



**THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE OF CANADA  
TORONTO DIOCESAN COUNCIL  
YOUTH AWARDS 2023**

**CATHOLIC**  
and **LIVING IT!**

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The Toronto Diocesan CWL Youth Awards Program is a combination of contests which are intended to support Catholic youth in becoming people of faith, dedicated to following in the footsteps of Christ to serve God and Canada. The program reflects the Objects of the Catholic Women’s League of Canada.

## **MARY MATTHEWS**

Mary Matthews joined the League in 1945 in Ottawa and subsequently moved to Toronto, served at the parish and diocesan levels, being elected Archdiocesan Council President from 1965-67. She served as national convener of social action and was chairperson of committees, which prepared League briefs on the "Status of Women" and "Poverty in Canada". She was elected as national president in 1974. She served on the Pontifical Council for the Laity, WUCWO, Canadian Conference of Catholic Lay Associations and was the first woman to chair the Board of Directors of the Catholic Children's Aid Society. She received the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice Medal in 1975. She passed away in 2016 at the age of 101.

### **MARY MATTHEWS PUBLIC SPEAKING CONTEST 2023:**

Grade 7 and 8 students are eligible from all parish schools, private or public. Contestants choose their own topic. Any speech prepared within the current school year can be used.

**First place: Neo Smolders**, Guiding Light Academy, St. Joseph's Parish (Peel Region)  
**Topic: God's Favourite Sport is Baseball**

**Second place: Anna Tomash**, St. Monica Catholic School, St. Mary's Parish (Northern Region)  
**Topic: Space Pollution**

### **Other 2023 Participants**

**Hans Cinco**, St. Ignatius of Loyola Catholic School, St. Bartholomew Parish (Scarborough Region)  
Topic: Chess

**Rania Gordon**, St. Kateri Tekakwitha Catholic School, St. Gertrude Parish (Durham Region)  
Topic: Unsung Heroes

**Isabel Gregoris**, St. Margaret Mary Catholic School, St. Margaret Mary Parish (Humber Valley Region)  
Topic: Accessibility

**Grace Lopez**, St. Timothy Catholic School, St. Timothy Parish (North York Region)  
Topic: Women in Film

## **First place: Neo Smolders, Guiding Light Academy, St. Joseph's Parish (Peel Region)**

### **Topic: God's Favourite Sport is Baseball**

Did you know that baseball is the only game that could actually last forever? It isn't timed like other sports. It is technically nine innings but if the two teams are tied after nine, they play extra innings. If every extra inning stayed tied, theoretically, a baseball game could be eternal.

There are two things that make me happy and fulfilled. The first and most important is my relationship with God. The second, is the classic sport of baseball.

These two things might seem completely different, but today I will prove to you that God's favourite sport is baseball and he has hidden clues inside the game itself. Firstly, think about what I said earlier. Baseball is the only sport that could last forever, like God himself, eternal. And everyone knows that God's favourite number is three. Because He is three. There is one God in three persons called the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We call this the Holy Trinity.

Three is also the most important number in baseball. Three strikes and you're out. Three outs and the teams switch from the field to batting. There are three bases that you have to go through to get to your final destination that is called home.

Why did God make you? The catechism tells us to know, love and serve Him so that we can be happy at "home" with Him in Heaven.

Baseball players use the wood of the bat to defeat the other team. Jesus Christ used the wood of the cross to defeat Satan.

A baseball is made up of two colours, white with red seams. This is the same two colours that come out of Jesus' heart in the famous Divine Mercy painting. The white represents the purity of Baptism, and the red represents the blood of the Eucharist.

God also made people specifically to play His favourite sport. There was a young boy who spent 12 years as a child in the St. Mary Industrial School for Boys. At the school, Brother Mattias of the St. Francis Xavier order became a mentor, teacher, and coach of this boy.

That boy would grow up to be the biggest name in baseball, maybe in all sports, Babe Ruth. Babe Ruth even joined the Knights of Columbus when he played for the New York Yankees.

Traditionally, like when Babe Ruth played, people would dress up for the game, just like when they went to Church.

But just like Church, people are trying to modernize baseball. They have introduced technology like AI that can automatically call balls and strikes meaning they don't need the umpire. Personally, I don't like this about baseball. It takes away from the tradition of the game. I like to think that when I watch a game now, it is the same as when Babe Ruth played in the 1920s. I also think the same way about my Catholic faith. I know some people want to change the Church and make it more modern.

