

Proposal Guidelines: Books for a Popular/Lay Audience

General:

- Electronic submission is preferred, but paper proposals are acceptable.
- If this is an electronic submission, please submit files formatted in Microsoft Word 2007 or later.
- Do not send the complete manuscript instead of a proposal.
- Please understand that it can take two months or more to evaluate your proposal.
- Please indicate if you are sending the proposal to other publishers.
- Paulist Press does not generally publish fiction, memoirs, or poetry.
- If this is an unsolicited paper proposal, you must include a self-addressed, stamped envelope to receive a reply. If you want your proposal returned, you must include sufficient postage.

Your book proposal should include the following elements:

1. **Title of the book.** Include the tentative title and subtitle for your book.
2. **Author contact information.** Please include your name, mailing address, email address, and phone number(s). Include two to three paragraphs about your present position, educational background, and previous publications, with special emphasis on your qualifications to write the book you are proposing.
3. **Book description.** In 200–250 words, describe the book you are proposing. What is its nature, focus, purpose, or argument? What is its central thesis? If you were writing the back cover copy, or a description that would go into our catalog, what would you say to convince a potential reader to buy this particular book?
4. **Annotated Table of Contents.** Provide the working Table of Contents, chapter by chapter. (If there are several parts or sections, group the chapters into those parts.) Beneath each chapter, include a brief (100-word) description of the chapter's contents. This summary should explain the focus and development of the chapter and indicate how it advances the argument of the whole book. Also, indicate whether the chapters will include reader-friendly elements like discussion questions.
5. **Audience.** This section will give your insights into two basic questions:
 - a. Why is your *general topic* important to readers, and why do you think there is a market for another book on this topic?
 - b. For what niche audience is *this specific book* written (e.g., women who have had a miscarriage, Catholics who are advocating for immigration reform)?
6. **Author promotion.** Please detail the ways in which you plan to promote this book to potential buyers. Including some or all of the following:
 - a. speaking engagements at churches, conferences, and conventions
 - b. media contacts you already have
 - c. likely endorsers

- d. blogging and social media presence
 - e. workshop and retreat leadership
 - f. additional writing and reviewing for magazines and newspapers
 - g. special sales to your organization
7. **Competition:** Please describe a few—at least three—competing and complementary titles on this topic, giving publisher and year. What does your book offer that these others do not? How will your book be superior to or different from them?
 8. **Manuscript length:** What is the estimated word count for the proposed book? (Base your calculation on approximately 300 words per double-spaced page in 12-point Times New Roman.)
 9. **Date of completion:** Indicate the date by which you expect to submit a completed manuscript.
 10. **Sample pages.** Enclose a sample of 15–25 pages, perhaps of the introduction and a sample chapter, which shows your writing style in the book. These should be pages that are typical of the book as a whole, especially critical to your argument, or that give a good overview of the book.
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