

**John Carroll Society
Margaret Mary Missar Essay Competition 2018**

THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH WILL BE SHAPED BY ITS SAINTS

Throughout its history the Church has been led by visionary and faith filled women and men who have served as prophetic witnesses to the challenges of their times. Often, these challenges were in response to the injustices of a civil culture that exploited its members. But challenges also came from within when the teachings of the Church were not being lived with authenticity. In each of these situations, reform and transformation came from “saints,” individuals committed to Gospel values and to the action necessary to implement real change.

Pope Benedict XVI addresses this when he writes that “the future of the Church, once again and always, will be reshaped by saints, by women and men whose minds probe deeper than the slogans of the day and who see more than others see because their lives embrace a wider reality.” The saints that Pope Benedict refers to are both capital “S” saints, those recognized by the Church for their sanctity and sacrifice as well as small “s” saints, members of the faithful Church whose lives of inspiration had a profound effect on their times.

This year’s Margaret Mary Missar Essay Competition, sponsored by The John Carroll Society, invites students to reflect on the topic “The Future of the Church Will Be Shaped By Its Saints” and to consider the following questions and themes in their response.

1. Research and reflect on a saint or saints (both capital and small “s” saints) who have had a considerable impact on the Church, especially those who sought to reform the prevailing practices of their time (examples would include St. Francis of Assisi, Dorothy Day, St. Catherine of Siena, among so many others) as well as others who changed their communities with their commitment to social justice (the recently canonized St. Oscar Romero, Fr. Horace McKenna, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and St. Katherine Drexel to name just a few). Describe their life/lives and the way they responded to the injustices of their community and time. How can the faithful be inspired and informed by these legacies to help address the challenges in our Church today?
2. Consider the statement that “we are called to be saints” and the fact that many of those who have been most heroic in the way they lived their faith were not much older than you are today. The final document of the recently completed 2018 Synod of Bishops concludes with these lines: “Through the holiness of the young, the Church can renew her spiritual ardor and her apostolic vigor. The holiness of the young can heal the wounds of the Church and the world...these young saints urge us to return to our first love,” a fullness of faith. How can you use this quote as motivation/inspiration as you confront the social injustices in our society and challenges to our faith? Who are the personal “saints” in your lives; parents, teachers, mentors or friends who are instrumental in helping you live a life rooted in the Gospel?

All essays will be evaluated on their creativity, thoughtfulness, grammar and appropriate writing style. Please consult the accompanying competition instructions for additional requirements.