

John Carroll Society
Margaret Mary Missar Essay Competition 2020
December 2019

FINDING HOPE AND CONTEMPLATION IN OUR MODERN WORLD

As people of faith, we strive to find opportunities to grow in holiness by prayerfully engaging with the world around us, serving the poor and vulnerable, and dreaming of a future that is rooted in Gospel values. In order for this future to become a reality, the Catholic community seeks to provide young people with an environment where they can contemplate, discern, imagine, innovate, create, and act in ways that inspire others --- to answer the call to actively serve as signs of hope and beacons of faith to the world. The modern world presents both opportunities and obstacles for its future leaders to respond to the needs of the world around them and to inspire others.

This year's Margaret Mary Missar Essay Competition, sponsored by The John Carroll Society, invites students to reflect on the topic "Finding Hope and Contemplation in Our Modern World," and to consider the following questions and themes in their response.

1. In an article published online on June 16, 2019, the *Catholic News Agency* reported Pope Francis saying, "[Hope] does not expire, because it is based on the fidelity of God. The hope of the Spirit is not even optimism. Born deeper, it rekindles at the bottom of the heart the certainty of being precious because loved." How do you define hope? What are daily signs of hope that inspire you as an active member of your parish or school, as a citizen of the United States, or as a member of the global society? How can this sense of hope be cultivated in Catholic schools, in the Archdiocese of Washington, and in the world?
2. In 1806, Archbishop John Carroll initiated the construction of the first Roman Catholic cathedral in the United States. Today it is called the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary and it is located in Baltimore. It was designed by Benjamin Henry Latrobe, the architect of the United States Capitol. Sacred space holds great meaning and significance for communities, families, and generations of people. This was evidenced in April 2019 when so many people across the globe watched in horror as Notre-Dame in Paris raged with fire. Write about a religious structure or a space you consider to be sacred. What are the unique characteristics of the space? What makes the space sacred to you? In our contemporary world, what value do you find in having sacred spaces that are designed for prayer, contemplation, and worship?
3. Our world is connected through social media and technology in unprecedented ways. What is your view on technology and its impact on the spiritual and interior life? How is

technology either enhancing or detracting from your faith life or the faith communities that you witness? Does it matter?

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