Just like baseball, when I go to Mass, I like to think that it is the same Mass that saints like Padre Pio, Maxillian Kolbe and St. Francis went to.

So as you can see, there is no doubt that baseball is God's sport. The game can be eternal, the number three is so important and the best player ever was a Catholic. In conclusion, I would like to leave with a quote from one of the best players of our time, Albert Pujols. "I've heard kids say they want to be just like me when they grow up. They should know that I want to be just like Jesus." All I can say to that is Amen and Play Ball.

## **Second place: Anna Tomash, St. Monica Catholic School, St. Mary's Parish (Northern Region)**

### **Topic: Space Pollution is as Problematic as Pollution on Earth**

When you look into the night sky, what feeling passes by you? When I look up, a profound feeling of wonder passes through me as I look into the night sky, filled with stars that look like a salt shaker has sprinkled them on. But imagine if every time you looked up at the sky instead of feeling curious you felt afraid and worried. This is why I strongly believe that space pollution is as problematic as pollution here on our home planet called Earth. Space debris causes problems in space and here on Earth. Let me tell you why.

To begin with, let me tell you what space pollution is. Space pollution includes discarded launch vehicles, parts of a spacecraft, tools from the ISS, rockets, etc. Space debris is any man-made object that has been left discarded or dysfunctional in space. Currently, as of this decade, there are about 2,000 active satellites, 3,000 dead satellites, and 162,000 space debris up in space as NASA states.

Fundamentally, space debris affects space the most. As of 2022 the countries that pollute space the most are Russia, The U.S., and China as statistica.com states. All space junk that is left up in space causes many problems for our satellites, rockets, and the ISS. Most importantly it puts the astronauts in space, in danger. Space junk can cause spacecraft collisions and traffic up in orbit which complicates launching rockets. It can also collide with satellites which can cut our communications, essentially depleting us of my generation's favourite thing in the world: wifi. As well, junk can collide with the ISS causing serious damage and potentially killing the crew. It can also hit the astronaut when they go out to do the EVA, killing them instantly. For reference, space debris travels through space ten times the speed of a bullet from a gun. So something or someone getting hit by debris can do some hefty damage.

Furthermore, space debris also damages our planet Earth. In the future when you look at the night sky if you see a shooting star it most likely will be space debris re-entering our atmosphere instead of a meteoroid. That doesn't sound interesting, does it? When space debris re-enters Earth it causes depletion of the ozone layer because of the chemicals and

metals that are released when the debris is burning up in the atmosphere. Debris in orbit below about 600 km falls back to Earth in a couple of years, and big pieces of space debris can fall into the water here on Earth which pollutes the water.

Although space debris has a small chance of falling back to Earth without burning up in the atmosphere there is still a chance that big pieces of debris and re-entering rockets can land in the wrong place and ruin environments. Although, I understand that we all have limited time on Earth. I understand that global warming is affecting us more quickly than space pollution. I know that our Earth will suffer from big consequences in a couple of decades from global warming as the Fraser Research Bulletin states. But re-entering space junk can make global warming come even faster and we wouldn't be able to leave Earth because of the debris up in orbit.

Space debris may seem like a big problem to solve but when you are older you can try to invest and donate more money to sciences that can develop solutions for space pollution. For example, we can create new technology like a net to collect debris or a space claw. This technology will pull the debris into the Earth's atmosphere so it will burn up. In general, if we invest in new technology, space pollution can be solved by building rockets and satellites that can re-enter Earth once they are not needed anymore instead of leaving them floating around lifeless in space.

In conclusion, space pollution is as bad as pollution on Earth. It can be solved, but to solve it we have to put our words and ideas into action. In my favourite movie, *Interstellar*, the character Cooper says, and I quote, "We've always defined ourselves by the ability to overcome the impossible. And we count these moments. These moments are when we dare to aim higher, break barriers, reach for the stars, to make the unknown known. We count these moments as our proudest achievements." So let's find a solution to space pollution, let's overcome that said "impossible" challenge and hopefully, in the future, we can count that exact moment as our proudest achievement.

## **MARY DOBELL**

Mary Dobell was a life-long resident of Toronto and lived her entire life in St. Joseph's Parish in the east end until her death in 2007 at the age of 105. Mary graduated from St. Michael's College, University of Toronto in 1924. She served as Toronto Archdiocesan President from 1959 to 1961, Provincial President from 1967 to 1969 and served on the National executive. Mary was instrumental in the development of the "Leadership and Public Speaking Course" that is still offered today. For her lifetime of devoted service to the Church, she was awarded the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice medal in 1981.

