

Judge's Comments 2026

HOMESCHOOL

4th Grade: Hailey Stukenborg

"The History of Memphis and the Growth of Catholicism in Memphis"

Hailey wrote an engaging and informative essay about the history of Catholicism in Memphis. She clearly traced the growth of Catholicism over time and highlighted the impact it has had leading up to the present day. Congratulations to Hailey!

5th: Nathaniel Carney

"St. Damien of Molokai"

Nathaniel wrote an interesting and well researched essay about St. Damien of Molokai. The essay illustrated how St. Damien was able to bring the love of Christ to the poor and sick through his work in the leper colonies. This essay is a good introduction into the life of a lesser known saint. Congratulations, Nathaniel!

6th: Saint Richardson

"France from the Stone to the Modern Age"

Saint wrote a thought provoking essay on the Lascaux Cave and Notre Dame Cathedral and explained why he would like to visit them. He vividly illustrated both places and showed how humanity's creativity and pursuit of beauty are reflected in the paintings of the Lascaux Cave and the architecture of Notre Dame Cathedral. Congratulations, Saint!

7/8th Jeannette Sparks

"The Incredible Convert: Olga of Kiev"

Jeannette's essay on St. Olga of Kiev is engrossing. The essay provides a detailed account of a brutal queen whose moral and religious conversion paved the way for the Christianization of Kievan Russia through her grandson St. Vladimir. Great job, Jeannette!

High Maria Pasquale

"The Battle of Midway"

Maria's essay on the Battle of Midway is superb. It is a fascinating, detailed and well-researched commentary on the events and main players of the Battle of Midway in 1942 during World War II. Her essay made a compelling case for why the Battle of Midway was a turning point both in World War II and in world history. A hearty congratulations to Maria!

SCHOOL

4th: Forrest Baker:

"Forrest Hood 'Fob' James Jr."

Forrest Baker wrote an essay about Forrest Hood "Fob" James Jr., a two-time governor of Alabama. The essay is well written and well organized. It tells of his life and career, his success in business and his decision to run for governor. It is interesting, and it shows the author's personal interest in the governor's life. Congratulations to Forrest Baker.

5th: Zelda Williams:

"Good Father Gus"

Congratulations to Zelda Williams who succeeded in writing a captivating essay about the life of the first Black American priest. The essay discusses some of the enormous struggles of Fr. Tolton's life, as well as

his courage and determination. Zelda shows sincerity and expertise in describing the way Ven. Fr. Tolton is an inspiration to others.

6th: Megan Tran:
"Vietnam"

Written in an authentic and personal voice, the entry by Megan Tran about Vietnam is the first place winner. The well-written essay tells of her personal interest for Vietnam and describes two significant places she longs to visit: one historical, and one religious. Congratulations to Megan!

7/8th: Seraphine Alquaddoomi

"When Silence Speaks: The Courage of Sir Thomas More"

Seraphine explores St. Thomas More's famous conflict with King Henry III and his lasting impact using a narrative style that captures the tension of his death. Her essay is an example of how riveting history can be. Congratulations, Seraphine!

Highschool: Helena Frieboes

"The Importance of X-Rays"

Helena expertly traces the invention of the X-ray machine, beginning with Wilhelm Röntgen's research and development and through the impact of this invention in its immediate time period, including its initial uses and the discovery of negative side effects. When looking at contemporary uses, she doesn't limit herself to the medical field but also points out how X-rays are used in multiple contexts as varied as art history and airport security. Congratulations, Helena!