

Catholic Citizenship Essay Contest

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Conducting a Contest

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Conducting a Knights of Columbus Catholic Citizenship Essay Contest is an excellent way to get the young people of your community involved in exploring the role of a Catholic citizen from a variety of perspectives.

The first step is to organize your contest. The council's youth director, in consultation with the grand knight, should select a team that will administer the contest. This team will be involved in all phases of the contest: organization, publicity, judging, prizes, etc. Columbian Squires circles should work with their sponsoring councils in conducting contests. The council should be ready to go at the start of the school year, so the participants can meet district and state judging deadlines. Find the current theme at www.kofc.org/essay. **The theme does not necessarily change every year.**

Once the team is in place **the next step is to contact Catholic schools in your community to publicize your contest.** Solicit the support of the teachers and administrators; ask them to encourage their students to participate. Teachers, school administrators and, most importantly, young people can serve as judges. Each entry must be the work of an individual student; previous submitted entries will not be accepted. Schools can use the contest as a project for English composition classes.

If there are multiple schools participating, consider conducting preliminary judging with each

school submitting its top winners. In this way, the people in the community you ask to serve as judges will not be overburdened by the volume of essays, and the judging process will proceed more quickly.

Display promotional materials prominently. In an effort to attract public and home schooled students, the poster (#4209) included in the Essay Contest Kit should be displayed in youth centers, church halls, libraries, Boys & Girls Clubs, skating rinks, shopping centers, YMCA and YWCA buildings, and the council meeting place. On the poster, indicate the name of the council, the contact person and a telephone number to call for more information. Additional posters are available free of charge from the Supreme Council Supply Department or by clicking on "Support Materials" at kofc.org/essay.

Build public interest in the contest. **Use the sample press release on page 4 to announce your contest** to local newspapers and radio stations. Also be sure to place the promotional posters in prominent places around town as noted above.

Recognize all participating students by presenting participation certificates to all who submit entries, and winners certificates to your council's winners. Encourage each school to develop some type of recognition for the winning entries in that particular school. Use the included generic certificates to give additional recognition for things like "Perfect Spelling" or "Best Grammar."

Rules and Guidelines



GOAL

The goal of the Catholic Citizenship Essay Contest is to give students an opportunity to define the role of a Catholic citizen in many different scenarios, and to strengthen the bond between the Knights of Columbus and local schools.

ELIGIBILITY

The Catholic Citizenship Essay Contest is open to all Catholic students – in public, private or parochial schools – in grades 8,9,10,11 and 12 during the current school year.

THEME

The theme of the Catholic Citizenship Essay Contest will be distributed each fraternal year. The current theme is always at kofc.org/essay and will not necessarily change every year.

CONTEST LEVELS

Council: The council representative collects finished essays from schools and other participants. They are judged according to the criteria in the “JUDGING” section. Upon completion, the first place entry for each grade level (5 total) should be forwarded to the next level of competition, going to either the district deputy or state program personnel depending on the setup in your area.

District: District level judging is only necessary if more than one council within your district participates in the Catholic Citizenship Essay Contest. Make sure your councils know the deadline so they can schedule their competition accordingly. The district deputy plus one or two other judges should score the essays on the same entry form/score sheet that was used for the council level. Winning entries should be sent to the state office for the next level of the contest. Check with your state program director for the deadline and forwarding address — in the event your jurisdiction doesn't participate, call 203-752-4703 to find out how to participate in higher levels of competition.

State: All councils and district deputies should be made aware of the deadline for submitting state level essay contest entries — put it in your state newsletter and on the state website. This deadline should be set so that you have enough time to judge essays and submit them to the Supreme Council Office before April 15th.

International: The winning essays from state level competitions will be judged by a panel appointed by the Supreme Knight. There will be a 1st place and 2 runner up winners for each grade level — the state deputies will be notified of any winners from their jurisdiction, and will be issued checks and certificates signed by the supreme knight. The state deputy should then contact each winner and present the awards at an appropriate time and place.

AUTHORITY

The Catholic Citizenship Essay Contest is sponsored by the Knights of Columbus. The official responsible for the contest is the grand knight, program director or council youth director of the sponsoring council, or faithful navigator of the sponsoring assembly. Any questions about this program should be directed to the appropriate official or to the Supreme Council Department of Fraternal Services, 1 Columbus Plaza, New Haven, CT 06510. Telephone 203-752-4270.

GUIDELINES

- Essays must reflect the assigned theme and be the student's original work.
- Essays must be typed and be between 500 and 750 words in length.
- The student's name should appear only on the official Catholic Citizenship Essay Contest entry form, which must be stapled to the essay.
- All entries become the property of the Knights of Columbus and will not be returned.