### **THE MARY DOBELL PRO-LIFE ESSAY AND POETRY CONTEST**

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. All submissions must reflect the teachings of the Catholic Church concerning the sanctity of life and the value of human life from conception to natural death. Topics can include but are not limited to any topic which is reflected in the CWL Objects of the League.

### **MARY DOBELL PRO-LIFE INTERMEDIATE ESSAY CONTEST 2023**

**First place: Nicole Gavazzi, St. Margaret Mary Catholic Elementary School, St. Margaret Mary Parish (Humber Valley Region)**

**Title: Life**

The Catholic Church teaches that all human life is sacred and valuable from the moment of conception until natural death. This belief is rooted in the understanding that human life is created in the image and likeness of God, and as such, it is deserving of the utmost respect and protection. The Church also teaches that the sanctity of life is not limited to only certain stages of life, but rather, applies to all individuals, regardless of their abilities, age, or circumstances.

One of the ways in which the Catholic Church promotes the sanctity of life is through its objection to abortion, euthanasia, and assisted suicide. These practices are seen as a violation of the inherent dignity and value of human life and are therefore unacceptable. The Church also advocates for the protection of the unborn and the rights of those who are vulnerable and marginalized, such as the elderly, the disabled, and the poor.

Unfortunately, in many schools, communities, and the world, the sanctity and dignity of life is diminishing. As well as in the increasing number of hate crimes and acts of violence directed towards certain individuals or groups. There is a growing disregard for the rights and needs of the vulnerable and marginalized, which can lead to a lack of support and resources for these individuals. To promote the dignity of life in these environments, it is important to educate and raise awareness about the teachings of the Catholic Church

concerning the sanctity of life. This can be done through the use of resources such as pamphlets, brochures, and educational programs.

Additionally, it is important to advocate for the rights of the defenceless, and to work towards creating a more inclusive and supportive society. This can be done by volunteering at local shelters, food banks, and other organizations that support these individuals. Furthermore, it is important to speak out against hate crimes and acts of violence, and to promote a culture of respect and tolerance for all individuals, regardless of their abilities, age, or circumstances.

Overall, the teachings of the Catholic Church concerning the sanctity of life and the value of all human life from conception to natural death are essential to promoting a society that values and respects the dignity of all individuals.

While there are many challenges and obstacles to promoting the dignity of life in our schools, communities, and the world, there are also many opportunities to make a positive impact. By working together and utilizing these sources and teachings of the Catholic Church, we can create a more just and compassionate society that promotes the sanctity and dignity of all human life.

## **Second place: Emma Malik, St. Margaret Mary Catholic Elementary School, St. Margaret Mary Parish (Humber Valley Region)**

### **Title: Solidarity In The Catholic Church**

In the Catholic religion, solidarity is displayed as the virtue of enabling the human family to share the treasure of material and spiritual goods. Pope John Paul II states that a person is made for self-giving solidarity with others, and not for the social isolation that comes from the concern for one's rights. Now our question is, "How can I be in solidarity with others"? Today I will be discussing how to spread solidarity in the Catholic church, and how it can make a huge impact when it comes to our journey with Christ.

Part of showing the virtue of solidarity is to show commitment. Commitment is the state or quality of being dedicated to a cause. We can start off by being committed to prayer. But how? First start off by making time in your day for daily prayer or devotion. Whether that's in the morning or before you go to sleep, devoting a time of your day to God can reduce feelings of self-isolation and or negative stress. In my eyes, being able to show God that you will always take time out of your day to talk to Him, is one of our main priorities as Christians.

Showing solidarity doesn't only involve connecting with God. At times, we can show solidarity by giving. In 2023, 8.5 percent of the world is struggling with poverty or vulnerability. Take time to look at yourself and the situation you're in. Why is it that most people living a beautiful life don't take their gifts that God has blessed them with, and give to people who need it most? Becoming a volunteer for a food drive or a clothing drive, is how we can show solidarity in our daily lives.

