



FR. PEDRO ARRUPE, SJ WRITING CHALLENGE

ARRUPE JESUIT HIGH SCHOOL



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Sponsor By: The Zimmerman Family Foundation



What is the Fr. Pedro Arrupe, SJ Writing Challenge?

The Fr. Pedro Arrupe, SJ Writing Challenge is an opportunity for students to express in writing what principle or personal ethic is a driving factor in their lives.

It is meant to publicly recognize young people who reflect upon and write about their personal beliefs and values through the lens of their Jesuit Catholic education.

Goals

- Build the Arrupe Jesuit writing community
- Encourage students to explore their Jesuit Catholic identity through self-examination and writing
- Improve narrative writing skills
- Recognize exceptional writers within the Arrupe Jesuit community

Special Thanks

Program Coordinator

John Micich

Thank you to our Volunteer Essay Readers

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Andrea Garcia Fernandez	Florence Navarro	Brian Zweig

PROFILE OF THE ARRUPE JESUIT GRADUATE AT GRADUATION

INTELLECTUALLY COMPETENT

Constantly thinking across multiple disciplines and cultures, always maintaining a deep respect for wisdom and truth.

OPEN TO GROWTH

Seeking out new challenges and opportunities to enrich her/his experience or perspective, be it religiously, socially, culturally, emotionally, or intellectually.

COMMITTED TO JUSTICE

Working for and with the impoverished, the unfairly treated, and those who are without representation.

LOVING

Recognizing that respect, trust, and fidelity are the basis of any loving relationship and that love for God or others, requires giving without asking for anything in return.

RELIGIOUS

Having a sincere and deep sense of God's presence and love in her/his life, ever reliant on prayer and reflection on Christ's example for guidance and development.

WORK EXPERIENCED

Having learned to be a dependable, responsible worker of integrity with high ethical standards.

ESSAY PROMPTS BY GRADE LEVEL

NINTH: Loving

Think about times you have experienced love, kindness and generosity. At the time, you may not have recognized God's friendship in these moments. Describe a time when you experienced love in your life and how it impacted you. Reflecting on this experience, how do you recognize this as an act of God's love?

TENTH: Open to Growth

Thinking about your first two years at Arrupe Jesuit, what does it mean to be Open to Growth? How have you embraced this idea so far, and in what ways have you grown as a young person during your time here? Describe a time at Arrupe when you had to be Open to Growth, and describe what you learned from the experience.

ELEVENTH: Intellectually Competent / Religious

Reflecting on your time at Arrupe, what does it mean to be "Intellectually Competent?" How does being Religious fit into being Intellectually Competent? Include an example of a time when you saw the intersection of these two values during your time at Arrupe Jesuit.

TWELFTH: Work Experienced / Intellectually Competent

During your time at Arrupe you've grown into a more Loving, Religious, and Intellectually Competent person who is Open to Growth. In your final year, where does being Committed to Justice fit into your life? How have you seen an interaction between being Committed to Justice and Work Experienced? Describe a time when both of these values overlapped during your time at Arrupe Jesuit.

WINNERS AND PRIZES

1st Place

Anne Zimmerman Scholarship, Macbook Air

Jade Santana Hernandez “In The Valley”

2nd Place

The Zimmerman Family Scholarship, iPad

Danna Mejia “New Encounters Bring In New Light”

3rd Place

The Zimmerman Family Scholarship, Beats Headphones

Lucia Perales “Transferring to Arrupe Jesuit High School”

In the Valley

At Arrupe Jesuit High School, we are challenged to grow in intellectual competence while being religious. This has allowed me to explore the world through different lenses, logical reasoning and Scripture. God has allowed me to view theological, philosophical, and scientific ideas with critical thinking while staying aligned to my Jesus-centric values. I am a product of intellectual competency and religious values, which gives me the opportunity to grow as a person and understand that in each and every situation God's timing is perfect because "there is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens" (Ecclesiastes 3:1, NIV).