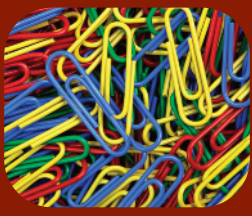
SUGGESTED TIMETABLE

(Check with State Essay Contest Chairman or Youth Director for specific dates in your area)

- **July/August:** Councils, assemblies and circles order Catholic Citizenship Essay Contest Kits from the Supreme Council Office.
- **August/September:** Councils, assemblies and circles contact schools to obtain cooperation. At this time the date, place and means of recognizing winners should be determined.
- **September/October:** Students write essays.
- **October/November:** Judges review essays for council level.

The Essay Contest council participation form (#4216) for the council level should be filled out and sent to the Supreme Council Department of Fraternal Services by December 31.

- **December/January:** District judging if necessary.
- **February/March:** State judging. Essays due to the Supreme Council for international judging by *April 15*. Jurisdiction winners should be recognized at the state convention or another jurisdiction event.
- **May/June:** International Essay Contest winners announced by the Supreme Council Office.



Publicity

PUBLICIZING YOUR EVENT

One of the best ways to make sure your essay contest is a success is to publicize it. The program must always be referred to as the ***Knights of Columbus Catholic Citizenship Essay Contest***.

After setting the dates, use the sample press release on this page to announce the contest. Announce the contest in local newspapers, including both local secular and diocesan ones. Retype it, double spaced, on council letterhead, filling in the necessary information by listing the who, what, when and where of your council's scheduled essay contest. Make sure to include the name and phone number of a contact person.

Ask newspaper and parish bulletin editors to publish a reminder close to the date of the contest or to list it in

the community or weekend calendars. Talk with assignment editors and suggest the contest as a great opportunity for a feature story. Make arrangements for a story about your winners. Personally deliver or send their names, ages and stories, along with some clipart emblems (available online at www.kofc.org/clipart), to the editors. You may also want to include copies of the pictures of the winning contestants.

If you have not contacted local schools in the area, now is the time to ask them about the possibility of having the contest incorporated into their curriculum for the school year. Work with local parishes to have the Essay Contest announced alongside their scholarship programs. If there are local retail office supply stores contact them to see if they may donate some supplies or are willing to print the students' essays for them.

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

CONTEST ANNOUNCEMENT Local K of C to Sponsor Youth Essay Contest

All Catholic students in public, private and parochial schools grades 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12, are invited to participate in the *(year)* Knights of Columbus Catholic Citizenship Essay Contest. Students are encouraged to write a 500 to 750 word essay on the theme of: *(theme)* The local contest will be hosted by *(school name)* in *(town)* on *(date)*.

All contestants on the local level are recognized for their participation in the contest. Participants are required to furnish written parental consent. For entry forms and additional information contact: *(name and telephone number of contact person)*.

The Knights of Columbus is an international Catholic family fraternal service organization with more than 1.8 million members in over 15,000 local councils. In 2012, Knights donated 70 million volunteer hours and \$167.5 million to charitable and benevolent causes, sponsoring projects to benefit their Church, councils, communities, culture of life, families and young people.

Getting the Word Out



SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENT

CONTEST WINNERS ANNOUNCEMENT Knights of Columbus Select Essay Contest Winners

There were *(number of winners)* students named local champions of the *(year)* Knights of Columbus Essay Contest in grades 8 through 12 from *(town or towns)*. *(Council name and number)* in *(location)* sponsored the contest at *(school or schools)*. All Catholic students in grades 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 attending public, private or parochial schools were eligible to participate.

Each contestant wrote their essays on the theme of: *(Theme)* The winners are: *(name)* 8th grade, *(name)* 9th grade, *(name)* 10th grade, *(name)* 11th grade and *(name)* for the 12th grade.

The goal of the Knights of Columbus Essay Contest is to give students the opportunity to define the importance of religious freedom, and to strengthen the bond between the Knights of Columbus and their local schools.

Each of these winners *(were/ will)* be awarded *(description of award)* on *(date of event)* at *(time of event)* at the *(event location)*.





Judging and Awards



JUDGING

Judges will be selected by the sponsoring Knights of Columbus council, assembly or circle. Council and / or assembly members, teachers, clergy, civil officials and/or members of the community may serve as judges.

Essays will be judged on a 100-point scoring system:

35 points: Content—

How clearly is the theme presented?

30 points: Grammar—

How well is the essay written with respect to sentence structure, paragraph construction and spelling?

35 points: Style—

Does the essay show creativity, imagination and development of the topic in a compelling style?

All scores should be recorded on the entry form/score sheet.

