use the mass media and new technologies; and
- 5) to design an integrated pastoral communications plan central to the ministries of the Church.

This communications overview is an attempt to provide you with the tools and techniques to tell the good news and to be proactive messengers of faith, using all the modern communication tools available to us today and those not yet developed for the future. Its purpose is to give parishes, schools, and organizations time-tested practical advice in the areas of print, media, publicity, advertising, television, radio and public relations.

There is only so much “shelf space of the mind,” so to get our message heard, we have to cut through the daily messages of materialism that bombard us. And if we who are charged with helping to keep God’s message ever-present amidst all that materialistic clutter are to do our work successfully, we have to do it in a consistent, believable, professional way.

Assistance is available from the Office of Public Information. Please call us if we can help with a specific issue in your parish.

B. Communication Principles and Guidelines

The communications tools are based upon some basic principles of theology and communication practice. These are:

- a. Good communication proclaims the goodness of God as manifested in all creation by:**
 - Emphasizing listening, recognizing that effective communication is a two-way street that challenges us to listen before we speak and to hear both the spoken and the unspoken needs of the people we serve;
 - Inviting individuals and communities to see goodness in themselves;
 - Emphasizing hope rather than despair; and
 - Using a professional and always truthful style of communication that promotes hospitality, openness and respect for all.

b. Good communication proclaims the dignity of the person, called to wholeness in Jesus Christ, by:

- affirming the primacy of the individual over the anonymous crowd;
- emphasizing the most personal style of communication that is practical;
- recognizing and nurturing the unique gifts and talents of every individual and respecting the rights and freedom of all regardless of age, gender, race, social or economic status or personal talents or abilities;
- recognizing the right of Catholics to be informed about developments in their church;
- adapting the way we communicate and the medium we use to the particular needs and circumstances of the individuals and groups we serve;
- respecting the privacy and integrity of individual conscience;
- welcoming dialogue with all religious traditions; and
- using forms of communication that are dignified, courteous and respectful of all people at all times.

c. Good communication proclaims the power of community by:

- recognizing the need to belong that we all share;
- affirming the importance of communities which can alleviate loneliness and serve the common good;
- creating an authentic community spirit in the parishes, schools and commissions and agencies of the Diocese and encouraging cooperation among these entities;
- celebrating our diversity and our unity as a local Church;
- recognizing the many contributions that various cultures and ethnic groups have made to our local Church;
- witnessing the bond that exists among people of all nations, cultures and religious traditions; and
- committing ourselves to prayer, collaboration and service in the formation of true communities of faith.

Implications

1. Tell the truth.
2. Communicate as personally as is practical. The most effective form of communication is one-on-one, face-to-face conversation. The least effective forms include billboards and skywriting. Somewhere in between fall: group discussions, speeches, telephone conversations, personal letters, computer-generated letters, videos, brochures and pamphlets, institutional newsletters and magazines, news carried in the public media, and advertising. Each vehicle has its advantages and disadvantages, depending on the message and the audience you are trying to reach. However, when communicating important or sensitive news, the personal touch is very important.
3. Use positive language in your communications, always inviting your audience to see goodness and possibilities even in difficult situations.
4. Communicate with unfailing courtesy.
5. Celebrate our unity as a local church and your unity as a parish, school or commission by projecting a unified, positive image. This image should flow from your mission statement and should be translated into visual imagery, such as a logo.

This visual imagery is essential to creating a unified image. Logos should appear on every piece of parish or school communication, e.g. all letterhead, business cards, publications, internal and external newsletters, invitations, thank-you cards, intention cards, etc. Your graphic identity should become synonymous with your parish or school, so that when people see that symbol, they will think of you.

Try also to create a unified narrative about your parish, school or agency with consistent facts, figures, goals and values. If everyone uses this central source, your image will remain unified and your story constant.

6. Celebrate the diversity of your audience by communicating inclusively.

7. Remember to listen, and check out any assumptions in your communications program. Use survey and evaluation tools frequently.
8. Strive for excellence and professionalism in communication materials. Well-orchestrated materials do not have to be expensive; rather, they are a function of good design and careful attention to detail.

Through our communication ministry we seek to release in our midst the power of the word of God. We recognize that to be successful in this effort, we must rely on the grace of God, the time and talent of all who work in the church, and the openness and receptivity of all God's people in our diocese.

C. Communication Guidelines of the Diocese of Phoenix

There are a few guidelines that are important to the integrity of our communications as a local Church. The Office of Public Information is here to serve you when a media inquiry is directed to a parish, school or agency. This is especially crucial if the inquiry deals with a sensitive issue or issues that affect the larger Church. If you have questions, please call the Office of Public Information at 602-354-2121.

Office of the Bishop:

- Any letter with the Bishop's name or on his stationary must be approved first by his office. Please call the Executive Assistant to the Bishop, Emy Palermo, 602-354-2488, at the Diocesan Pastoral Center to obtain permission or for further information.

