

First Step to Service High School Essay Contest

During the month of January—Poverty Awareness Month—Catholic Charities invites all local high school students (grades 9-12) to participate in our First Step to Service High School Essay Contest. This opportunity allows students to exercise their writing skills, to promote their faith, to become involved in their local community, and to have the chance at a cash prize!

In order to enter the contest, students must complete the entry form attached to this document, have it signed by a parent or guardian, and submit it along with their completed essay to Catholic Charities, Diocese of Youngstown by the February 8, 2023 deadline. This contest is not limited to high school students who attend Catholic schools. This contest is open to all students in grades 9-12 whose family belongs to a Catholic parish within the Diocese of Youngstown. The author of the essay determined to be the best by our panel of judges will receive a cash prize of two-hundred and fifty dollars (\$250). The First Step to Service program, and all prize money, is funded by a grant from Catholic Home Missions.

Below, you will find the essay topic and included you will find a rubric that details how the essays will be judged. The theme for this year is “Sharing God’s Love.”

First Step to Service Essay Contest

The Topic

- Give a specific personal example about a local event, activity, or local organization which you believe has “shared God’s love” with the poor and underserved, in one way or another. Then, please explain how God’s love was shared during that event or through that organization. Be as specific as possible and include how you were a participant or witness to the event. Include event, activity or organization details, as well as a date and time reference. Include city, entire county in which observations took place, and a description of some of the people who were involved in acts of “sharing God’s love.”
- Explain how your chosen example had an impact on you personally and how your participation and/or witness in your example will influence your future engagement with the poor.
- Some possible examples:
 - Knights of Columbus coat-collection
 - Volunteering with a food pantry
 - A local St. Vincent de Paul event
 - A school or parish clothing drive / food drive

The Rules/Requirements

- Only one entry per student.
- Entry Form must accompany essay.
- Student’s name should not appear on the essay itself for judging purposes. The entry form will contain all of the necessary information.
- Essay must have a title and page numbers, if applicable.
- Essay must be typed, double spaced, and using at least a 12 pt. font.
- Essay must contain a minimum of 300 words, but should not exceed 1,500 words.