One final way that we can show solidarity is to treat others equally and remember we are all one in Christ. For example, overcoming any barriers of race, colour, ethnicity, or gender. We need to remember that being able to accept everyone for who they are, helps build relationships and feelings of trust. This is a reminder that we are to treat others the



same way that Jesus treats us. Even in our sin, he is kind and compassionate towards us, and that is why we live out our faith journey the way we do today.

From what I described to you today, solidarity is crucial to live out our lives as Christians. No matter your age or the state you're living in, showing solidarity is an easy task, and can be filled out in so many different ways. Solidarity makes communities strong, reduces conflict, and encourages us to share our time and help each other when needed. At the end of the day, solidarity doesn't define who we are as a person but how we choose to live out our lives. God's love for us is based on who we are, and not on what we do.

### **Third place: Julia Ochwat – All Saints C.S.S., Holy Family Parish (Durham Region)**

#### **Title: More Than Just a Life: Respecting People for Who They Truly Are**

A human life is more than what you think it is. It's more than something that can be ignored or referred to as worthless; it revolves around the dignity that all human beings truly deserve. In other words, it's the respect that should be given to every single person from the day that they're conceived to the day that they die.

When we're born and as toddlers, we're often believed in. People often tell us that we are limitless and that our potential is infinite. Of course, this isn't the case for everyone, but for many people it is. On the other hand, some young kids are verbally and/or physically abused, are undernourished, and are treated as objects. The older we become, however, the more people start to doubt us. Every single day, it is ingrained in thousands of kids and teenagers that they should change themselves in order to "belong". Every single day, they are told that they aren't limitless. As adults, this never-ending cycle only continues, up until death. People constantly suck power and "strength", from bringing someone else down. It's disheartening, I know, but that's the current reality.

"Freedom consists not in doing what we like, but in having the right to do what we ought" is a quote that Saint John Paul II once said. Put differently, we have the freedom to do whatever we choose, but it is our responsibility to do the right thing, the thing that would make both God and ourselves proud. Pope Francis once said, "In prayer, God keeps calling us, opening our hearts to charity." By saying this, he meant that we are meant to help others above all else.

As I'm writing this essay, I'm dying to ask: Don't you think that rather than focusing on getting rich and expanding territory through fighting, we should start focusing on fixing the global issues that currently exist, circling around sanctioning human life for people from varying walks of life? I do. We've become so obsessed with power and fitting in that we've forgotten that there are people halfway across the world who are fighting for their lives during a war. We've forgotten that there's things that matter so much more than getting respected by others by instilling fear in them. As a citizen of this generation, this makes me extremely devastated.

As you can see, this world is far from where it should be in the twenty-first century. Normal individuals are consistently treated as objects; as worthless "beings". Yet, this doesn't have to be the case. Really, it doesn't. All of us have it within us to change that, but it's up to us whether we will have the courage to do so. This is because it takes true

bravery to stand up for what you believe in. But ... that's what heroes do. And, guess what? You can be a hero, too. It only takes one step to start.

### **MARY DOBELL PRO-LIFE SENIOR ESSAY CONTEST 2023**

**First place: Melanie Dias, Senator O'Connor College School, St. John XXIII Parish (North York Region)**

**Title: Life in its Purest Form**

Life: "the quality that distinguishes a vital and functional being from a dead body". This definition from Merriam-Webster encapsulates the essence of life and the absolute value of protecting it. The quality that distinguishes life from a dead body is the birth of the child and its presence in the human world. Part of what gives a baby life is the family's love and affection. The tender cradle and care that travels the infant at birth nourishes it with the human love it will grow to live in. All these first impacts start with the most vital part of life, birth.

Imagine you're in a hospital room watching a mother affectionately embrace her newly born gift. She hugs the baby tight and promises that she will never leave her child. You hear her thank God for the miracle baby he blessed her with as she melts down in tears forever thinking about why she ever thought it wouldn't work out. This pure moment emphasizes the ability to trust God not just at the start but through till the end. That mother would have never known, she would create an ethereal beauty if not for sticking by God's side through it all. She acknowledges God's plan in action and compassionately vows to protect her child from any dangers of the world. The meaning of life for the mother and child stems from this one pure scene, revealing how choosing life was the best route to seek peace and happiness with her new family. God will not leave us on our hardest, unsure paths but remain alongside and heal our sufferings together, which is why where life is, God is too.

