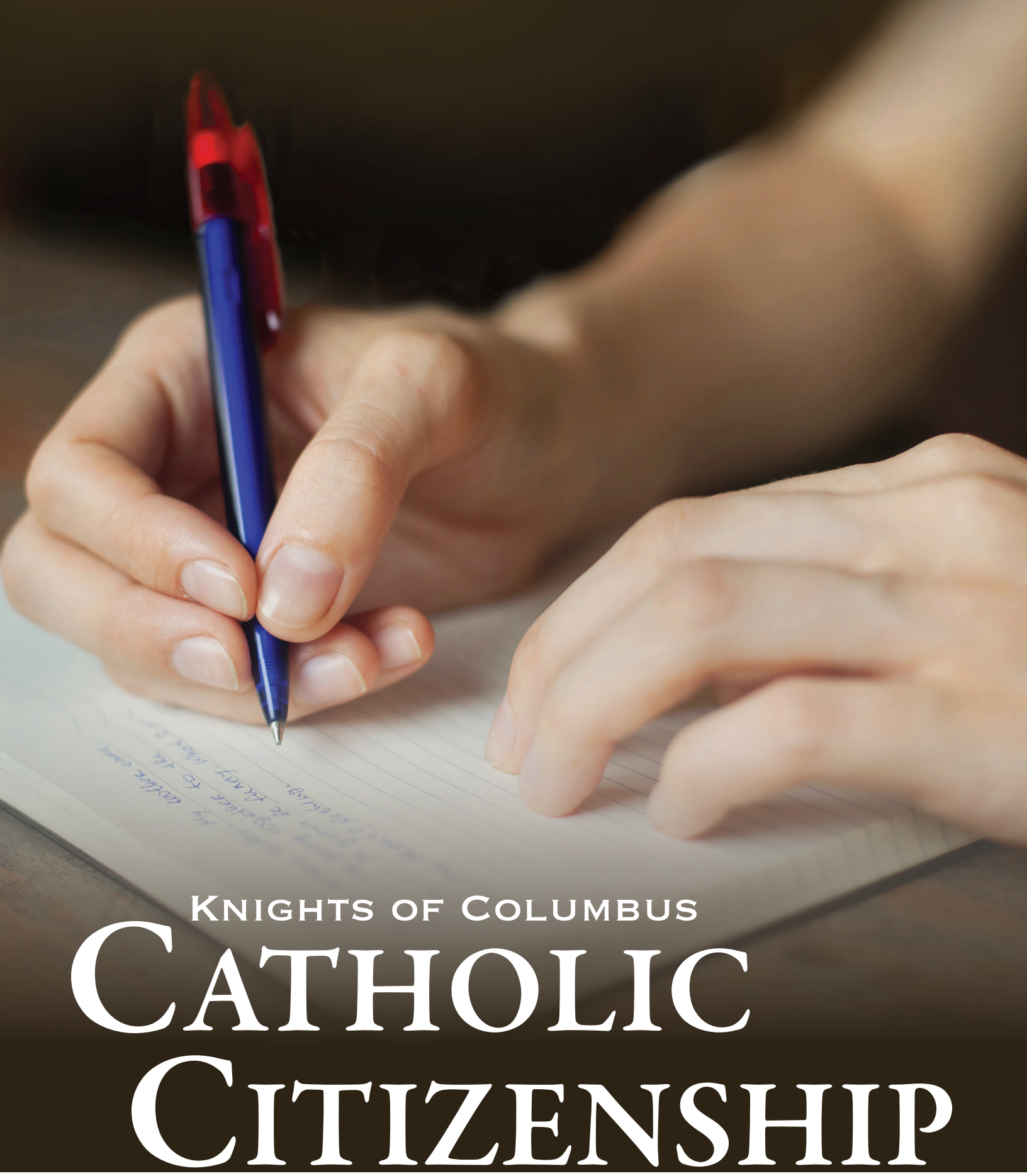

Knights of Columbus

Catholic Citizenship

Essay Contest

Faith in Action

Community

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Conducting a Contest

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Put your Faith into Action

Energize the youth in your community to become active citizens grounded in their faith. This meaningful essay contest also builds toward the Community program requirement for the Columbian and Star Council Awards.