Privacy of Individuals:

- The privacy and dignity of persons always should be respected. When dealing with the media, we are willing to discuss policies, programs or events, but not individuals - unless we are offering sympathy or congratulations. In addition, the Diocese does not release to outside organizations or to the public media personal information about employees, volunteers, parishioners, students or clients. Similarly, we do not release address or telephone information to individuals, outside organizations or to the public media without prior authorization from the individuals involved.

Children and Youth:

- The names of children and youth under the age of 18 should never be released publicly. An adult should be present and prior permission obtained from a child's parent or guardian before any media interview with a child is granted. We strongly recommend that in difficult or emotional situations, the media not be allowed access to children on school or parish property. (However: if media are situated on public property near your school or parish, they do have the right to film the children en masse.)

Lawsuits:

- Check with the Office of Public Information and the Office of the General Counsel before commenting on a situation involving a lawsuit. Generally, we do not comment directly on the circumstances surrounding pending litigation.

Financial Information:

- It is the policy of the Diocese not to release financial information about individual parishes, schools or agencies. Aggregate totals may be released, but prior approval must be obtained by the Office of Finance at the Diocesan Pastoral Center.

Personnel Information:

- It is the policy of the Diocese not to release personnel information about any employees. The release of any information beyond the date of hire, years of service and present position, if still employed, must be cleared by the Office of Human Resources. Salary information may only be released by the parish/school after receiving written authorization from the employee.

Mailing Lists:

- Parish mailing or school household mailing lists may only be used by the Diocese or by the parish or school owning the list. The Diocese never rents, lends or sells its household mailing lists to other individuals or organizations.

Release of Names:

- In the event of injuries or fatalities arising from a crisis occurring on parish, school or agency property, do not release names until family members have been notified.

Diocesan Logo:

- Parishes, schools and agencies that are part of the corporation sole of the Diocese may use the diocesan logo for printed materials. The graphic integrity of the logo (including the proper colors) must be respected.

D. Public Relations as Part of Your Communications Program

Public relations is an essential and important part of any good communications program.

Public relations and communications should be part of your parish planning. Public relations planning exercises also can be valuable additions to the data collection and situation analysis phases of your planning processes. Public relations planning resources are listed in the bibliography.

Good public relations must be intentional in order to be successful. As a management function, it also must be a primary responsibility of the leaders of an organization. Here are some principles of a good public relations program:

Public relations principle #1 – the law of origin

- **Institutions must operate in agreement with their purpose or mission in order to be successful.**
- **Catholic parishes, schools and agencies must ensure that their actions and activities are in sync with their mission to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ.**
- **A corollary to this central principle is that public relations cannot disguise institutional behavior that is out of sync with the purpose of the organizations.** Images cannot be sustained without substance to back them up. Jesus said: "A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit" (Matthew 7:18). A parish cannot advertise itself as warm and friendly if, in fact, people find a cold and aloof atmosphere when they visit on Sunday. A school cannot effectively promote its excellence if students are not achieving to the best of their abilities.

In summary, public relations are built upon character and competence. Any public relations effort that promotes our institutions at the expense of our mission and our service to people is self-serving and misdirected. A firm commitment to service, responsiveness and accountability -- and a willingness -- to listen will keep us on track.

Public relations principle #2 – the law of trust

- **Trust is essential in our relationships with those we serve and requires cooperation among all parties.**
- **This principle is basic and its absence is destructive to any public relations effort.** We should recognize our need for each other. In addition, we must communicate honestly with people we serve about both strengths and weaknesses and about our mission, values, successes and failures. And we need to listen to what people say back to us.

Public relations principle #3 – the law of positive reinforcement

- **In the absence of positive reinforcement from leadership, negative attitudes and behaviors are most likely to emerge from the group.**
- **According to communications theory, we need three to five positive messages to combat one negative message.** This is because we take the positive for granted. Positive things go on every day in our parishes, schools and agencies. Unless we have a specific strategy to tell good news, one negative incident can outweigh our daily positive progress.
- **This law does not ask us to be less than truthful or to sweep problems under the carpet, but it does ask us to be intentional about communicating all the good things going on.** It also calls us to proactively create a positive environment.

Public relations principle #4 – the law of motivation

- **Fear is a powerful emotion that has a direct impact on intellect and achievement.** The power of fear is ultimately destructive, whereas the power of joy is positive and constructive.
- **This principle closely relates to the law of positive reinforcement.** We can achieve more by motivating people through positive emotions like joy than we can through negative emotions like fear, especially if our goal is long-term achievement. Fear and guilt can work in the short term, but in the long term, these emotions discourage the intellectual engagement, the sense of accomplishment and the self-motivation that will contribute to the growth and development of our parishes, schools and agencies.