Our life does not only exist here on Earth but also in heaven when we will later reunite with our Heavenly Father. On Ash Wednesday, the priest proclaims: "Remember that you are dust, and from dust, you shall return". This line explains how we are all uniquely created and how we have no greater authority than God as He is our creator. A king does not order another king to death because his authority is equal to that of the other king and lesser than God's authority. Similarly, God is our one and only judge, and we humans are his citizens in his kingdom. As the creator, it is up to God to decide how we start and end our lives, not up to human nature and society to dictate for us.

It is up to us to save humankind and protect the innocent lives that don't get a voice. God gave us a voice, heart, and mind to speak up for Him and His creations. The main goal of protecting life is to build a bigger enriched community that will see the face of God when we all reunite. The beauty of our world comes from the birth and renewal of families and children that strengthen and uplift our society, faith community, and individual lives. So preservation consists of more than just a simple pro or no. Its roots are in understanding the graceful value of accepting life in its purest form as a baby. Every one of the billions of human beings on this planet, including the millions of unborn, holds the absolute yearning to experience life and have the immaculate value of our own individual presence in life.

**Second place: Adam Malik, St. Mother Teresa Catholic Academy, St. Timothy Parish (North York Region)**  
**Title: Christian Unity**

Prayers alone can increase unity among Christians. Prayers cleanse our souls and fill them with the love of God. The Catholic Church has struggled to bring all followers of Christianity under the umbrella of faith in Christ by the rule of prayer. Even before the attempt of unification, both Christians and Catholics have helped the poor and the needy, but prayers can bring them together spiritually, making them feel like they belong to the same Christian family. For instance, the Coronavirus pandemic which began in January 2020, caused several lockdowns. A strict stay-at-home order was implemented and people were forced to isolate themselves in order to prevent the contagion of the virus.

The Vatican, who emphasized the importance and reverence of prayer, called every Christian in the whole world to pray for God's mercy. Prayers have brought together people - virtually or in person - to recite the Rosary. Prayers have opened up our churches for worship. Prayers have united us all around Jesus.

Members of the Catholic denomination are united through the Eucharist. Every Sunday and every weekly mass, we celebrate the Holy Eucharist, sharing the consecrated Host, the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Every baptized Catholic then returns to their respected home with The Messiah in their life. Christ's presence helps us to live out God's commandments of love.

Indeed, the people at St. Timothy's Catholic Church are well known for their wonderful ministries. This includes the youth group who work in the church, whether that means to help out during the mass or to have various missions outside the church such as carrying out charitable work towards the homeless community. The youth minister along with her many volunteers, is always looking for opportunities to take her group of young adults wherever they can to help the less privileged.

Another example of the community living out God's love, is a big organization called "ShareLife" which, in Christian unity, acts out the golden rule "Love thy neighbour as thyself". It does so by fundraising for those in need, disregarding their religious and cultural beliefs, as Jesus tells us to do in the parable of "The Good Samaritan". Moreover, when Jesus was born, He was surrounded by various people.

First there were the shepherds whom the Angel called to Bethlehem to worship the Messiah. The shepherds were Jewish of a humble origin, hard-working but God-fearing men. Then the Magi, who came from the far corners of the world, were not Jewish but Paganists by religion. Unlike the shepherds, they were very learned and knowledgeable men, having the highest positions in society. Their presence is explained by the Magi who said that, "We saw the star in the east and we came to worship him"(Mt 2:2). The birth of the Messiah was revealed to the three wise men from the Star and had followed the celestial wonder, searching for the King of the Jews. Indeed, Jesus' birth brought together both Jewish and non-Jewish individuals, expressing Jesus' desire for all of us to be united in Him.

Many followers of Christ worship in various denominations. They may be faithful to Christ but they go to other churches. For instance, some of my relatives belong to the Anglican Church, some belong to the Lutheran and some find their belonging to the Baptist Church. Yet we all love each other and get together for our family celebrations. If we love Jesus and obey His commandments, we will stay united.

Lastly, but nevertheless, the women of the Christian faith have great significance and contribution to the religion. This is evident from the fact that many mothers are usually responsible for influencing their children's faith and spirituality. An example of this is a major figure in our Christian faith, our Mother Mary who birthed and supported Her Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, even at times when She feared for the safety of Her family. Instead of giving into this fear, She encouraged Her Son to continue on with His purpose - to spread the Word of God. The Catholic Women's League (CWL), is a group of empowering women of Christian faith, who not only are virtuous role models of God's teachings but provide the youth of our region to express and explore their beliefs in their voice and words. Surely the youth is grateful for their presence and endless opportunities of growth and encouragement. Conclusively, the CWL is an added example to the importance of women in Christianity.