5 Easy Steps

Step 1: Organize Your Contest

The council's community chairman, in consultation with the grand knight, should select a team that will administer the contest. This team will be involved in all phases of the contest: organization, publicity, judging, prizes, etc. The council should be ready to go at the start of the school year, so the participants can meet district and state judging deadlines. Find the current theme at www.kofc.org/essay.

Step 2: Contact Local Schools

Once the team is in place the next step is to contact schools in your community to publicize your contest. Solicit the support of teachers and administrators; ask them to encourage students to participate. Teachers, school administrators and, most importantly, young people can serve as judges. Each entry must be the work of an individual student; previously submitted entries will not be accepted. Schools can use the contest as a project for English composition classes.

If multiple schools participate, consider conducting preliminary judging with each school submitting its top winners. In this way judges will not be overburdened by the volume of essays, and the judging process will proceed more quickly.

Step 3: Display Promotional Materials

In an effort to attract public and home-schooled students, the poster (#4209) included in the Essay Contest Kit should be displayed prominently in the community. On the poster, indicate the name of the council, the contact person and a telephone number to call for more information. Additional posters are available through Supplies Online, which can be accessed in the Officers Portal.

Step 4: Build Buzz about the Contest

Use the sample press release to announce your contest to local newspapers and radio stations. Also be sure to place the promotional posters in prominent locations around town as noted above.

Step 5: Recognize Participants

Present participation certificates to all who submit entries, and winners certificates to your council's winners. Encourage each school to develop some type of recognition for the winning entries in that particular school.

Goal

The goal of the Catholic Citizenship Essay Contest is to give students an opportunity to define the role of a Catholic citizen in many different scenarios, and to strengthen the bond between the Knights of Columbus and local schools.

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Rules and Guidelines

Eligibility

The Catholic Citizenship Essay Contest is open to all Catholic students — in public, private or parochial schools — in grades 8-12 during the current school year.

Theme

The theme of the Catholic Citizenship Essay Contest will be distributed each fraternal year. The current theme is always at kofc.org/essay and will change every other year.

Contest Levels

Council: The council representative collects finished essays from schools and other participants. They are judged according to the criteria in the "Judging" section. Upon completion, the winning entries for each grade level (five total) should be forwarded to the next level of competition, going to either the district deputy or jurisdiction community chairman depending on the setup in your area.

District: District-level judging is only necessary if more than one council within your district participates in the Catholic Citizenship Essay Contest. Make sure your councils know the deadline so they can schedule their competition accordingly. The district deputy plus one or two other judges should score the essays on the same entry form/score sheet that was used for the council level. Winning entries should be sent to the jurisdiction office for the next level of the contest. Check with your state community chairman for the deadline and forwarding address.

Jurisdiction: All councils and district deputies should be made aware of the deadline for submitting state/province level essay contest entries — put it in your jurisdiction newsletter and on the website. This deadline should be set so that you have enough time to judge essays and submit them to the Supreme Council office before February 15th.

International: The winning essays from jurisdiction level competitions will be judged by a panel of judges. There will be a 1st place and two runner-up winners for each grade level. The state deputies will be notified of any winners from their jurisdiction and will be issued checks and certificates signed by the supreme knight. The state deputy should then contact each winner and present the awards at an appropriate time and place.

Authority

The Catholic Citizenship Essay Contest is sponsored by the Knights of Columbus. The official responsible for the contest is the grand knight who could appoint a member to chair the essay contest for the sponsoring council, or faithful navigator of the sponsoring assembly. Any questions about this program should be directed to the appropriate official or to:

Supreme Council Department of Fraternal Mission
1 Columbus Plaza
New Haven, CT 06510

Guidelines

- Essays must reflect the assigned theme and be the student's original work.
- Essays must be typed and be between 500 and 750 words in length.
- The student's name should appear only on the official Catholic Citizenship Essay Contest entry form, which must be stapled to the essay.
- All entries become the property of the Knights of Columbus and will not be returned.