AWARDS

The following are suggestions for prizes to be awarded at the different levels of the Knights of Columbus Essay Contest. They are not mandatory. You may design your own awards for the contest (such as scholarships, gift certificates, savings bonds, plaques, certificates, trophies, etc.). Certificates for first, second and third place winners, and certificates of

participation for all entrants, will be included in the essay contest kit. There are also some generic certificates included in the kit to use at the council's discretion. Additional certificates are available from the Supreme Council Office free of charge.

It is recommended that councils consider monetary awards in the range of \$25 to \$50 in the form of savings bonds or cash to first place winners. Councils should also work with individual schools to develop awards for the best entries in that school. It is also recommended that a special certificate or plaque be given to the school of the champion in each grade. The school could then place the award in its trophy case or otherwise display it in the school. Higher levels of competition may call for awards in the range of \$50 to \$100 in the form of savings bonds or cash.

The top three international level winners for each grade will receive monetary awards: \$300 for 1st place, and \$100 each for 2 runners up in each grade level. Checks are accompanied by a framed certificate signed by the supreme knight.



Student Resources



2012-2013 Winning Essay
by Catherine Rea, 10th Grade –
Submitted by Council #12979
Arvada, Colorado

Walking the Road Home

As we journey to heaven, we are surrounded by community. As children of God and brothers and sisters in Christ we are all family, and as such we have a responsibility to support and protect each other. Each individual, small community and Church has a duty to serve and strengthen as we travel together. This service should not be restricted only to those who are active in the Church, but to all in need. Since we are a community it is important to protect the common good. Sometimes this means participation when it would be easier to stand back and just watch and, sometimes holding back when it is tempting to dig in and get revenge. As Catholics in a free society, we have a duty to show others the love of Christ through participation in our community, upholding our morals and the dignity of each human, and actively contributing to the decisions made by the leaders of our society.

We are born, and we live, into community for a good reason. Each life is valuable and needs to be protected. As Catholics, we are called to go out into our community and tend to those in need. Become active in your community. Volunteer, serve, and above all, pray. We live in a free society where we can voice our opinions and share the truth. All should utilize this, especially when it comes to protecting life. It takes those in good moral standing to bring our country back to where it should be, and we are the ones who can lead the change.

To do this we really must have a good idea of what our morals are, and where we stand. The best way to solidify our knowledge of this is to attend Church and actively participate and accept the sacraments. We each have a duty to each other and ourselves to partake in the Mass. From there we can go out to be a light in the darkness, and leaders in our community. When we know where we stand, and have learned to be joyful, the people around us will see Jesus through us. For some, we are the only look into the Bible that they will ever get. Because of this, we must let God and His word guide us. We should not hesitate to show who we are to the people around us, including those who lead our country.

The Catechism states that: “[a]s far as possible citizens should take an active part in *public life*.” (CCC 1915) The Catechism itself specifically states that a government, which allows a large number of people to participate in the public life, is the better type of governing system. Our country is based on this system of government, and it is our duty to participate and to call for more participation in the decision making of our country. Each of us who can vote should do so, voting for those who will lead our Nation closer to the proper road by moral law making. All of us can vocalize the needs of our society, and we should all do so. It is only through the willingness of each of us to speak out when necessary that we can bring our society back to where it needs to be.

All of this should be done following the example of Christ. We need to love our neighbors as ourselves, speak out gently yet vigorously when needed, and protect what is right. Our examples can and will change the community in which we live. Our community can change how our Nation lives, and our Nation can influence the world. All it takes is the willingness to step out, speak up, and live, as we love, with strength and careful steps.

ESSAY CONTEST KIT CONTENTS

THESE ITEMS CAN ALSO BE ORDERED FREE OF CHARGE
INDIVIDUALLY ON A FORM #1 REQUISITION

75 - Entry Form/Judging Sheet, #4208*

5 - Promotional Poster #4209*

5 - Essay Contest Guide & Resource Book, #4202*

75 - Participation Certificates, #4206

3 - Winner Certificates (5 each): First Place #4207,
Second Place #4865, Third Place #4866

5 - Generic Certificates, #4214

1 - Essay Contest Participation Form, #4216*

* available online at www.kofc.org/essay

CLIP AND MAIL FORM BELOW TO SUPREME COUNCIL

Department of Fraternal Services, 1 Columbus Plaza, New Haven, CT 06510-3326

or

Go to the "Council Forms" section of the Knights of Columbus Web site
(www.kofc.org/forms) to order a kit online.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS ESSAY CONTEST KIT ORDER FORM

Name

Title

Council No.

Street Address

City

State/Province

Zip/Postal Code