As has been demonstrated, if we have Jesus' love in our hearts and homes, we will have unity in our families and in our Churches. But how can we have divine love in our lives? Fr. Patrick Peyton says: "The family who prays together, stays together." Prayer, indeed, is the key to Christian unity.

## **MARY DOBELL PRO-LIFE INTERMEDIATE POETRY CONTEST 2023**

**First place: Aaron Malik, Sacred Heart Catholic School, St. Timothy Parish (North York Region)**

**Title: The World and Christian Faith**

The world needs more churches for people to gather  
To cultivate the value of prayer and worship  
But here we are, continuing to drift farther  
As we drown in the dimensions of greed and hardship

The world needs to bring family prayers back  
Where parents would command ever so sweetly  
"Come my darling child, bring your bible from the rack,  
we will pray holding our hearts and hands tightly"

The world needs to embrace more love and peace  
Where humans of all race and kind can breathe  
The world needs war and violence to cease  
To spread The Word of Christ beyond and beneath

The world is full of humans of all kinds and race

Belonging to many groups, creed and caste  
They all deserve the same respect and grace  
As they have all been created in God's likeness and taste

The world needs to value the role of a woman  
Mother Mary is our mother who we all love  
She is either standing behind or next to her son  
Or praying for us from Heavens above

**Second Place: Anamarie Xavier, Senator O'Connor College School,  
St. Timothy Parish (North York Region)**

**Title: Hope and Mercy**

I want to fit in  
Without being compared  
But that's not possible  
Because those people are rare

I've hoped for love  
But got hatred instead  
I hear the sound of silence  
And I know I'm in need of a friend

I want to be happy  
But I always feel sad  
Thinking about my pain  
Always makes me mad

The world wasn't always grey  
It's those people who made it stay  
I know it sounds strange  
But one day I hope the world would change

And when that day comes  
All the world will see  
Whether at night or in light  
God's mighty hand reaching over me

As He takes me away in his ever-loving arms  
I cry like a baby who was born in a barn  
Life isn't fair, I thought  
But then realized that all my sins were bought

The thought of suicide is sinful and crazy  
I must take a step back  
To think about God's mercy  
Despite all the attacks

God will watch over me  
He will be my protector

I am sure you will agree  
Because God is our defender

**Third Place: Aislynn Ng Lee, St. Hilary Catholic School, St. Francis Xavier Parish (Peel Region)**

**Title: Many Amazing Gifts from God**

Everyone is loved by our heavenly Father  
All of us have a purpose,  
So please be kind to one another,  
As if Jesus were there with you.  
Because He is, in our hearts.

Forgive, as Christ forgave you,  
Do what Jesus would do.  
He made a huge sacrifice,  
And died on the cross,  
So all our sins may be forgiven.

He loves us dearly,  
And all of us equally,  
For we are God's beautiful creations,  
Unique in many ways.

So let's follow in Jesus' footsteps,  
Enjoy the gift of life,  
Praise the Lord, your God,  
And in a world where you can be anything,  
Be kind!

### **MARY DOBELL PRO-LIFE SENIOR POETRY CONTEST 2023**

**First place: Melanie Dias, Senator O'Connor College School, St. John XXIII Parish (North York Region)**

**Title: I am "God's design"**

I hear the joys and excitement of the outside world,  
All these happy thoughts and dreams are swirled.  
I can feel my future with every passing beat,  
Imagining myself in a warm, friendly family suite.

I can taste the sweet, light and delightful food,  
The reality of a new world sets the mood.  
With my eyes shut close I see a warm embrace,  
Picturing that divine life I'm willing to chase.  
I hear my mom's cries wondering if it'll all work out,

I wish I could tell her that I truly am the best route  
My heart beats louder with my whole future in line  
But then I hear a whisper "my child you are God's design"

Her pure words envelop love and melt my heart  
For I continue my excitement for life as I did at the start  
She gives me hope for a life I know I will see  
Since that's where my new God given family will be.

**Second place: Lyzandria Dias, Senator O'Connor College School, St. John  
XXIII Parish (North York Region)**

**Title: God's Plan**

If not today when can you start to see,  
how God's great love is for eternity!

How amazing must it be,  
to know that God has a home for you and me!  
His plan for us is meant to be!

