



DIOCESE OF
SAN JOSE

Filming in Churches Guidelines

updated June 2022

All Catholic churches are sacred and holy ground. Each Catholic church contains a tabernacle. Within that tabernacle is the Body of Christ, what was once bread and is now the physical Body of Christ – body, blood, soul and divinity. In other words, Jesus Christ is physically present in every Catholic church. Our primary duty is to preserve the sanctity of the church.

This policy is not directed toward members of the faithful or visitors who intend to take photos/video for their own personal, non-commercial, or educational use and whose photographs will not be published, sold, reproduced, transferred, or otherwise commercially exploited in any manner whatsoever.

*Requests for professional videography, photography, streaming or audio recording of regularly scheduled Masses, liturgies, weddings, baptisms and other sacraments should be directed to the parish office unless the bishop is presiding. **If the bishop is presiding at a parish or school liturgy, any request to film or photograph by a third-party professional photographer/videographer not contracted by the parish or school should be directed to the Diocesan Communications Office.** Photography/Videography contracted by the parish or school should simply be indicated on the episcopal liturgy form.*

Requests for filming movies, television, commercials, music videos and/or non-liturgical photography or audio recordings on church property are considered on a case-by-case basis. The Diocesan Communications Office reviews all requests for commercial filming and photography in all parishes throughout the diocese in consultation with the Bishop.

General guidelines:

- Music videos are typically only considered if the artist is a Catholic musician who has the endorsement of their pastor and/or bishop.
- Fictional movies, television shows, student films, etc., are typically only considered if the movie contains a Catholic or Christian message in line with the teachings of the Catholic Church. Projects with topics of the occult, “monster movies,” violence, or any project that would be rated higher than PG-13 by the MPAA will not be considered or approved.
- Documentaries, non-fiction projects and reality shows will also be considered on a case-by-case basis but there must be a connection to the subject and the Catholic Church.
- Operation or use of any drones, manned and/or unmanned aircraft/flying systems, and remotely-controlled or radio-controlled flying machines (whether or motorized or not) of all types, shapes, and sizes over our parish and schools campuses is not generally permitted due to Diocesan liability insurance for reasons of safety and parish and school family privacy.

- In limited circumstances permission may be granted, provided that the experienced drone operator with registered drones has appropriate certification and licensing; and can provide evidence that they hold an appropriate insurance policy.

If the project meets the above criteria, please send the following to communications@dsj.org:

- Location/property requested and the extent of the filming request
- A prospectus and/or summary of the entire project
- The complete script, with the scenes to be shot on church property clearly marked; And complete lyrics for any music
- Listing of any follow-on written, video, or print collateral that will contain references or depictions of the church property
- A list of all producers, financiers, directors and cast
- Proof of insurance (property and liability)
- Requested dates and times for filming. Please review the calendar for the location, on the church's website, for an understanding of how busy a particular location may be. For example, weekends are typically not available for filming.

It may take up to 3 weeks to review a project and render a decision. Please plan accordingly.

If the filming request is approved, the pastor of the specific location has the discretion to accept or deny the project access to his location. If a pastor denies the project, the project may seek secondary locations under the same approval. All of the logistical details of scheduling, etc., must be made directly with the parish office. All recorded material is to be used only for the project approved and shall not be used for any other projects without the expressed written consent of the Diocese of San José.

If the filming request is denied by the diocese, that decision stands for all Roman Catholic churches in the Diocese of San José.