

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 1, 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

- a. 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, and/or county in which observations took place, and a description of some of the people who were involved in acts of “sharing God’s love.”
- b. 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.
- c. Some possible examples:
 - i. Knights of Columbus coat collection
 - ii. Volunteering with a food pantry
 - iii. A local St. Vincent de Paul event
 - iv. 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 500 words, but should not exceed 1,500 words.

The Rubric

Grading Rubric

	1 Does Not Meet	2 Partially Meets	3 Does Not Fully Meet	4 Meets	5 More Than Meets	6 Exceeds
CONTENT/IDEAS	Writing is extremely limited in communicating knowledge, with no central theme.	Writing is limited in communicating knowledge. Length is not adequate for development.	Writing does not clearly communicate knowledge. The reader is left with questions.	Writes related, quality paragraphs, with little or no details.	Writing is purposeful and focused. Piece contains some details.	Writing is confident and clearly focused. It holds the reader's attention. Relevant details enrich writing.
ORGANIZATION	Writing is disorganized and underdeveloped with no transitions or closure.	Writing is brief and underdeveloped with very weak transitions and closure.	Writing is confused and loosely organized. Transitions are weak and closure is ineffective.	Uses correct writing format. Incorporates a coherent closure.	Writing includes a strong beginning, middle, and end, with some transitions and good closure.	Writing includes a strong, beginning, middle, and end with clear transitions and a focused closure.
VOCABULARY/WORD CHOICE	Careless or inaccurate word choice, which obscures meaning.	Language is trite, vague or flat.	Shows some use of varied word choice.	Uses a variety of word choice to make writing interesting.	Purposeful use of word choice.	Effective and engaging use of word choice.
VOICE	Writer's voice/ point of view shows no sense of audience.	Writer's voice/ point of view shows little sense of audience.	Writer's voice/ point of view shows that sense of audience is vague.	Writer uses voice/point of view. Writes with the understanding of a specific audience.	Writer has strong voice/ point of view. Writing engages the audience.	Writes with a distinct, unique voice/point of view. Writing is skillfully adapted to the audience.
SENTENCE FLUENCY	Frequent run-ons or fragments, with no variety in sentence structure.	Many run-ons or fragments. Little variety in sentence structure.	Some run-ons or fragments. Limited variety in sentence structure.	Uses simple compound, and complex, sentences.	Frequent and varied sentence structure.	Consistent variety of sentence structure throughout.
CONVENTIONS	Parts of speech show lack of agreement. Frequent errors in mechanics. Little or no evidence of spelling strategies.	Inconsistent agreement between parts of speech. Many errors in mechanics. Limited evidence of spelling strategies.	Occasional errors between parts of speech. Some errors in mechanics. Some evidence of spelling strategies.	Maintains agreement between parts of speech. Few errors in mechanics. Applies basic grade level spelling.	Consistent agreement between parts of speech. Uses correct punctuation, capitalization, etc. Consistent use of spelling strategies.	Uses consistent agreement between parts of speech. No errors in mechanics. Creative and effective use of spelling strategies.

First Step to Service High School Essay Contest Entry Form

This entry form must be completed by the student, and signed by a parent/guardian. Incomplete or unsigned entries will not be eligible for cash prize.

Student Name: _____

Student Address: _____

Student City / State / Zip Code / County: _____

Contact Email address: _____

Contact Phone Number: _____

High School Name: _____ Grade: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Title of Essay: _____

Statement of originality:

I have read the rules and requirements of the Catholic Charities First Step to Service High School Essay Contest and agree to adhere to them. I have prepared my essay with limited or no assistance from others. I have given proper credit for any non-original content I may have used.

Student Signature

Parent Signature

Date: _____

Date: _____

Please return completed, signed entry form with essay to:

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Youngstown
High School Essay Contest
144 West Wood St.
Youngstown, OH 44503

Deadline:
February 1, 2023