Public relations principle #5 - the law of relevance

- **Communication must be diverse and messages relevant to the lifestyle of the listener.**
- **People will not listen to what they're not interested in hearing and therefore will not retain the information – much less allow it to influence them.** Therefore, we have to be creative and inventive in our communication and create interest where it doesn't exist naturally. We create interest by making information relevant to people's lifestyles and by showing concern for their time and their special interests.
- **A good public relations program communicates what you are doing, why you are doing it and how it benefits the larger community.** Variety and repetition are important. Any media effort will only reach 42% of the people to whom it goes, so we have to repeat the same message in a variety of ways in order to get the news delivered.

Public relations principle #6 – the law of ownership

- **People work for and support goals that they set and for which they have input for implementation.** They do not work for and support goals formed and mandated by others.

- **People have a need to give.** Catholics are embracing their responsibility as stewards to care for the gifts given them by a loving God. They are growing in their understanding of their baptismal call to share in the mission and ministries of the Church. Parishes, schools and agencies, however, must respond accordingly by allowing parishioners and volunteers meaningful input into the life of the Church. We cannot call forth the gifts of volunteers and then reject their input when it is not convenient. The need for ownership and involvement is a two-way street.
- **Good public relations fosters involvement as well as input:** “Good public relations doesn’t just ‘tell’ the public information. Rather it tries to involve community members with the information presented.” It is communication that appeals to the public’s desire to identify with the parish, be part of it and dream with it.

Public relations principle #7 – the law of blame and credit

- **Give the credit to others and take responsibility for your own errors.** Your credibility will increase substantially.
- **When working with volunteers, the model for the pastor or principal or parish/school staff to emulate is the coach.** Successful coaches know they have to build teamwork, and they have to give the glory to the players in order to get the job done. The good leader will take the back seat by discerning talent in others, cultivating that talent and passing the credit on to them.

E. Writing, Editing and Design Guidelines

1. The basics of good writing

- **To write well, you should use three basic principles:** common sense, allow for some extra time, and keep it simple. Writing letters, memoranda, newsletters and brochures all call for the same methods. Listed here are a few tips to help you write well, enjoy putting your words on paper and feel proud of the results.

2. Writing tips

- **Write with your reader in mind.** Clearly define the particular audience you are addressing. Involve your readers with an experience to which they can relate an anecdote or a rhetorical question. By writing from your readers' point of view, your writing will have more credibility and your message will be better received.
- **Determine your purpose.** Ask yourself why you are writing your letter, memorandum, newsletter, and brochure. What is the main message? Are you writing to inform or to motivate the reader to take action?
- **Get to the point.** Keep your writing simple and get to the point. Let your reader know from the start what you are writing about. Covering a subject broadly can hide your main point. Prune excess words. Don't be redundant as in "future prospects" or as in "past experiences" and do not overuse superlatives such as "very."
- **Stay away from jargon such as "cutting edge", "state-of-the-art" or "heretofore."** Clarify terms specific to the diocesan community such as pastoral associate, outcome-based education etc.
- **Express, don't impress.** Beware of pretentious words and expressions. Use "now," not "at this point in time"; "if," not "in the event that"; and "size" and "shape," not "magnitude" and "configuration."
- **Use short sentences and paragraphs.** Be concise. It is easier to retain information contained in short sentences. A good guide is to keep paragraphs between four and six sentences long.
- **Be concrete, specific and use an active voice.** Details have far more impact than generalities and the past tense weakens your message. Details make it easier to absorb and retain information.
- **Limit conditionals and qualifiers** such as: would, could, probably, almost, and somewhat.
- **Be aware of communication politics.** Consider all possible persons who might read your letter, newsletter, brochure, etc.

- **Proofread, proofread, proofread.** Nothing can undermine your credibility faster than misspelled names, incorrect titles, typographical errors, poor sentence structure and bad English. Always have someone else proofread your work carefully after you have finished.

F. Printing Guidelines

Buying printing services is like buying shoes - you need a good fit. Cost can drive printing decisions, but issues like reliability, quality control and customer service are just as important in the decision-making process. The issues to consider when purchasing printing services are the following:

Reliability/Customer Service: What is the printing company's reputation? Is the customer service representative honest and realistic with you about cost and quality? Does the printer alert you to potential problems early in the process? Does the printer meet reasonable deadlines? Is the printing company honest with you about its limitations?

Printer Capability: The printing company's ability to efficiently and effectively handle your job depends on the printer's capabilities versus the specifications of your job. Specifications include the size, quantity, number of colors and the mechanicals – how your job is bound or put together.

Parishes, schools and diocesan agencies would be well-advised to establish relationships with both a "quick printer" who can handle simple flyers and newsletters up to 2,000, and a medium-sized printing company that can economically handle fairly standard, two-color products at relatively low quantities (2,000 to 5,000). The relationship is important. The printer can get to know your needs and, with reasonable volumes, can sometimes give you discounts.

Printing Budgets

Here is what to include in a printing budget. When comparing printing bids, make sure you are comparing apples to apples (the same specifications). Then look at the cost per piece.

Quantity: Obviously, the price increases with quantity. However, keep in mind that a good portion of the printing cost is in the setup. Therefore, depending upon the job, you might be able to print a few hundred more pieces for a minimal additional cost. Your printing company can advise you about quantity price break savings.