The sun was setting, and I was peering out the window, thinking, "What can I write about?" It was the one question that became difficult to answer while I was up at HS², a summer program that was introduced to me by Mr. Machado, my Math Seminar Teacher, during my freshman year. I can say my classes were difficult that summer because they were new, but the most strenuous topic was my second year writing showcase. At that moment, I took a brief pause and remembered the peace I felt during prayer, a time when I would reflect and seek guidance. Remembering Arrupe's daily prayers in class, it was then I decided to let God guide me and write about the difficult year I have had adjusting and comprehending that my uncle is no longer on this earth. Science tells me his cause of death, philosophy tells me we all die at some point, and theology tells me death is a consequence of man's sins.

Logic works in many ways, just like it lets us assign names to days, events to dates, and many other things. On July 2nd, I was in coding class at HS², thinking through problems, finding solutions, and executing them. Yet, logic didn't work with me that day, and none of that happened. As the sun glared down and the leaves were making music, it crept up on me and tied me down in my chair. Surprise! A panic attack. My mind cycled and filed through every emotion and situation, and 9 days flashed through my head. The countdown I didn't even know I started told me 7/11 was coming, an anniversary that wasn't so exciting to celebrate, my uncle's passing.

God is love. God is happiness. God is peace. God is a safe place.

It was on my walk through campus that I found myself thinking of Mr. Medina's Theology class and the reminder to seek out our surroundings because of the peace we find for ourselves. The grass smelled clean, the ponds glistened, and the birds chirped, and God was in every single part of it. God is my best friend and at that moment, I felt the warmest hug that I never knew existed.

Learning to articulate my emotions and words into an understandable paper had many lessons. Where did it flow the most, and where did it need the stops? Yet, I also found what strength in God means.

The perseverance to continue on the path of vulnerability and finish what I started with a newfound understanding. Logic allows us to follow a process, but with God, we have blind faith. These two qualities give me the ability to seek knowledge while finding His purpose for me on this Earth.

Every day, we walk through the valley of shadows, whether it is going from class A to class B, getting up from your bed, or having a tough conversation. Through it all, we are challenged to have an open and willing mind to grow, learn, and understand these unique situations. This allows us to be encouraged in knowing that God has a bigger purpose for our lives. "God's will is not that you'd live in the miracle or misery of yesterday, but that you would bear witness to what He's doing right now in this season" (Joel Osteen, 36). Every day, there are sad and happy moments, and there are times that will be more difficult to move forward, and during these times, it will be hard to explain why we need to move forward. With God's grace, He gives me the opportunity to grow, to learn, and to accept these moments as they are. I am the product of intellectual competency and religious values.

2nd Place

Danna Mejia
Class of 2025

New Encounters Bring In New Light

It was a cold morning in the fall of my junior year, working at Regis University for Corporate Work Study. The campus was quiet, all but the wind and a light mist in the air as I walked toward the Disability and Accessibility office in Clarke Hall. My role, which I had grown to love, was to support students with physical and mental health challenges, ensuring that they had the resources and accommodations necessary to thrive at Regis. As I entered the office, the quiet space felt familiar, just another day of meeting with students and working through their concerns and exams. But that morning, I had a conversation that would shift my understanding of both justice and the power of presence, not knowing how much it would impact me. A student-athlete, who had fractured her back and could no longer compete in the sport that had defined her identity spoke to me about her struggle. She felt this was the only support provided but yet it felt like no one understood the struggle of having to go through her injury alone. She wasn't just grieving her injury; she was mourning the loss of herself. As I listened, I understood something about justice that I had never fully grasped before: justice is not just about fixing what's broken in the body; it's about addressing the whole person: their emotional, mental, and physical well-being.

That conversation was a turning point for me. I began to realize that commitment to justice wasn't just a logical ideal to discuss in a classroom or a lofty goal to aspire. It was a responsibility, something I was already called to act upon in my work at Regis University.