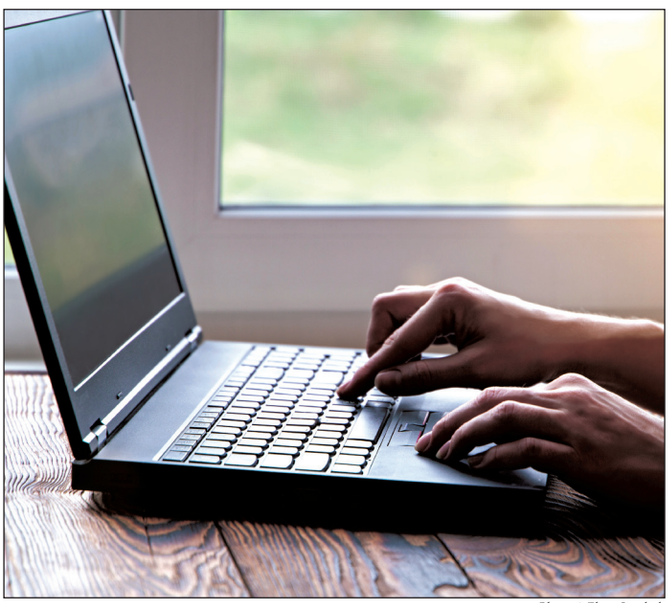


Photo © Elena Sistaliuk

Publicity

Suggested Timetable

Check with your jurisdiction community chairman for specific dates in your area.

- **July/August:** Council, assemblies order Catholic Essay Contest Kits through Supplies Online, which can be accessed in the Officers Portal, and contact schools to obtain cooperation. At this time, the due date and means of recognizing winners should be determined.
- **September:** Students write essay.
- **October:** Judges review essay for council level.
- **November/December:** Judges review essay at the district and jurisdiction level.
- **January:** Jurisdiction judging. Essays due to the Supreme Council for international judging by January 31. Jurisdiction winners should be recognized at the jurisdiction convention or another jurisdiction event.
- **March:** International Essay Contest winners announced by the Supreme Council office.