Use of color: Generally a printed piece will be printed in black ink on white paper or in two, three or four colors. Four-color printing is more costly and requires greater skill from the printer than two-or three-color printing. Remember: black is considered a color.

How color is used: Is the color used in large, solid blocks or is it used only for headlines and rules? Does it run off (bleed) the edges of the paper?

Type of Paper Stock: Paper can represent from 25% to 55% of the cost of your final job. (For most jobs, the paper cost should not exceed 25% to 30% of your budget.) Therefore, it is important to choose the best paper for your job. For newsletters and other printed pieces that you will be printing on a regular basis, you may consider asking the printer for "house sheets" (paper that is kept in inventory that can be used for a variety of jobs). More about paper selection will follow.

Number of Photographs: Usually black-and-white photos (also called halftones) are priced per photo. Sometimes you can save money by "ganging" photos (putting several photos of the same size together on a page). This type of savings is especially applicable to four-color printing.

Mechanics of the printed piece, including size (before folding), types of fold and binding (if necessary): It is important to discuss these details with the printer in the planning stages of your job, especially if you are considering unusual folds. Folds that cannot be handled by a folding machine can be costly. (For multi-page newsletters or booklets, remember that printers work in "signatures," which are almost always in multiples of 4. Therefore, you must plan your project in those multiples.)

Services required from the printer: Will you be able to give the pieces to the printer "camera-ready," meaning that the printer only has to prepare the plates and put the job on the printing press? Will you ask the printer to size and crop (remove portions of) photographs? Do you need typesetting services or design services?

Guidelines for working with printers

Get written cost estimates. Printers will want to know the quantity, finished size, number of pages (for booklets or brochures), number of colors, number of photographs and type of fold or binding that you will require. The first few times you work with a printer, you should talk to the printer representative and agree upon a common language for cost estimates. (A graphic designer also can be of great assistance in this area, but will charge you for the time spent working with the printer.) For major jobs, get three bids. Printing bids should clearly indicate the printing deadline for the job submitted.

Set realistic deadlines. For most basic two-color jobs with relatively low quantities, printers will need ten working days, assuming that you give them camera-ready artwork. Plan to have the job printed and completed a few days before you absolutely have to have it. If you fail to submit your artwork to the printer at the agreed-upon deadline, the printer may have to charge you for overtime. This extra charge is justified, but should be clearly indicated and explained in advance.

Give the materials to the printer in an organized fashion. Put pages in proper order, key photographs or graphics in the appropriate location in the printed piece, and clearly mark where you would like colors used. If you write directly on the camera-ready copy, use a light blue pencil. (Light blue will not be picked up by the camera that makes plates for the printing process.) Otherwise, write your instructions on tissue overlays. Many desktop publishing programs will make the job of pagination and color indication much easier, and printers can work directly from a disk.

Check Proofs Carefully: Printers should provide you with a proof before they print the piece. This is usually called a "blueline." This proof will show you the way the piece will look when it is completed, but it will all be printed in a bluish color, hence the name blueline. This is your final chance to catch typographical errors, photo errors, pagination errors, etc. However, you should expect to pay additional charges for the correction of errors at this stage of the project, unless the mistake is made by the printer. If you are particularly concerned about color or photographs, especially in a four-color job, you can ask for a "press proof" or color proof.

Carefully Monitor Proof Changes: Once you give the artwork to the printer, keep changes to a minimum. "Camera-ready" indicates that the job is ready to be printed, and changes made in the "blueline" stage, the final proof that you approve before the job goes on the press, will be costly. (You are justified in asking for changes at this stage that are the result of printer error.)

Order carefully. The conventions for the printing industry stipulate that printers can deliver a 10% overrun or underrun and charge you accordingly. (Example: If you request 500 brochures, the printer can deliver either 550 or 450.) If you absolutely need 500, stipulate on your bid "no less than 500." Most of the time you will get at least 550.

Paper Selection

There are several characteristics of paper that will determine your choice:

Size: Photocopiers, computer printers and quick printers generally work with 8.5" x 11" and 11" x 17" sheets as the standard sizes. Commercial printers work with "sheet sizes," ranging from 11" x 17" to 23" x 35". Generally, newsletters of less than 2,000 quantity will be printed on 11" x 17" sheets and folded to 8.5" x 11". If you are printing greater quantities, it may be more economical to print on larger sheets. Ask your printer for guidance. With any printing job, it is more economical to use standard size sheets with a minimum of waste. Proper planning and consultation with your printer in the beginning stages of your printing project will help you to take advantage of these economies.

Weight: The weight of paper is expressed in pounds. Book papers (text, coated and offset) are made in weights from 50-pound to 100-pound increments; 60- and 70-pound papers are most commonly used for newsletters and brochures. The price of the paper increases as the weight increases. Bond papers are expressed in 20-pound and 24-pound.