I learned justice isn't just about advocating for physical accommodations or those that are visible to the eye; it's about ensuring that everyone, regardless of their struggles, has the resources, support, and care to bloom into the person they are meant to be. What struck me in that moment while speaking with the student was how often the mental health struggles of athletes, particularly in high-stress environments, go unnoticed. In the competitive world of sports, there's little room for vulnerability, something I would relate to from playing sports at Arrupe. This reality highlighted the intersection of work experience and commitment to justice for me. My role wasn't just to make sure the students had the necessary physical accommodations but to stand in solidarity with them as they navigated the more invisible, yet equally significant, emotional toll of what they were going through.

I realized that work, especially in a role that involves advocating for others, is one of the most substantial ways we can live out justice. My CWSP job allowed me to see that the commitment to justice doesn't always come in grand, sweeping actions seen by everyone. Sometimes, it's found in the simple acts of listening, validating someone's pain, ensuring that their needs are both seen and met. In my case, advocating for this student's mental health, making sure she was connected to the appropriate resources, and encouraging her to voice her needs, were all acts of justice, small but important. The work itself was a powerful demonstration of how a commitment to justice can deeply influence the way we interact with others in everyday settings, something so simple as making a difference.

Looking back on this experience, I see how deeply it shaped the person I am today. Through this interaction, I learned that commitment to justice is not an idle value; it's an active commitment that requires us to be present, to listen, and to respond to those who aren't heard. It's about creating a space where others can be seen for who they truly are, not just for their physical capabilities or outward success. This moment of connection helped me see that true justice involves addressing the whole person: their mental, emotional, and spiritual needs, not just their physical ones. It was a strong realization, one that I have carried with me in all areas of my life, more now as College approaches. Regis University truly guided me to live out the Grad at Grad values as I prepare to leave Arrupe this year. This experience also connects directly to the Jesuit Grad at Grad values, specifically Openness to Growth and Commitment to Justice. The ability to see this student as a whole person and to understand the connection between her struggles with mental health and physical injury was a moment of growth for me. I was forced to open my understanding of what it means to be truly committed to justice. I learned that Openness to Growth requires an openness to seeing things from new perspectives, especially when those perspectives reveal new layers of injustice or hurt that we may not want to accept.

In my aspiration to become a Sports Medicine Physical Therapist, I now understand that my commitment to justice will always require me to look beyond the surface, to understand the complexity of individuals' needs, and to advocate for their well-being, even when those needs are invisible to others. An aspect that, thanks to Arrupe, will drive me to provide the right level of care to my future patients, seeing beyond. I now know that the true meaning of justice is not just about fixing what is seen by the eye and physical; it's about the relationships we build and the dignity we establish in the individuals we encounter every day.

Moving forward, I carry with me the lessons learned from this experience, confident that my work and my life will continue to be shaped by my commitment to justice and my openness to grow in the service of others.

3rd Place

Lucia Perales
Class of 2027

Transferring to Arrupe Jesuit High School

Have you ever felt like everyone who is supposed to believe in you thinks you're a failure? I did not expect to feel this way at a school I was eager to attend. Before transferring to Arrupe, I attended St. John Paul the Great Catholic High School, or JPG. Although I knew nobody there, I recognized it as a great opportunity because of its Classical curriculum, which included classes that caught my attention. Initially, I enjoyed my time there because the classes helped me grow intellectually. However, the treatment I would receive from my classmates and teachers completely deteriorated my confidence. I realized I could find better opportunities elsewhere if I remained open to growth. To be open to growth is to be confident to seek out challenging new opportunities- spiritually or physically. To be open to growth, it is also essential to understand that failure enriches us in many ways. The feeling of failure I experienced at my old high school led me to a great new opportunity that has shaped me into the person I am today.

