

The Catholic Citizenship Essay Contest

2026-27 Topic: **“The rights of man come not from the generosity of the state but from the hand of God.”**

In 500-750 words, explain what this quote from former U.S. President and Knights of Columbus member John F. Kennedy’s 1961 Inaugural address means and its importance for the flourishing of a nation.

Overview

The Knights of Columbus sponsors the Catholic Citizenship Essay Contest to encourage today’s youth to be more connected to their community and their faith. The goal of this program is to involve young Catholics in **8th through 12th grade (public, private, parochial, or home schools)** in civic discourse and instill in them religious and life-affirming values. The essay should be approximately 500-750 words on a specific subject, changing every year. Entrants will be judged on grammar, style, and how clearly they present the theme – which should showcase creativity, imagination, and overall development of the topic. For Catholic Citizenship Essay Contest resources, visit www.kofc.org/essay

Action Steps

1. Identify a program chairman to oversee all action steps and delegate tasks, as needed. If coordinating with the parish or school, confirm pastor or principal approval with your grand knight, and then set up subsequent collaboration meetings.
2. Contact your grand knight, financial secretary, or program director to order the Catholic Citizenship Essay Kit (#EA-Kit) through Supplies Online via [Officers Online](#).
3. Use the sample [News Release](#) (#10643) as a model to create and distribute a tailored release to local media.
4. Build public interest for the event! Promote the Catholic Citizenship Essay in your parish and larger community through a variety of efforts:
 - Advertise at Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) meetings, in parish halls, and especially in local Catholic schools.
 - Reach out and encourage Catholic School English teachers to use this as a class assignment.
 - Bulletin announcements
 - Pulpit announcements
 - Posting on your council and parish website / social media pages
5. Ensure that all essays are collected by the pre-determined date.
6. Assemble a team of three or more judges (consisting of clergy, teachers, and other respected members of the Catholic community) to select winning submissions.
7. Make a formal presentation of winners and invite the media to attend (refer to [Public Relations and Publicity Guidelines](#) #2235) if you need additional ideas. On the day of the presentation, be sure to wear Knights of Columbus-branded apparel and enlist a fellow knight or community member to photograph the event.
8. Send winning essays along with the [Entry Form](#) (#4208) to the next highest level for judging. Contact your district deputy to learn where the winning essays should be mailed. In California, the next level of judging will be done at the Chapter Level, followed by the

State Judging. Once the judging has been completed at the state level, the winners from each grade level will be forwarded to the Supreme Office Department of Fraternal Mission through fraternalmission@kofo.org for the final round of judging.

9. Following the Catholic Citizenship Essay Contest, update the community on the success of your program by amending the Catholic Citizenship Essay sample [Winners Announcement](#) (#10644) and distributing it to local media, along with energizing photographs from the event.
10. To gain credit for your program through the Order, complete the associated reporting forms.
 - Immediately after your event is finished, complete the [Fraternal Programs Report Form](#) (#10784).
 - At the end of the fraternal year, complete the [Columbian Award Application](#) (#SP-7).

Supreme Essay Contest kits can be found at the following link: [Essay Contest Information](#) or through the Officers Online portal and going to the Supplies Online tab.

The Deadlines for the 2026-27 Catholic Citizenship Essay Contest are as follows:

Councils Judging — Mid to late **October 2026**

Chapter Judging — Early **November 2026** **See note below*

To the state for judging from Chapters — **December 18, 2026**

State sends the winners to Supreme — **January 31, 2027**

****Note: on the Entry/Judging form where it states "District/Regional Total" for scoring the essays, that is the Chapter Level here in California.***

- **Please note: Only submit the winners for each grade to the next level of judging. DON'T SEND FIRST-, SECOND-, AND THIRD-PLACE ESSAYS; ONLY SEND THE WINNERS FOR EACH GRADE LEVEL.**

When the Chapter judging is complete, please send your winning essays, along with the completed and signed Entry Form, to:

Peter Tremblay
Essay Contest Chairman
2219 Ranch House Court
Auburn, CA 95603

You can also send an electronic copy of the essays and entry forms to [@gmail.com](mailto:jptremblayca@gmail.com) (**NOTE: the entry forms MUST BE SIGNED by a parent or guardian and MUST INCLUDE the sponsoring council number and contact information with phone number**)

California State Council Contact:

Peter Tremblay
Essay Contest Chairman
California State Council
(916)390-7153
jptremblayca@gmail.com