Opacity: This term refers to the extent to which the ink shows through from one side of the paper to another. Obviously, heavy papers are more opaque than light ones. Bond paper is not as opaque as offset or coated papers. If you are ordering an uncoated text or offset paper, ask your printer about the opacity of the paper you are selecting, especially if your printed piece includes large blocks or color or photographs.

Surface: Surface refers to the look and feel of the paper. Paper can be smooth, textured or have a dull or glossy finish. Textured paper or paper that is coated costs somewhat more, but might be worth it depending upon the results you are looking for. Consult your designer and printer for advice.

Color: Each mill has its own color scheme, and there is no standard for naming them. White is the least expensive paper to order; light-colored paper will cost slightly more. If you are interested in examining various colors, your printer or designer can provide you with a paper swatch book that will show you the various colors, weights, and textures that are available in that brand of paper.

G. Event Management Guidelines

To have a successful event, plan, plan and then plan some more. Regardless of the event, it will reflect on your image and your parishioners. As with any event, there will always be people who attend for the first time. They will not necessarily make themselves known to you, but at a future point in time could have a significant impact on the parish. So make your events successful and memorable through diligent planning.

In the planning efforts, use the 80/20 rule. Eighty percent of your time will be devoted to planning and research. Twenty percent will be in the actual execution. Listed in the next sections are several steps that need to be taken for a successful event or meeting. These steps can be tailored by you to meet the needs at hand.

1. Planning

- For a successful event you need to form a committee. Planning an event alone is an exhaustive and lonesome process and does not ensure that your event will be a success. In most cases, planning an event alone will ensure its failure. People like to become involved if asked -- and that's the important part. Ask newcomers to the parish, or families that have not been involved in the past to join in the effort. Try to break the stereotypes and cliques that naturally establish within groups of people. Get people to think 'outside-of-the-box' in planning for events and go for the fresh approach.

- How many people do you need for the event committee? That truly depends on the size of the event and should include members from all walks of the parish. These include long-time members, school, newcomers, and those involved in the many and various aspects of parish life. Ask yourselves why someone would want to be a part of this event: Is it a topical event or more general in nature? The answers to these questions will provide you with the information that becomes your basis for asking.
- Now that the committee is in place, define the specifics: date, time, location, budget and other details. Start planning about one year to nine months in advance of the event. One of the most important and critical rules of planning an event is to make sure that your event does not conflict with another one and that the location and or room is available. Make a checklist of things to do. Assign responsibility for publicity, mailings, coordination, logistics and evaluation. Create and distribute a timeline showing what needs to be accomplished and by when. Schedule regular committee meetings with a defined agenda, stick to the agenda and limit your meetings to one-hour if possible. Start on time and end on time. Use an event-planning checklist so that you do not miss a step and everyone knows where you're at and what needs to be done.
- If you are going to have a speaker, plan for the worst case scenario. What's the back-up plan if the speaker becomes ill, has an emergency, or the flight doesn't get in on time? Be aware of the season of the year that your event is planned for. Can you cancel and reschedule? What are the financial impacts of canceling? Will the speaker be available on a reschedule date? Is there a telephone-calling tree in place to make calls? How would you get the word out that the event was cancelled?

2. Research

- Start with defining the goals of what you wish to accomplish. Keep your ideas in line with the goals. Understand who your internal and external audience is by defining the attributes of the event that would appeal to them and cause them to support the event. Consider age, income, gender, geographic location, marital status, family size and other

demographic factors. This information will provide you with an understanding of your audience, what message about the event needs to be communicated as well as what publicity vehicles to employ.

3. Message

- Once you understand your audience you can craft the message that best targets the audience you are attempting to attract. What event attributes are important to communicate? Define that for the potential attendees and make those positive attributes an important part of your message.
- With a compelling message in place, your next step is to target your audience - this means identifying for whom the program or event is made. Is it a school program for parents, a fundraiser for the entire parish or are you going after a broader audience? The answers to these questions will determine to a large extent the publicity vehicles you use.

4. Publicity

- The homework assignments have been completed. The planning and research is done. You've crafted a message about the event tailored to your audiences. Now you have to get the word out. This in large part will be determined by your budget.
- Many of the common ways to publicize an event is to note it in the parish bulletins, school newsletters, flyers/handouts, public announcements and mailings to parishioners. All these items are low cost ways you already communicate with active parishioners. Remember that a personal invitation is one of the most important factors in getting people involved. When using internal publicity, repetition is the key. Use several different ways to deliver your message. Keep repeating the message to get past the clutter with which you're competing.
- To reach a broader audience beyond the parish, you will need to be more resourceful. You could use other parish bulletins and school newsletters. Notices could be sent to the local newspapers and television stations for inclusion in their community calendar of events. Public Service Announcements (PSAs) can be created and sent to radio

and television outlets. If you have a significant budget, you could even do paid advertising in newspapers and/or on radio and television.