So why do you think you know more,  
of how God's plan should go?  
Don't you think you've done enough  
while all your laws have been so tough  
For who? Not you, what do you have to say,  
for you have claimed you suffered in every way.

Yet you don't know the death it suffered  
Even after all, that has been recovered.  
What an innocent soul we see  
fighting for all it has to breathe.

And yet you think you're in the right  
for killing what is left in sight  
Why do you think you know?  
More of how God's plan should go.

## **JEAN McCANN**

Jean lived a life of service to her family, her church and her community. She was involved working with new immigrants through the Women's Interfaith Council Coalition. She was also involved with the Community Care Access Centre. Jean was a life member of the C.W.L. and President of the Toronto Diocese C.W.L. (1971-1973). She received the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship in 1974 and the 'Pro ecclesia et Pontifice' award from the Pope for her service to the Church. Jean died in 2013, in Barrie, in her 102nd year.

### **JEAN McCANN YOUTH SERVICE AWARD 2023**

The Jean McCann Service Award for Youth recognizes and affirms the role played in our parishes by our confirmed Catholic youth between the ages of 15 and 18. This award emphasizes the necessity of service to others and shows appreciation to those young people who are taking the gospel message seriously. The nominated students must prepare a written submission that describes their involvement with their family, school, community, parish and other activities. They explain how they use their talents in witnessing Christ to the world.

#### **Recipient: Leah Thomas, St. Joan of Arc High School, Holy Spirit Parish , (Northern Region)**

As a teenager, I have many roles and responsibilities, as per the activities I am involved in. These activities take place in school, my community, and my own family.

My involvement in the parish includes being a choir member, cantor, a lector, as well as a youth group leader and member. I always try my best to be present and help when I can. I am also on the coordinating team for our annual Summer VBS which involves lots of work. Last year, I was invited to be on the Parish Pastoral Council as the Youth Rep. I attend Mass every Sunday and I was part of the group that shared in the music ministry during the lockdown and when we were only live streaming Masses. Currently, I sing the psalm and gospel acclamation and at other times I am the lector during Mass.

I am also an active member of Lifeteen, an Edge crew member, and a youth leader in both of these groups. One of the highlights of my involvement has been accepting the invitation to assist with the Youth Mass and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. I assist with the set up, singing, and reflections. During our adoration sessions I have the opportunity to write and share reflections relating to the theme of the worship songs and about my own faith journey. As a group, my parish's youth and the youth from St. Paul's parish in Alliston walked all over downtown Barrie this past Christmas season to distribute care packages and donated coats to the homeless. This was such an eye opener for me and I am so glad I was given this opportunity. I also had the amazing opportunity to go to Edge Camp in 2021 and 2022 as a camp leader for my parish group which allowed me to grow in my faith, and acquire leadership skills that I am now able to share during our Edge and Lifeteen gatherings and in my daily life.



At my school, I am the co-founder and social media coordinator of a group called the "JOA Lights". I am quite fortunate to be a part of this group as we discuss social and environmental issues and find ways to bring awareness to the school community and to others about them. This year we chose to pick a different cause per week to fundraise for and we fundraise by selling popcorn on Fridays. So far we've raised money for the Women and Children's Shelter, and war relief in Ukraine, among many other causes. We also help our school chaplain with setting up for school masses, Advent/Lent prayer services, Rosary walks, and other religious activities around the school.

Other than the JOA Lights, I have also been a football scorekeeper since grade 9, I set up and helped organize school events with our school leadership mentor group, and have been taking the Waterloo Math Contest to enhance my education for the past four years. I am also one of the 4 Student Senate representatives at my school. This role requires me to partake in formal meetings with other Catholic high schools in the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board and share ideas on how to make our schools a better place for everyone. I was also a part of a group called "Best Buddies" where we spent one lunch a week with the special needs kids in our school and made crafts together. I played badminton and went to the regional tournament when I was in grade 9, but haven't been able to join in because of the pandemic and the workload from school.

Within my community, I am very involved in a prayer group (outside of my parish) that is led by my dad for the Malayalees (the people who originate from the state of Kerala, India) in Barrie, Ontario. The prayer gathering happens once a month and there are more than 50 families involved. Within this group, I have been bouncing between roles for the past few years but recently I have been focusing much more on children's liturgy and giving talks based on the Bible.

