



John D. Kelley 2026 Vocations Essay Contest

Sponsored by the Serra Club of Indianapolis

Essay Question:

As our nation marks the 250th anniversary of its founding this year, we also remember the priests and religious who built our parishes, schools, missions, and communities of faith which have strengthened the soul of our nation. As America enters its next chapter, the Church depends on a new generation willing to listen for God's call. What can the story of our past teach the youth in our Church today about their own vocation and their role in the future of the Church? How might God be calling you to make your own contributions?

Procedures:

Eligibility & Sponsors	The Essay Contest is open to all Catholic students in Grades 7 through 12 who live in or attend school within the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. Catechists and religion teachers at each parish or school may sponsor the two (2) essays they consider best for each class within grade 7 and 8. For grades 9-12, two (2) essays per grade level may be sponsored. Home school students may submit essays in conjunction with their parish.
Contest Time Period	The Essay Contest begins with the distribution of these materials. All essays are to be submitted (postmarked) by midnight Friday, March 6, 2026.
Length & Appearance	Essays should be between 300 and 500 words in length and may be typed or hand-written. Hand-written essays should be in black ink (not pencil) and be single-spaced on lined paper.
Prizes & Recognition	All submitted essays will be anonymously read and judged by a Serra Club committee according to a rubric. A winning essay will be selected for each grade level based upon: (1) how well it addresses the topic; (2) originality and content; (3) grammar and readability. A certificate and \$100 prize will be awarded to one student at each grade level for the essay judged to be the best as determined by the judges. Winning essayists will be invited to read their essays at a special Serra recognition luncheon on Tuesday, April 21, 2026, to be held at Fatima Retreat House in Indianapolis. Winning essays will also be published in <i>The Criterion</i> .
Submission	Essays must be submitted (postmarked by midnight) no later than Friday, March 6, 2026. Send essays to: Serra Vocations Essay Contest Office of Vocations Archdiocese of Indianapolis 1400 N. Meridian Indianapolis, IN 46202

Serra is an international organization of lay persons whose mission is to help foster and promote vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Serra's patron is Saint Junipero Serra, the missionary priest who, along with fellow Franciscans established 21 missions in California in the late 1700s. The Serra Club of Indianapolis has supported vocations in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis for sixty-seven years.