- The event may generate news coverage. Never ever plan an event simply to obtain media coverage. And remember that media coverage will be after the fact. Your event may receive media attention because the topical nature of the subject matter or a notable recognizable speaker is present. The event could receive coverage based on a number of circumstances such as weather, other local news, important national news etc. Just because a reporter or media outlet was there does not ensure that your event will be reported on. Your event should stand on its own merits and be representative of the parish, school or agency.

5. Evaluation

- After it's all over, the time has come to evaluate the efforts of the committee. Summarize event planning, who did what, cost compared to budget, actual revenues to expected revenues, attendance, weather, and feedback from satisfaction surveys. What worked and what did not? How would you do things differently next time? Was the budget accurate? Did the event advertising and publicity work? Were the messages clear and understandable?
- Keep clips of news articles about the event. Keep photos of the event and share them with your parishioners. Thank everyone involved in the planning and execution of the event by writing them a thank you note or making a personal telephone call.

H. Dealing with the Media

Religion and the media

There are wonderful opportunities for a fruitful relationship between religion and journalism. The tips provided in this section will help you do your best to determine what is news, to provide good interviews, to become a trusted media resource, and, in general, endeavor to see that your news and interviews generate positive messages about the Diocese, parish or school. Your rights when dealing with the media are also included.

Recent studies have found that uneasiness exists between religious organizations and the media. This is because of what Peter Steinfels of *The New York Times* calls ignorance, incompetence and insufficient resources as well as what he describes as the framework of journalism (how news is defined and the practical conditions under which journalism is carried out).

Both parties are working at a better relationship. Faith groups are striving to be more professional, more accessible and more knowledgeable about how the news media operate. At the same time, we are asking the media to improve their knowledge, to use religion specialists more often to report religious news, and to report more often on how religion touches people's lives.

Five principles that can guide our dealings with the media:

1. **A respect for the truth.** We always tell the truth. If we cannot comment fully on a situation, e.g., the questions involve private, personal information about an individual, we explain why.
2. **A respect for the dignity (and privacy) of individual persons.** We will gladly talk about policies, programs or events, but not about individual people, except to congratulate or express sympathy.
3. **A respect for the Church.** We will speak positively and with confidence about the teaching and practice of the Church.
4. **A respect for the media.** We will not take reporters or their editors for granted or try to "use" them. We will work to understand their principles (explicit or implicit) and to respond to their needs whenever possible.
5. **A respect for ourselves.** We will give ourselves every available advantage with the media. We will be pro-active and request clarifications, corrections or opportunities to tell "our side of the story" whenever we think this is appropriate.

Who are the media?

The media are just like everyone else. Some reporters and outlets are more inclined to publish church and school news than others. You must work to build relationships and credibility.

Reporters are:

- bombarded by information from honest as well as from manipulative sources;
- under scrutiny by editors and news directors who demand certain standards;
- under pressure from constant deadlines;
- in competition with colleagues for space and time in their own media;
- constantly on the edge of creativity as they search for information that's objective, timely, unusual, interesting and specific.

Different media provide different opportunities from which to take advantage. Newspapers publish news stories, letters to the editor, editorials, columns, Sunday supplements and special interest sections. Broadcast media air news programs, talk shows, call-in programs, community bulletin boards and other special programs.

Remember that reporters bring their own biases and views to their stories. Two reporters can see a story very differently.

What is news?

News is what journalists within a given publication or station consider timely, interesting and important. The common saying that "news is man biting dog" (rather than the reverse) illustrates the elements that news editors are looking for.

The following are generalizations about what "makes news," allowing for the fact that what might make news on slow days can change when big news breaks:

- **Significance:** Will your event have or has it had an effect on the media outlet's public? Usually, the more people affected by an event or trend, the more significant it is. Generally, news must transcend the interest of your parish or school in order to warrant coverage.

- **Timeliness:** A current event or issue is more appealing than something that happened last month or even last week. Timeliness can also be used to make a more mundane story appealing to the media.
- **Human Interest:** People and human interest stories with fresh, unusual twists make better news and features than dry facts. The universality of the emotional content of a story is important even if the circumstances are otherwise inconsequential.
- **Proximity:** The story should be geographically close to the audience. All things being equal, higher priority is given to local events.
- **Conflict:** A story of conflict or disagreement are sometimes considered to be newsworthy. Unfortunately, examples of this abound. Parish and school closings and ideological conflicts in the Church are of great interest to the media.
- **Uniqueness:** Something that is unusual, rare, or an example of a first- or last-time occurrence often garners media attention.
- **Prominence:** People who are well known make news. The Pope and the Bishop are newsmakers and what they do, say or think makes news because of interest in these individuals. An otherwise routine workshop could attract media attention because of a prominent speaker.

Some other things to keep in mind when evaluating the newsworthiness of your program, event or idea:

- Remember that television is a visual medium. Let the assignment editors know that there will be something for their cameras to capture. Speeches, workshops, or conferences, unless presented by a very prominent person, usually won't attract television coverage.