At first, I enjoyed my experience at JPG because of the curriculum; however, I later felt the environment hurt me more than it enriched me. I was determined to attend this school because I knew it was a great opportunity that my parents were ecstatic about. As I started the school year in the fall of 2023, I learned a lot and enjoyed attending mass daily. My biggest struggle, however, was making friends and pleasing my teachers. In particular, my theology teacher. One day, he gave us an assignment I completed to the best of my ability, and I worked hard on it. As I was presenting to the class, he interrupted my presentation and publicly humiliated my work by saying, "Everyone in this class can do much better work than this." I remember thinking, what could have been so bad about my project? Was I not good enough? This thought swarmed around my brain until I finally acknowledged his wrongfully rude comments and decided to take action. This is where I saw growth in who I am because I had the confidence to confront him about it. I responded effectively by asking him for some constructive criticism, and although he yelled at me, I was proud that I had done something entirely out of character. Usually, I would have just stayed silent, but I grew the confidence to talk to him instead. By recognizing the rude, unfair, and untrue comments the teacher had made of me, I was able to grow in confidence, and I was able to look for a better opportunity elsewhere.

I realized that my environment was harming my person rather than helping me, so I sought the opportunity to transfer schools. It was hard to admit that I needed to transfer because I was so excited to attend this excellent school. I loved my curriculum, but I knew a change was necessary. I told my parents about my negative experiences with multiple teachers and students. Their reaction was as I expected; I was told to deal with my misery. After much, much convincing, I was finally able to persuade them to let me transfer. This new opportunity was challenging because I had to endure many rude comments and cope with stress. However, I didn't let it stop me from doing what I knew was right for me. I remember feeling as if my world was crashing down. I thought I was quitting, but the hope of a better opportunity kept me going. I felt growth within myself because I could be honest about what was good for me. I remember I did not do all this on my own; I had God by my side. I could discern my reasoning for transferring deeply; as I talked to God, he showed me that great opportunities are everywhere. I had grown immensely since middle school because I turned to God and was able to seek new opportunities at Arrupe Jesuit High School.

Transferring to Arrupe Jesuit High School was a remarkable opportunity for growth in who I am socially, emotionally, and intellectually. I was nervous to transfer because I feared people would think I was a failure. However, I realized their opinion didn't matter because God and I knew the valid reason for my decision. On my first day of school, I immediately felt welcomed and supported by all my teachers and classmates. I fit in here, especially when Ms. Britt, my algebra teacher, wrote me a letter saying how much she enjoyed having me in her class. My mental health improved so much, and in that way, I retained the learning in all my classes far better than in my old school. Not only did I enjoy my classes, but I also really enjoyed my job. At my job, I improved my typing and people skills. Reflecting on my journey, I felt like a completely different person. I was full of life and grew mentally, socially, and emotionally. I was so grateful to God for leading me to this opportunity that I became closer to him than ever before. The growth in my faith made me realize I have also grown immensely as a person. I no longer sought validation from others because I knew I could always depend on God to help me pursue the right relationships.

I grew in my ability to discern with God, social encounters, confidence, and intellectual skills by transferring to Arrupe Jesuit High School. I faced my fear of failure and had the confidence to confront my teachers, admit the need for a change, and become a woman who acts in pursuit of the greater glory of God. I am becoming what it means to be "of Arrupe," a woman for others; I finally have the confidence to speak up for myself and discern effectively. I feel incredibly proud of pursuing the challenging journey that led me to the great opportunities at Arrupe. I aim to continue discerning difficult decisions, like my college major, with God as my guide. I know that whatever Major I choose, God is with me along the way, and with Him, I will be able to be a confident woman for others.

Nothing is more practical than
finding God, than
falling in Love
in a quite absolute, final way.
What you are in love with,
what seizes your imagination,
will affect everything.
It will decide
what will get you out of bed in the morning,
what you do with your evenings,
how you spend your weekends,
what you read,
whom you know,
what breaks your heart,
and what amazes you with joy and gratitude.
Fall in Love, stay in love,
and it will decide everything.

Fr. Pedro Arrupe, SJ
(1907 - 1991)