

Listed here are excerpts from 16 of the top 20 Essays from the Pro-Life Essay Banquet. The students name and school are listed under each excerpt.

The Good Samaritan helped the traveler when no one else would. He demonstrated kindness, respect, and mercy – all of the traits God wants us to show. No matter what the injured traveler’s religion, culture, or appearance, the Good Samaritan still helped him. He shows us that we should always help a neighbor in need, and that we should respect everyone as if they were our family. The Catechism of the Catholic Church supports this saying, “created in the image of the one God and equally endowed with rational souls, all men have the same nature and the same origin...All therefore enjoy an equal dignity.” It is wrong to reject help to someone based on their race and religion, so Jesus wants us to follow in the footsteps of the Good Samaritan.

COLIN MCLAGAN – VILLA MADONNA

Many grandchildren are close to their grandparents, but mine are the only caregivers I have ever known. My grandparents could have chosen to not take me in. I was not their baby and they did not have a strong bond with my mom or dad. Yet, they showed compassion, mercy and love to an infant in need of a family.

There is a song called “Hey You” by Pink Floyd. A lyric in this song describes my grandpa and how cancer has affected his life. Every time I hear this song, it makes me think about all the good times my grandpa and I shared. It makes me think of a man who lived every day like the Good Samaritan. He showed compassion unconditional love, and mercy to an injured traveler; a child who needed someone to pick her up from the road and care for her.

EMMY OSBURG - ST. THERESE

“God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them.” Genesis 1:27 All who are created in God’s image must be treated as one. A fetus in the mother’s womb is given the exact same equal rights to live and grow. The ethnicity differences between people are not different, but equal in God’s image. The sons and daughters of Christ are one in the Catholic Church. When God created the heavens and the earth He did not state specifically who He would rise up to Heaven. God came to save us all because His love is shared among His sons and daughters. Those humans that are aborted do not have the power to fight back for life, though they’re granted equal rights to live like others. An unborn child is living, even if it is put through abortion. Do not be ashamed of who you are, be proud of the art God has created.

JANET CRUZ MARY QUEEN OF HEAVEN

Almost 90% of the women who find out their child has Down's syndrome choose to abort. Do they choose to abort because they don't want their child to be "different"? Or is it because they don't want the sacrifice that comes with it?

My cousin Ben was born with Down's syndrome. He may look a little different and he may talk a little different, but he plays like us, laughs like us, and is happy like us. Ben is part of my family and I can't imagine life without him. When we are faced with these decisions whether to take the life of an unborn baby, or to accept them as who they are, we should think about the story of the Good Samaritan. Would you just pass by and let the beaten man die, or would you show love and mercy, like the Samaritan?

GWYNETH THOMAS - ST. AGNES

God created everyone in his image with love and mercy including all those with disabilities. In Luke 14: verses 12-13 Jesus tells us about including those with disabilities when he says; "when you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind." This tells us how God loves us all and we need to include those with disabilities who may be having a really tough time and could really use some kindness to be shown towards them. Many people avoid those with disabilities because they think they are weird or different, but God wants us as Christians to be a friend to every person in need. We all need to remember that everyone can make a difference in the world, no matter who they are.

ALEC PARNITZKE - ST. HENRY

Imagine if during Jesus' time they had TV. How would the story of the Good Samaritan play out? Would it be a story of an injured man who was beaten and left for dead? Or, would it be a story of a man who showed mercy and compassion for an injured traveler?

In our world today we hear stories of people being unkind to one another, stories of not respecting other's lives. Sometimes, though rare, we hear stories of people showing kindness and mercy. We hear of people accusing police officers of unjustified shootings due to the color of someone's skin, we hear of adults harming innocent children; but, every once in a while, we hear a good story. We hear of the man who risked his own life to save another from a burning car. We hear of the woman who gave her kidney to her brother. Our world today has such negativity. But, if you look and listen closely enough, you will see the good.

EMMA MALLERY - ST. THERESE

Life shouldn't end for the convenience or will of a person. Even though someone may want to die, that person was born with certain rights, and those are stated in the Declaration of Independence. This means that all people have the natural right of life. God didn't intend for people to end their life because they didn't want suffering.

It is no one's right to end a life due to inconvenience. Everyone needs to stand up just like Jesus did and say, "Father, not my will but Yours be done." During my mom's pregnancy, the doctors found a hygroma on my neck, swelling on my extremities, and blood tests were abnormal as well. This led the doctors to discover that I had Turner Syndrome. My mom was given the opportunity to abort me since there were abnormalities. She chose life and chose to keep me. Even though I may struggle with things and don't have all of the chromosomes that everyone else does, I am happy that she kept me. I live the best life I can, and maintain a positive outlook on the life that God has given me.

JENNA PLANEAUX - ST. JOSEPH, COLD SPRING

I know a lot about the effects of little things on people's lives. I was a tiny baby who was able to make a big difference. I am adopted. Both of my mother's chose life. My birth mom chose life by not having an abortion, loving me, and making an adoption plan for me. My adoptive mom chose life by adopting me, supporting me with each small step along my way and loving me.

There is so much hate going around the world right now, and a lot of people aren't choosing to respect life and follow the message of the Good Samaritan. Some people are frustrated because they want to save the whole world at once. We need to focus on the little things and change our corner of the world. Beautiful acts of kindness will find a way to spread to every town and village throughout the world.