- Some events that are not particularly substantive, but have good visual appeal, could attract television coverage on a slow news day, especially if they will attract a lot of people or will have unusual or especially colorful elements. Events like this will not likely warrant a story in the newspaper, but they might appeal to the photo desk of the newspaper.
- If you want to be taken seriously by the news media, don't submit press releases when you don't have news, and don't over-bill your event.

Tips for writing releases, advisories, tip sheets

Since press releases and media advisories compete with hundreds of other releases and advisories per day, news assignment editors and reporters must be able to tell at a glance if the information is of interest. It is your job to make their job as easy as possible – to get them to say “yes” and see a benefit to your story. Thus, keep the information simple, provide an attention grabber at the beginning and make the information “jump” from the page.

Write in an inverted pyramid style, leading with the most important information. The first paragraph should summarize the basic information: who, what, when and where. Editors cut from the bottom-up; therefore, leave less important details for the end.

In general, your release should answer six questions:

1. Who is the subject?
 2. Who is the story about?
 3. When it is scheduled to take place?
 4. Where it is happening?
 5. Why is it occurring?
 6. How is it being accomplished?
- **Keep advisories and tipsheets to one page; press releases to two pages.** Fact sheets and biographies or background material for complicated issues can be attached.

- **As for the format, news releases are written on white standard-sized 8½" x 11" paper.** The text, or "copy," should be typed, double-spaced (advisories and tipsheets may be single-spaced), beginning about one-third of the way down the first page. This leaves room for an editor to write in a headline and make other notations or changes as needed.
- **Be sure to write the word "-more-" at the bottom of page one when there is a second page (this does not include attachments).** Place "###" at the bottom of the last page of your release or your one-page advisory/tipsheet. It is okay to add: [Attachment:---] at the end of your text, on the left margin above the pound signs.
- **Do not split a paragraph from the first to second page of a news release.**
- **When sending a photo of an individual with a press release, stick with a 5" X 7" size and make sure the photo is tagged on the back with the person's name and number.**
- **Be sure contacts listed know all the information about the event and can be located at all times.** List home telephone, cell number, pager number, and email address if necessary for after-hours/off-location events.
- **News releases must be written carefully since sometimes they are picked up word-for-word.** Always have someone proofread your work!
- **Send your news release to media several days in advance of the event or program you want covered.** Most organizations fax news releases. Mailing is okay, too, though you might want to allow a few extra days for delivery.
- **If the story is important enough, follow-up with a phone call to make sure the press release has been received.** But, do not call every time you send out a release.

Tips for giving good media interviews

You've been contacted by a radio, television or newspaper for an interview. What should you do to prepare? Interviews need not be intimidating or stressful. As with most situations, preparation is essential.

Newspaper interviews can range anywhere from five minutes to an hour. Electronic media interviews are usually shorter unless you are on a talk show, panel or radio call-in program. The following points are tried and true methods for giving a good interview:

- **Prepare for the interview.** Identify two or three key points that you want to convey during the interview and make sure you have supporting facts for each of them. Anticipate questions you may be asked and practice with a colleague. Read local newspapers and -- if possible -- watch TV news programs that have covered the topic you are going to be interviewed about. Having your key points makes it easier for you to keep the interview on target and control what is communicated.
- **Before you respond to any questions over the phone (except very simple, factual questions) always ask the reporter for the basic information he or she wants to know and ask to call back.** This gives you time to think through your responses. Find out as much information from the reporter that you can before the interview. Reporters will not tell you the exact questions they will ask, but they will discuss the basic story angle and objective. You also have the right to ask who else is being interviewed.
- **Always be truthful.** A minor misrepresentation can destroy your credibility.
- **Control the interview:** Remember your three points and bring the topic back to them whenever possible. Use "bridging" to return to your basic points, especially when answering a negative question. (Example: "Are Catholic schools declining?" Answer: "We are facing some unique challenges in the Catholic school setting, but let me dispel the myth..." Then "bridge" to one of your main points about schools today.)

- **Phrases like “What’s most important to realize” or “The most important thing I can tell you” or “Our position has always been” are flags to an editor of an important sound bite.** Using statements like these with a succinct answer summarizing one of your key points is an excellent way to control the interview and prevent being taken out of context during a television interview.
- **Keep your answers short and to the point.** Long and complicated answers are subject to rewrite and misinterpretation by print editors and can be more easily edited and taken out of context by the electronic media.
- **Once you have decided how you want to answer a question, resist the temptation to expand on the answer or be drawn into other issues.** Say what you have to say - no more, no less. Sometimes questioners will use silence to encourage people to say more. Look the interviewer in the eye, smile and wait for them to ask the next question.
- **Never say “no comment” or “none of your business.”** These responses suggest you have something to hide. Instead, explain that you cannot comment and explain why: *“I cannot comment on our principal’s job performance because it is against our policy to discuss personnel issues.”*
- **When asked a question that contains incorrect information or assumptions, be sure to correct the misinformation before answering the question.**
- **When asked an either/or question when both options are bad, disagree with both, say neither and go on to frame the answer in your own terms.**
- **If you don’t know, say so. “I don’t know” is an intelligent answer.** Offer to get the information and get back to the reporter. (Make sure to get the information back to the reporter in a timely fashion.) Do not speculate.
- **During a print interview or a pre-recorded television interview, be sure to ask to clarify or restate an answer you are not satisfied with.**
- **Do not use technical language or church jargon that a general audience would not understand.**

