



Office for Ecumenical & Interfaith Relations

Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto

OVERVIEW OF THE FRIARS ESSAY WRITING CONTEST 2026

“Of particular importance in the promoting of a grass roots ecumenism is the connection between family, parish, school, different groups, associations.” (Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican: 25 March 1993, §65).

These various dimensions are crystalized in The Friars Writing Contest.

This long-standing tradition in the Archdiocese of Toronto is part of the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The Office for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations organizes and promotes this event in the Catholic high schools throughout the Archdiocese of Toronto in partnership the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement who supply funding for prizes with *The Catholic Register* who collaborate to advertise, select, and publish the essays of the finalists.

Hightschool students throughout the Archdiocese of Toronto are encouraged by their pastors, school boards, principals, department heads and religion teachers, as well as chaplains to explore a focus question that expresses the theme of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Many schools incorporate this initiative into their religion curriculum.

From this year’s theme, “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling” (Ephesians 4:4), students were invited to reflect and describe how you are growing in knowledge of Christ and how it inspires and shapes their thoughts, relationships, and outreach. They were to conclude their essay by composing a prayer to Jesus to help us reach out to those in need as friends and disciples.

From the many fine submissions received, three remarkable essays surfaced as finalists. They were not only well written but also creative in employing evocative images and symbols that explore the gift and task of Christian unity willed by Jesus for the Church. Above all, they give personal testimony to the students’ living and growing faith, especially in the many groups to which they belong and serve, albeit their parishes, schools, and outreach to society.

It is edifying to read how our Catholic faith received through the ages is being passed on and flourishing among our youth through their parents and friends as well as the ministry of pastors and educators today!



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An awards ceremony to honour the accomplishment of these students is planned for Sunday February 22, 2026, at the conclusion of the 11.00 am Mass at St. Mary's Church, Brampton.

Schools, especially in “religious teaching should aim in their own way to train hearts and minds in human and religious values, educating for dialogue, for peace and for personal relationships.” (Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican: 25 March 1993, §68).

First Place

Robert Rodriguez

Cardinal Léger Catholic Secondary School, Brampton

Title of Essay “Plank of One Bridge: Growing into the Full Stature of Christ”

Second Place

Emily Rocillo

St. Brother André Catholic High School, Markham

Title of Essay: “Becoming ‘Little Christs’: Following the Christian Calling to Imitate Jesus”

Third Place

Daniela Meglio

St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic High School, Aurora

Title of Essay: “Growing in the Knowledge of Christ”

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February 12, 2026*