NICK BOERGER- HOLY CROSS ELEMENTARY

When you receive a gift, do you say thank you and appreciate what you have been given, or do you reject it and hope for something different? God has given us the amazing gift of life. Each of us has many talents, and though they seem small, the gift of life allows us to do small deeds with great love for God. How is someone supposed to respond to God's calling if they never get the chance?

As Catholics, we are called to show mercy and compassion to those in need. In this year of mercy, Pope Francis asked us to be a Good Samaritan to all those that need our love and forgiveness. Each of us can be a Good Samaritan in our own way. You often read of people acting like the Good Samaritan in the bible, many doing extraordinary deeds. However, you do not need to save the world. We can follow our beliefs and practice our Christian faith. A way I can show mercy and be a Good Samaritan is to forgive others and not judge them by their past.

MORGAN FLANAGAN - ST. PAUL

Adoption can have so many impacts on our lives. My cousins, Maddie and Nate's presence has left such an impact on our family. To me, it symbolizes that every single person is a part of the family of God. During a situation like this, the story of the Good Samaritan comes into play. The mothers had the ability to have an abortion and focus solely on themselves, just like the people passing the helpless man; instead, the mothers were selfless and focused on the needs of their unborn child, just like the Good Samaritan who went out of his way to help the weak man regain his strength, both physically and emotionally. Welcoming Maddie and Nate into my family reminds me that as a Catholic, we need to embrace every child, born and unborn, and respect their right to life because each child is a part of God's family.

EMMA SUMME – BLESSED SACRAMENT

God gave us the incredible gift to feel and experience the world around us. We long to be near each other and connect, but many people are often forgotten by society. The elderly, for example, are sometimes put in nursing homes and forgotten. That is why it is our job as Christians to be the Good Samaritan and help them. The elderly are people too, and they have so much wisdom to share with us. Unborn children like the elderly, are sometimes forgotten and not valued. At 20 weeks of age, an unborn baby has a higher amount of pain receptors than an adult. They can feel. It's no mystery that abortion is a painful process for the unborn baby. Like an unborn baby, disabled and autistic children are often forgotten because they seem "weird" or "embarrassing". Since they can't communicate the way other people do. But if you take a moment to get to know them as a person, you'll learn what amazing people they are. Often the people who aren't heard have very interesting things to share with the world.

MOLLY MARTINI – ST. HENRY

"How can there be too many children: that is like saying there are too many flowers" said Mother Teresa. Every abortion is taking away an innocent, helpless baby from this world. There is no undoing what has been done, no changing the outcome, and there is no way to get that life back.

"It is not my heavenly Father's will that even one of these souls should perish." (Matthew 18 verse 14). This is so undeniable, God created each and every one of us. Having a life is great even if it is hard or not financially stable. Even if we don't know our biological parents and are adopted by a loving family it is better than no life and everyone should have a right to life.

HOLLY BURWIG – ST. MARY'S

The parable of the Good Samaritan is frequently discussed concerning the treatment of other people since Jesus illustrates that everyone is our neighbor. Yet, a deeper look shows just how all-encompassing God's mercy is, how it is offered to each of us. In the parable, Jesus tells us whom we should care for and love. He shows us the answer through a Samaritan, generally despised by Jews. "But a Samaritan traveler who came on him was moved with compassion when he saw him" The person thought to be the enemy shows more mercy to the beaten man than those from whom mercy was expected. Jesus shows that not only is every life to be glorified as if it were our own life, but he also shows that even those we think are against us can be used by God as instruments of good. We must take the lessons of this parable and expand on them. This means we must shine mercy on each other as well as those we think are opposed to protecting our brothers and sisters because, just like the beaten man, we never know when or from whom love will come.

DOMINIC MARTIN - VILLA MADONNA ACADEMY

Abortion has robbed millions of children of their opportunities to feel emotion, change the world, love and beloved, and live. Abortion also does not allow a mother to grow as a person or grow closer to God through her struggles. According to saint mother Teresa "...every abortion is the denial of receiving Jesus, the neglect of receiving Jesus." Mothers may also suffer physical and psychological damage during or after the procedure. Like the Good Samaritan from the bible, by aiding these women through organizations like Project Rachel, which offer emotional and financial support, we can save the child as well as the mother. Around 3,000 babies are murdered every day. Don't they deserve the chance to live, just as you and I do?

ABBIE COKER – ST. JOSEPH, CRESCENT SPRINGS

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, we are taught to help our neighbor. Everyone has a duty and moral obligation to help those who are being persecuted, just as the Good Samaritan helped the injured traveler. God wants us to help the innocent and those in need of help. As long as abortion is legal, we have a moral obligation to fight to stop it and save the life of millions of unborn babies. Not only can we work to advocate for the importance of laws that are pro-life, but we can also show our respect for all life in our day-to-day interactions with others. Just as we are equally loved by God, we likewise should equally love all forms of life. Maybe, just maybe, we can help change the course of the future for millions of others.

TREY GRONOTTE – ST. PIUS X

“Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man will his blood be shed.” This quote describes God’s feelings about Cain murdering his brother, Abel. The quote also says, “For God made man in his own image.” Abortion truly embodies this quote because God never willed for a baby to be aborted because he made man in his own image. Today’s society has too many excuses. Like the parable of the Good Samaritan, the priest and the Levite had better and more important things to do than to help a poor, beaten, defenseless man on the side of the road. God has taught us to respect all that he has made including the life of all, born or unborn.

WILLIAM VONHANDORF – ST. CECILIA