- **To give yourself a moment of reflection without an awkward pause, repeat or rephrase the question before answering.** If the question is negative, try to rephrase it positively.
- **Never argue with a reporter.** Maintain your dignity and courtesy even in the face of hostility.
- **An interview isn't over until the reporter is gone.** Information from conversations before and after the camera is turned on may be used in the reporter's narrative. There is no such thing as "off the record."
- **Here are some general guidelines for dealing effectively with the media:**
 - a. **Designate a media contact person:** The media need to know who to contact when they are looking for official information. This person can be an information broker for the media -- someone who can put a reporter in touch with experts on particular topics or can serve as a spokesperson for the Church on certain issues.
 - b. **Be professional:** Know what the media consider news and how they operate. Respect their deadlines. Try to deal with them as evenhandedly as possible.
 - c. **Be available:** Respond promptly to calls and be sure to get the information requested to media within their deadlines.
 - d. **Accept space and time limitations:** A newspaper's most precious commodity is space and the electronic media's is time. Remember these limitations when you are presenting information and when you are judging the way information is presented.
 - e. **Remember that reporters are people:** Treat reporters, even confrontational ones, with the same respect and courtesy that you would treat a member of your parish or a parent at your school. Let them know when you are pleased with the way a story has been covered and don't be afraid to discuss concerns or problems.
 - f. **Think carefully before demanding a correction.** Research has shown that only 5% to 10% of readers actually see a story. Repetition of the material increases that percentage to 25%. You might not wish to have information repeated, especially if it is negative.

g. **The Office of Public Information will help you determine if your information/event is newsworthy and consult on the best way to have information get to the media.** The routine tools of the trade for this task are: news releases, media advisories and media tipsheets.

Body language and dress for the television interview

- **Good eye contact is important.** Look at the reporter, not the camera. Use a conversational style.
- **Remember that television is visual: 57% of credibility is based on the tone of voice, attitude and conduct; another 35% on visual tones.** Your image should reflect warmth and compassion.
- **Be careful when nodding or bobbing your head to show you understand the reporter's question; you may be indicating agreement with what he or she is saying.**
- **Do not read from a prepared statement.** You may give the reporter the statement as background. Use index cards or a small notebook for notes.
- **Black-and-white clothing should be avoided, as should loud prints, large polka dots, bold strips, clanging jewelry or watches.**
- **Try to avoid signs of nervousness, such as tapping your foot, shifting your weight, frowning, or playing with jewelry or watches.**
- **Always thank the reporter after the interview.**
- **During a live interview or talk show, sit still and remain composed until the camera has stopped running.** The technicians may be running credits while you are still on camera.

You have certain rights when dealing with the media. As an interviewee you can:

- help determine time and location;
- request in advance the topics to be covered;
- set your own pace and give yourself time to think before answering questions;

- **challenge questionable facts, assumptions and dubious sources of information;**
- **speak only for your organizations** – not the entire U.S. Catholic population or other parish communities. Remember that in most instances you are speaking on behalf of your parish or school. Therefore, you do not have to answer questions about your personal opinion.

The Office of Public Information can assist you in preparing for any type of interview. We can help prepare a list of potential questions and answers prior to your interview. This is good insurance against unexpected questions and helps you focus on the interview in depth, which can bring to mind points you might not have considered.

Media interviews and diocesan guidelines

As a general rule, please consult with the Office of Public Information if you are contacted by the media. The staff of the Office of Public Information can assist you with responses, concerns or questions you might have in dealing with the media. You should be aware of the following diocesan media guidelines.

- Financial or personnel information of any kind should be cleared through the Diocesan Pastoral Center before discussion with the media.
- Please check with the Office of the General Counsel and the Office of Public Information before commenting on a situation involving a lawsuit. Generally, we do not comment on pending litigation.
- Principals or pastors always have the right to ask reporters to leave the school or parish property. Schools and parishes are considered private property. Reporters can, however, interview people from public access sidewalks or roads.
- The names of children and youth under the age of 18 should never be released publicly.
- In the case of injuries or fatalities resulting from a crisis on your property, do not release any names until family members have been notified.

- An adult should be present and prior permission obtained from the child's parent or guardian before a media interview is granted. During a difficult or emotional situation we recommend that reporters not be allowed to talk to children on parish or school property.
- In general, do not release household (address and phone) information on parishioners, staff or volunteers. Inform your staff not to release or distribute parishioner, staff or student lists. If you are asked to provide the name of a particular group or person for the media to contact, make sure you obtain permission from that individual or group before providing names and phone numbers to the media.