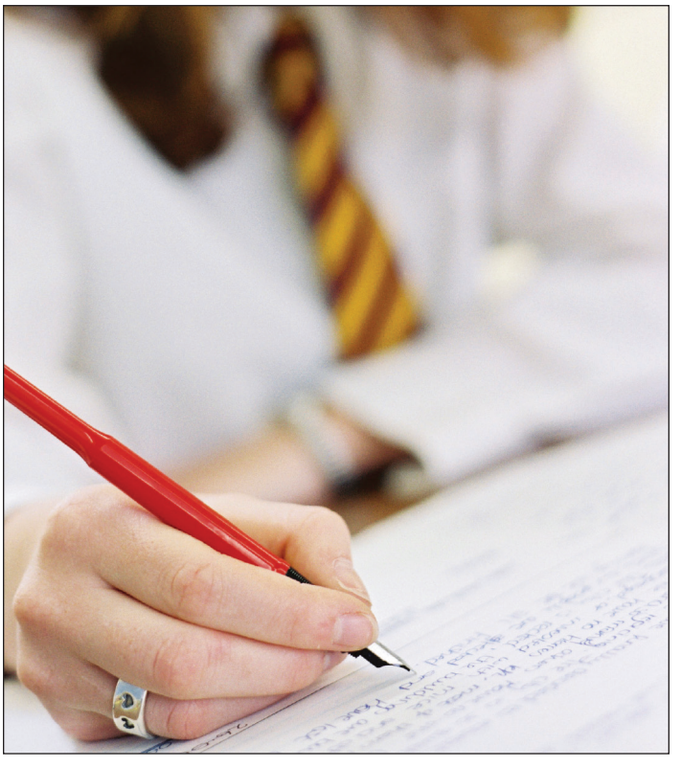


Photo © Christopher Futcher

Publicizing Your Event

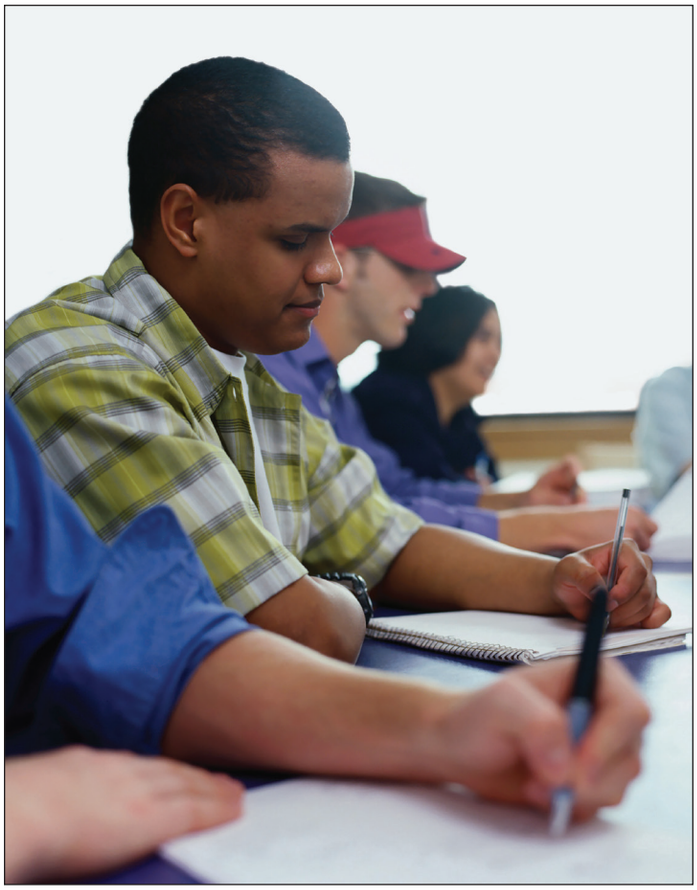
One of the best ways to make sure your essay contest is a success is to publicize it. The program must always be referred to as the **Knights of Columbus Catholic Citizenship Essay Contest.**

After setting the dates, use the sample press release to announce the contest. Announce the contest in local newspapers, including both local secular and diocesan ones. Retype it, double-spaced, on council letterhead, filling in the necessary information by listing the who, what, when and where of your council's scheduled essay contest. Make sure to include the name and phone number of a contact person.

Ask newspaper and parish bulletin editors to publish a reminder close to the date of the contest or to list it in the community or weekend calendars. Talk with assignment editors and suggest the contest as a great opportunity for a feature story. Make arrangements for a story about your winners. Personally deliver or send their names, ages and stories, along with some clipart emblems (available online at www.kofc.org/clipart), to the editors. You may also want to include photos of the winning contestants.

If you have not contacted local schools in the area, now is the time to ask them about the possibility of having the contest incorporated into their curriculum for the school year. Work with local parishes to have the Essay Contest announced alongside their scholarship programs. Contact local office supply stores to see if they may donate some supplies or are willing to print the students' essays for them.

Judging and Awards



Judging

Judges (three or more) will be selected by the sponsoring Knights of Columbus council, assembly or circle. Council and/or assembly members, teachers, clergy, civil officials and/or members of the community may serve as judges.

Essays will be judged on a 100-point scoring system:

35 points: Content
How clearly is the theme presented?

30 points: Grammar
Does the essay reflect proper sentence and paragraph structure and utilize correct spelling?

35 points: Style
Does the essay show creativity, imagination and development of the topic in a compelling style?

All scores should be recorded on the entry form/score sheet.

Awards

Following are suggested prizes to be awarded at the different levels of the Knights of Columbus Essay Contest. They are not mandatory. You may design your own awards for the contest (such as scholarships, gift certificates, plaques, certificates, trophies, etc.). Certificates for winning essays and certificates of participation for all entrants, will be included in the essay contest kit. Additional certificates are available through Supplies Online, which can be accessed in the Officers Portal.

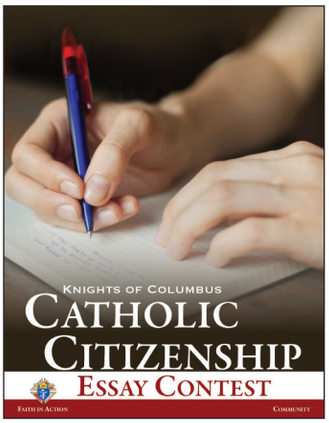
It is recommended that councils consider monetary awards ($25-$50) in the form of gift certificates or cash to first place winners. Councils should also work with individual schools to develop awards for the best entries in that school. It is also recommended that a special certificate or plaque be given to the school of the champion in each grade. The school could then display the award in its trophy case or other prominent location in the school. Higher levels of competition may call for awards in the range of $50 to $100 in the form of a gift certificate or cash.

