



The Catholic Women's League of Canada

Toronto Diocesan Council

MARY DOBELL PRO-LIFE ESSAY & POETRY CONTEST GUIDELINES

For Schools and Participants

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

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residual impact of residential schools; violence against women; child abuse; elderly abuse and the effects of pornography.

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

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- 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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JUDGING 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

1. This contest allows for the 1st and 2nd place winning entries at the Parish level to be submitted to the Regional level for judging and the Regional level 1st and 2nd place winning entries sent to the Diocesan level for judging.
2. 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. The winners will be contacted by the Diocesan Service Committee.

AWARDS

1. At the Parish and Regional levels, a Certificate of Participation should be awarded to all participants. When applicable, a small gift can be given to the first and second place winners in all four categories.
2. 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 to read her/his poem/essay at Toronto Diocesan Convention in May 2027.
 - 2nd place winner receives an Indigo gift card for **\$50** and a certificate that are mailed to the recipient.
 - 3rd place winner receives an Indigo gift card for **\$25** and a certificate that are mailed to the recipient.