I am also involved in a lay Catholic Prayer Ministry called Gethsemane Ministries. I have been attending this group since I was born and it really set the whole foundation for my faith. I was introduced to praise and worship, adoration, and many people with a strong desire to have a good relationship with Christ. In this ministry, I help with children's liturgy on Friday nights and attend day retreats that happen every third Saturday. Through this ministry, I was able to participate as well as volunteer at the Lift Jesus Higher Rally and strengthen my faith even more. On a national perspective, I participated in the March for Life in Ottawa in 2022 and hope to attend this year as well. It is a great feeling to stand for the truth about abortions and be a witness for Christ.

When it comes to my family, I am the oldest of three children, we're two girls, and one boy. As a young child, whenever my parents couldn't be there, I've always taken care of my siblings and it continues to this day. I am present to help people in my home, whether it be with homework or dishes, I am always there when called upon and when needed. Together we are then able to do things as a family whether that be inside and outside of the house. We enjoy watching movies together, random family road trips, and gardening together. I am working towards being a good role model for the rest of my family, especially to my younger siblings from whom I also learn from. Family prayer, and spending time reflecting on the Word of God all help me in my hope to be present for others, especially my family.

There are multiple ways that I use my talents in witnessing Christ and inviting those around me to a relationship with Him. I am a painter and I paint canvases with Bible

verses on them. I give these canvases to close family and friends. I also hang them up around the house to really remind ourselves of God's love and how awesome He is. Another one of my talents is singing and having a confident speaking voice. I have used these talents when singing the psalm and gospel acclamation, and being a lector at Mass. I am able to deliver the Word of God to the people around me simply through my voice. I was also able to use this talent as I spoke to the homeless in Barrie. This is a form of witnessing Christ because I am able to help care for and love others like how Jesus did and encourages others to do so as well. During youth gatherings and camps, I encourage everyone to pray, especially those to whom prayer is new. I think the best way I do this is by trying to become the person that God has called me to be.

For my future plans, I am hoping to attend the University of Waterloo for their Architecture program in hopes of becoming an architect. My vision for this dream of mine is to be able to design and sign off on the construction of buildings and homes where the homeless can seek shelter and any aid, especially in the winter, and of course free of cost. After meeting all those people on the street this past Christmas season, my desire for accomplishing this dream has become more adamant.

This is just a summarized version of who I am and how I share my gifts. And through these activities I not only offer service to others but encourage others to grow in their relationship with Jesus.

## **MARGARET ANN JACOBS CATHOLIC CHILDREN'S AID FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP**

Each year, through your generous donations, the Toronto Diocesan Council presents a monetary gift of hope to the children, youth and families served by the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto (CCAS). Through its Catholic Children's Aid Foundation Fund, the CCAS raises funds to support programs that create strong and healthy futures for children, youth, and families in the Catholic community of Toronto. Through your council's generosity, they are able to fund a post-secondary scholarship for Crown Wards of the Society to realize their academic dreams. The value of the scholarship is \$2,000.

The 2022 recipient of the Catholic Children's Aid Foundation CWL Margaret Ann Jacobs Scholarship is Whitney Nguyen who is now attending Humber College.

## **ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP**

The Toronto Diocesan Council has been offering this scholarship since 1960 with the aim of promoting higher education for deserving young women. The value of this one-time, non-renewable scholarship is \$3,000. The awarding of the scholarship is based on several factors: eligibility, first choice of college, and marks. Financial need is also a consideration. The applicant must be entering the Faculty of Arts and Science in one of the following areas of study: Commerce, Computer Science, Humanities and Social Sciences, or Sciences.

The 2022 recipient of the St. Michael's College Scholarship is Madelaine Kukovica graduate of Bishop Allen Academy, Etobicoke, and Our Lady of Sorrows Parish.

The Toronto Diocesan Catholic Women's League wishes to express its gratitude to all councils who contributed to these two scholarships. It is through your continued generosity that these scholarships can be sustained and be provided to deserving young people.

On behalf of the Toronto Diocesan Council, thank you to all parish and regional councils who offered the Youth Awards program in their parishes and regions. Through your efforts you supported and encouraged an awareness and positive attitude towards a broad range of pro-life issues.

Andrea Smart  
Toronto Diocesan Education and Health Chair (2022-2024)

Sub conveners:  
Carolyn Meaney (Mary Matthews Public Speaking, Mary Dobell Prolife Poetry and Essay)  
Catherine von Zuben (St. Michael's Scholarship)