The top three international level winners for each grade will receive monetary awards: $300 for 1st place, and $100 each for two runners-up in each grade level. Checks are accompanied by a framed certificate.

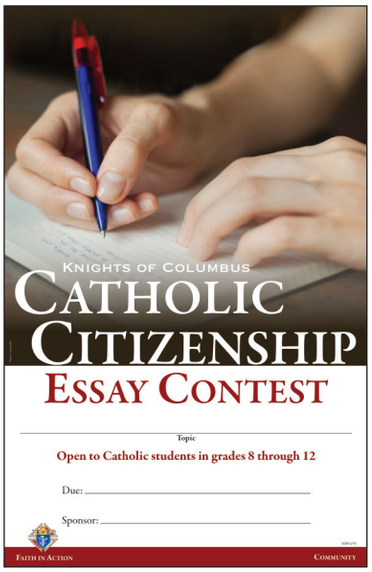
Photo © Jaruek Chairak

Kit Contents

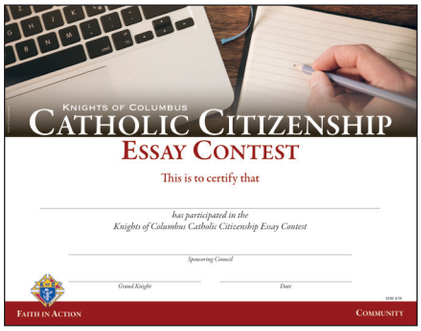
These items can be ordered through Supplies Online, the supply ordering portal available on Officers Online.



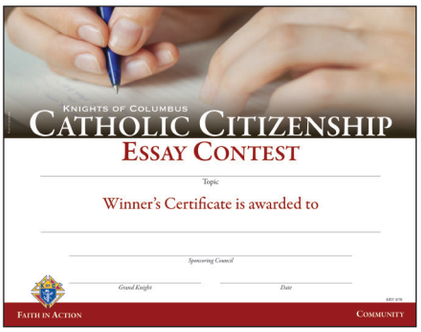
Essay Contest Guide & Resource Book (#4202-EA)



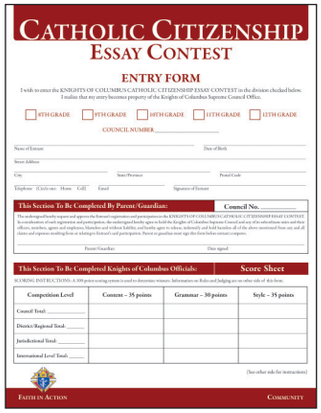
Promotional Poster (#4209)



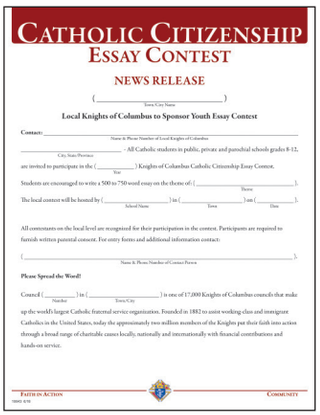
Participation Certificate (#4206)



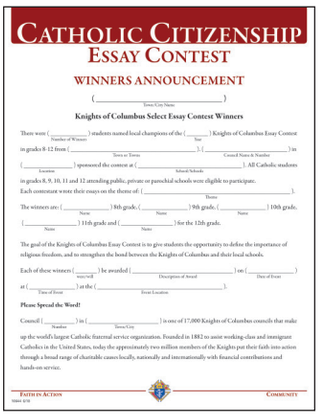
Winner's Certificate (#4207)



Entry Form/Judging Sheet (#4208)



News Release (#10643)



Winners Announcement (#10644)

Entry Form/Judging Sheet #4208

Promotional Poster #4209

Essay Contest Guide & Resource Book #4202-EA

Participation Certificate #4206

Winner's Certificate #4207

News Release #10643

Winners Announcement #10644

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203-752-4270 www.kofc.org

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