



The Catholic Women's League of Canada

Toronto Diocesan Council

MARY MATTHEWS PUBLIC SPEAKING CONTEST RULES FOR PARISHES & REGIONS

1. Eligibility

- Grade 7 and 8 students
- All Parish schools, private or public
- Students attending neighboring parishes or Catholics attending public schools in the Toronto Diocese can enter at the discretion of the sponsoring parish council, which must accommodate these contestants.
- If a school does not wish to participate, a council may run the event, inviting students to participate,

2. Process for advancement from Parish to Regional to Diocesan

- Contestants must compete in a contest at the parish level.
- Each school may send one contestant to participate at the parish level.
- A contestant may only participate in **ONE parish** Catholic Women's League public speaking contest per year.
- Each parish's winner then advances to the regional level contest. Where a parish winner is not available to compete at the regional level then the parish runner-up may participate instead.
- Only the winner from each region may advance to the diocesan level contest.
- Where a regional winner is not available to compete at the diocesan level then the region runner-up may participate instead.

3. Speech Regulations

Prepared Speech

- Contestants will choose their own topics. Any speech prepared within this school year may be used.
- Speeches should not be less than 3 minutes or longer than 5 minutes. The timekeeper will stand at the 5 minute mark. An allowance of 30 seconds will be given for speeches shorter than 3 minutes or longer than 5 minutes.
- Penalty points will be assessed at the rate of 1 point lost for each 5 seconds or part thereof beyond the 30 second allowance.
- Small note cards are acceptable as memory aids and small portable props are permitted. The use of a microphone and/or a podium is allowed. Note: *No extra marks will be awarded for the use of props.*
- Contestants are to wait in a room separate from the guests and judges. Each contestant will be brought to the hall when it is time to deliver his//her speech and may remain in the hall when finished.

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Impromptu Speech

- All contests **must** include impromptu speeches. These speeches are invaluable in determining the true ability of the speaker. The impromptu speech comprises 20% of the total mark.
- All contestants are to be assigned the same topic.
- The impromptu speech is to be 1 minute in length with 2 minutes preparation time.
- All contestants will wait together in a room separate from the guests and judges. Each contestant will be brought to a quiet room, one at a time, where they will be given the impromptu speech topic and 2 minutes to prepare. The room should have a supply of note cards and pencils. At the end of the 2 minutes the contestant will be brought to the hall to deliver the impromptu speech.
- Contestants should watch the timekeeper when giving their speech as he/she will stand at the completion of 1 minute and remain standing until the speech is completed.
- An allowance of 10 seconds will be given, with a deduction of 1 penalty point applied for every 5 seconds or part thereof for speeches over or under the 10 second allowance.
- Contestants should sit down when their time is up even if they were unable to complete the speech. This will have a more positive effect on the judges.

4. **Judges:**

The selection of judges is a very important step as they need to have the skills and knowledge to evaluate the contestants with an objective and unbiased mind.

- In advance of the contest date, select **three** qualified judges and ask one of the three to be the head judge.
- Those who have judged at the school or the parish level shall not serve as a judge at the Regional or Diocesan level.
- Those who have judged at the Regional Level shall not serve as a judge at the Diocesan Level.
- Although this may not be possible, it is preferable that the judges are unrelated to any participating school in your region.
- When selecting your judges, consider representation from retired teachers, post-secondary students, church or community officials, people of other faith communities, individuals who have taken the Christopher Leadership or Toastmasters courses, or people whose professions require them to make presentations.
- Provide the judges with the Scoring Package well before the contest so they can become familiar with the process.
- The day of the contest, provide each judge with an adequate supply of scoring sheets, blank paper and pencils. Provide a calculator for the judges should it be needed.

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- Give judges sufficient time to compile their comments/marks after each speech.
 - A quiet room should be available for the judges, before the announcement of the winners, to consult with one another.
 - Judges should not present a tie for 1st place or 2nd place.
 - Ask the head judge to provide a short constructive critique at the completion of the contest.
 - All evaluation sheets are confidential and should be given to the Service Chair after the completion of the contest for destruction.
5. **Other Information – Day of the Contest:**
- When the contestants register, ensure the appropriate consent form has been duly signed.
 - **Do not** announce or identify contestants by parish or school before the contest begins. **Assign letters of the alphabet (NOT numbers) to each contestant as shown on the Scoring Sheet (e.g., A, B, C, D, E, etc.).** Contestants are introduced after the Impromptu speeches and before the results are contest announced.
6. **Timekeeper**
- In advance of the contest date, select a timekeeper and provide a copy of the Timekeeper Instructions and the Record Sheet.
 - Ensure there is a stopwatch and it is in working condition.
 - The timekeeper is to calculate the penalty points for the judges for when they consult after the speeches.
7. **Awards and Gifts**
- Trophies and keeper plaques for all levels may be purchased at local awards supply establishments in each region.

Participants at Parish and Regional levels

- The winner and runner-up should receive an engraved keeper plaque or trophy.
- Each participant should receive a certificate of participation or some other small token of appreciation.

Participants at the Diocesan level

- The winner will receive **\$100 gift card**, the school plaque and a keeper plaque.
- The runner-up will receive **\$50 gift card** the school plaque and a keeper plaque.
- The remaining participants will receive **\$25 gift card** and a certificate
- **Important:** School plaques presented at the Diocesan contest will be taken back from the winners after the presentation so the name of the winner and school can be engraved on the respective plaques.

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- i. The winner will be presented with the engraved school plaque along with a keeper plaque at the Diocesan Convention. The winner will be invited to give their speech at the Convention.
 - ii. The runner-up will be presented with the engraved school plaque along with a keeper plaque at a regional meeting or school presentation to be held in the winner's region on a date determined by the Regional Chair or Diocesan Service Chair.
- it is the responsibility of the Regional Service Chairs in the applicable regions to retrieve the plaques from the schools of the diocesan winners and return them to the Diocesan Service Chair in January in preparation for the next Diocesan contest.

Judges and Timekeepers at all levels

- Judges and timekeepers will appreciate small gifts of thanks for their contribution.

8. **Contest Timelines**

The Diocesan Service Chair will not set the date by which the Parish contests must be completed. Keeping the Diocesan due date in mind, each Region will set their own due date and communicate the information to their parishes so each parish can in turn set the date for their contest.

Parish Contest Reports are due to their Region's Service Chair contact by the date set by their Regional Chair.

Regional Level: Contest reports from the Regions are due to the Diocesan contact no later than **March 13, 2026**

Diocesan Contact: Gabriella Di Pietrantonio @ gdp9@hotmail.com

Toronto Diocesan Public Speaking Contest will be held on: Saturday, March 28, 2026