



The Catholic Women's League of Canada

Toronto Diocesan Council

MARY DOBELL PRO-LIFE ESSAY & POETRY CONTEST GUIDELINES

For Parishes and Regions

The Toronto Diocesan Council of the Catholic Women's League of Canada promotes the Mary Dobell Pro-Life Essay and Poetry Contest to support and encourage an awareness and positive attitude towards a broad range of pro-life issues. These address all facets and stages of life development from conception, through childhood, adolescence, adulthood and senior years, to the new life stage after death. **In short, pro-life is a choice at every stage of human development.**

All submissions must reflect the teachings of the Catholic Church concerning the sanctity of life and the value of all human life from conception to new life stages (death). Contestants reflecting on the dignity of life can reflect on how they see the sanctity or dignity of life is diminishing in their schools, communities and the world and what can be done to promote the dignity of life in these environments. Topics can include but are not limited to any topic which is reflected in the CWL Objects of the League as illustrated below:

1. **To achieve individual and collective spiritual development;** as it relates to how the sacraments help us to follow in the footsteps of Christ, or what is the Sacrament of Confirmation or how works of charity and performing public service preserves the dignity of our brother and sisters at all stages of life.
2. **To promote the teachings of the Catholic Church;** as it relates to how the Gospels influence our lives; or how we show that we accept all God's children regardless of where we/they originate from or how much money we/they make, or what we/they own, or if they are able bodied/minded or have disabilities; and how we can show religious tolerance.
3. **To exemplify the Christian ideal in home and family;** explore what is family, what is home, how the members of a family are important to each other. How do we ensure that every act we do is done with love and explore how and why we must show respect for the elders in the family.
4. **To protect the sanctity of human life;** explore why and how we protect the unborn, the sick and the elderly; what the church teaches about euthanasia; the topic of suicide or suicide prevention.
5. **To enhance the role of women in Church and society;** explore vocations for women, laywomen in the church and the Catholic Women's League of Canada.
6. **To recognize the human dignity of all people everywhere;** as it relates to the inclusion of people with disabilities; child labour; education for the marginalized; homelessness; the residual impact of residential schools; violence against women; child abuse; elderly abuse and the effects of pornography.

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For Parishes and Regions

7. **To uphold and defend Christian education and values in the modern world;** as it relates to evangelization; the role of the church in society; the right to publicly supported Catholic education in Ontario and the role of the Diocese in Catholic education.
8. **To contribute to the understanding and growth of religious freedom, social justice, peace and harmony;** consider that caring for the environment is also a right for life; it is our responsibility to care for the developing world and it is important to think as a global citizen.

CONTEST ELIGIBILITY

The contest is intended to be promoted in the Family Life and Religious Education Program in the schools and is supported by the CWL at the Parish Level and includes the following categories:

Intermediate Level – Open to Grades 7, 8 and 9 students:

Essay: Minimum 250 words
Maximum 500 words

Poetry: Minimum 16 lines
Maximum 32 Lines

Senior Level – Open to Grades 10, 11 and 12 students:

Essay: Minimum 500 words
Maximum 800 words

Poetry: Minimum 16 lines
Maximum 32 Lines

Research sources are to be listed at the end of your essay submission.

The word count **must** be indicated at the end of the essay and line count at the end of the poem.

Penalty Point Calculations when under or over the above Minimum or Maximum Counts:

Essay word count:

- no penalties for up to 10 words under or over
- 1 point deducted for 11 to 50 words under or over
- 2 points deducted for 51-100 words under or over
- 3 points deducted for over 100 words under or over

Poetry line count:

- 1 point deducted for 1 to 3 lines under or over
- 2 points deducted for 5 to 9 lines under or over
- 3 points deducted for 10 lines or more under or over

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For Parishes and Regions

CRITERIA

The following criteria will be used as a guideline in judging the entries. There are six measures each with the indicated assigned percentage value.

Insight	25%
Moral Decisiveness	25%
The Teaching of the Catholic Church concerning the sanctity of all human life	25%
Content Research	10%
Composition/Theme Development	10%
Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar	5%

JUDGING PROCESS

This contest allows for winners at the Parish level to have their entries submitted to the Regional level for judging and the Regional level winning entries sent to the Diocesan level for judging.

During the review process, if it is determined by the judges that there are no worthy submissions received in a category, then no award is to be made.

At all levels, the Service committee members will review and judge the submissions and select (when applicable) the winners from each category.

1. Each Parish **may** send a maximum of **two submissions in each** of the following categories to her Regional Service Chair for a **maximum total of eight submissions**:
 - Intermediate Essays (from the grades 7, 8, 9 group)
 - Intermediate Poems (from the grades 7, 8, 9 group)
 - Senior Essays (from the grades 10, 11, 12 group)
 - Senior Poems (from the grades 10, 11, 12 group)
2. Each Regional **may** send a maximum of **two submissions in each** of the following categories to the Diocesan Service Chair for a **maximum total of eight submissions**:
 - Intermediate Essays (from the grades 7, 8, 9 group)
 - Intermediate Poems (from the grades 7, 8, 9 group)
 - Senior Essays (from the grades 10, 11, 12 group)
 - Senior Poems (from the grades 10, 11, 12 group)
3. At the Diocesan level, the judges will select from the Regional submissions a 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winner (when applicable) in each of the four categories.

MARY DOBELL PRO-LIFE ESSAY & POETRY CONTEST GUIDELINES

For Parishes and Regions

1. Included in the Mary Dobell Pro-Life Essay and Poetry Contest package is a ***Judging Score Sheet*** for each category. At all levels, each judge will use these forms to:
 - a. Record the total word/line count and the percentage he/she has allocated to each contestant for the criteria measures.
 - b. Calculate and apply any corresponding Word/Line Count penalty points to determine the Total Score for each contestant. (see page 2 for penalty point calculations)
 - c. Return the completed Judging Score Sheets along with the Essays and Poems to your Service Chair for consolidation.
2. The Service Chair or designate will complete the provided corresponding ***Judging Scores Summary*** sheets, to consolidate the individual judges scores and determine the winners for each category.
3. At the Parish and Regional levels, complete a ***Mary Dobell Pro-Life Essay & Poetry Contest Report*** for each winner. Submit, to the Service Chair at the next level (Parish to Region or Region to Diocese), the completed reports along with the Contestants' Applications, submissions and the ***Consent to Publish Personal Information forms***.

AWARDS

At the Parish and Regional levels, a Certificate of Participation should be awarded to all participants. When applicable, a small token can be given to the first and second place winners in all four categories.

At the Diocesan level, prizes are awarded (**where applicable**) in each of the four categories as follows:

- 1st place winner receives an Indigo gift card for **\$100**, a school plaque, and a keeper plaque presented at the Diocesan Convention. **The winner will be given the option if she/he wishes, to read their poem/essay at Toronto Diocesan Convention, May 2027.**
- 2nd place winner receives an Indigo gift card for **\$50 and a certificate** that is mailed to the recipient.
- 3rd place winner receives an Indigo gift card for **\$25 and a certificate** that is mailed to the recipient.

CONTESTS SUBMISSION DUE DATE

The Diocesan Service Chair will not set the due date for when the Parish submissions are due to their Regional Service Chair. Based on when the Regional submissions are due to the Diocesan level, each Region will set their own due date and communicate this information to the Parishes.

The Regional Level submissions are due to the Toronto Diocesan Service Committee contact **no later than Friday, March 12, 2027.**

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