

**OUR LADY OF THE VISITATION (OLV) PARISH
CATHOLIC CHILDREN AND YOUTH
FAITH FORMATION ESSAY AND POSTER
CONTEST GUIDELINES**

Mission / Purpose

To encourage and engage the parish's children and youth in their community to become faithful disciples by utilizing and demonstrating their faith through creative writing and meaningful expression. Open to all Catholic students (child and youth) (public, private, home, or parochial schools) during the normal school year.

Overview

A contest encourages today's children and youth to be more involved and expressive in matters of the Catholic faith within the parish community. The goal of this program is to motivate and involve Catholic children and youth (public, private, parochial or home schools) in civic discourse and instill in them religious and life-affirming values in a variety of topics/subjects (such as Respect Life, Keep Christ in Christmas, U.S. Catholic Citizenship, Social Justice, etc.).

- **Essays** should be approximately 500-750 words on a specific subject. Entrants will be judged on grammar, style, and how clearly they present the material – which should showcase creativity, imagination and overall understanding of the topic or subject matter.
- **Posters** will likewise be judged on grammar and how clearly the entrant presents the theme – which should also showcase creativity, imagination and overall understanding of the topic or subject matter.

Action Steps (including Judging and Presentation of Awards/Certificates)

1. Discuss the planning and conduct of the event with the parish's Pastor and Director of Children/Youth Religious Education Program.
2. Consider using the parish's bulletin, Mass announcements, website and/or other social media platforms and bulletin boards as a means to disseminate advertisement of and participation in the contest.
3. Ensure that all essays or posters are collected by an established contest pre-determined date.
4. Assemble a team of three or more judges (consisting of clergy, teachers, Knights of Columbus and other respected members of the Catholic community) to select winning submissions. In selecting judges, no activity judge may have a family relationship with a contest participant. In such instances, due to the potential conflict-of-interest posed, the individual is to abstain from judging in the contest's voting process entirely.

(Revision: February 22, 2019)

GENERAL SCORING INSTRUCTIONS: A 100-point scoring system should be used to determine essay and poster winners. Judging categories and criteria includes:

Content - 35 points / **Grammar** - 30 points / **Style** - 35 points
 (coherent?) (correct?) (appropriate and engaging?)

5. Awards, certificates and prizes are to be presented to winners and participants in essay and poster contests within 2 to 4 weeks after the judging. Collaborative decisions between the parish Pastor, Director of Child/Youth RE Program, and the Knights of Columbus Council #11918 (if/as appropriate) may design the awards for the contests (such as scholarships, gift certificates, plaques or trophies, paper certificates, etc.).
6. As a minimum, presentation of certificates for winning essays and posters and, Certificates of Participation or Appreciation for all other entrants is to be the general rule.
7. It is recommended that the parish and/or Knights of Columbus council consider monetary awards (e.g., \$25-\$50 generally) in the form of gift certificates/cards or cash to first, second and third place winners. Runner-up winners' monetary awards are at the discretion of the pastor and/or Knights.

NB: For parish-level contests, the parish's incumbent Pastor or Director of Children/ Youth Religious Education will be the overall activity point of contact (POC) and the parish will be responsible for funding the monetary awards. For Knights of Columbus contests, the Grand Knight (or his delegated representative) will be the overall activity POC and the respective council will be responsible for funding the monetary awards.

8. Facilitate a formal communal presentation of awards and certificates to winners; with the greatest level of parishioner involvement possible (e.g., after either the 5 p.m. Saturday or 10 a.m. Sunday Mass).
9. If/as possible or required, forward winning essays to the next highest level for judging (i.e., the Diocese of Colorado Springs, Knights of Columbus Supreme, etc.).
10. Following the essay or poster contest, update the community on the results of the event or program by including pertinent information in the parish's bulletin and/or website; placing the entrants' works on display for parishioners to review, etc., if possible.

Theme / Schedule

<u>Month</u>	<u>Subject/Topic</u>	<u>Sponsor</u>
February	What is Catholic Social Justice to me? Submissions by February 15th Judging before end of February	Parish-level

May	Who is the Blessed Mother Mary to us?	Parish-level
	Submissions by May 15th Judging before end of May	
October	Respect Life	Diocese, Parish and Knights of Columbus*
	Submissions by September 30 th Judging in mid-October	
December	Keep Christ in Christmas	Knights of Columbus*
	Submissions by December 15th Judging before Christmas Day	

(* Additionally, contest guidelines, forms and submission requirements may be as published by the Knights of Columbus Supreme or State of Colorado Knights of Columbus.)

Essay Contest

Conducting a Contest

GOAL: PUTTING OUR FAITH INTO ACTION

Involve and motivate the children and youth in our parish community to become active and contributing citizens living out their faith. Meaningful essay and poster contests will help to build toward greater faith community involvement in the local area's events and activities.

5 EASY STEPS

Step 1: Organize Your Contest

The parish and/or Knights of Columbus Council membership, in consultation with the pastor and Grand Knight, should select a team (before the contest's start date) that will administer the contest. This team will be involved in all phases of the contest: organization, publicity, judging, prizes, etc. The Knights of Columbus council should be ready to go at the start of the school year, so the participants can meet district and state judging criteria and deadlines.

Step 2: Contact Local Schools

Once the team is in place, the next step (if possible or practical) is to contact schools in your community to publicize your contest, if/as appropriate. Solicit the support of teachers and administrators; ask them to encourage students to participate. Teachers, school administrators and, most importantly, young people can serve as judges. Each entry must be the sole (independent) work of the individual entrant.

Step 3: Display Promotional Materials

Ensure that all advertisement and announcement materials are available to all parishioner families. These need to be clear and understandable; with the date/time of submission; award presentations; subject and any contest-peculiar rules or guidelines for participants, etc. Entry forms that accompany submissions (with the participants' email address and/or telephone number) may be posted in the parish church's Gathering Space.

Step 4: Generate Parish Communal Interest About The Contest

The keys to a successful essay and/or poster contest are clear instructions and a large field of participating children and/or youth. Additionally, what the participant and other parishioners have learned in the contest's subject matter should be evaluated also.

Step 5: Recognize Participants

Participation certificates to all who submit non-winning entries, and winners' certificates to contest winners are important for appropriate recognition.