



2023
FR. PEDRO ARRUPE, SJ
WRITING CHALLENGE



SPONSORED 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:

Alex Phuong
Ameeta Scott
Ann Carroll-Butler
CharLee Toth
Cindy Cookinham
Cindy Prado-Gutierrez
Claire DeLine
Delia Greth
Douglas Cisneros
Elizabeth Buckley
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Fran Scannell
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Margaret Tezak
Mary Jo Yantis
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THANK YOU TO OUR STAFF & FACULTY ESSAY READERS:

Addee Phillips
Jillian Salazar
Jillian Sharp
Maggie Shumway
Michael Lovinguth

Nancy Padron
Olivia Britt
Stephan Graham
Kim Smith
Megan Turilli

PROFILE OF THE ARRUPE JESUIT GRADUATE AT GRADUATION

INTELLECTUALLY COMPETENT

Constantly thinking across 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 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: *AWARENESS OF GOOD WILL/KINDNESS/LOVE*

When you reflect on your life so far, think about how you have been impacted by acts of generosity, compassion, care, service and love. At the time, you may not have recognized these acts as God's good will/kindness/love in your life. Describe an event or occasion when you've experienced good will/kindness/love in your life.

TENTH: *DISCOVERY OF SELF*

Based on your first two years at Arrupe Jesuit, how would you define what it means to be a man/woman for others? How have your choices impacted your ability to grow as a young person? Overall, describe how you have personally grown into this definition since coming to Arrupe Jesuit.

ELEVENTH: *CHOICES*

Choose two of the Graduate at Graduation characteristics (Open to Growth, Religious, Intellectually Competent, Loving, Committed to Justice, Work Experienced) to reflect upon, and then explain how you foster those characteristics in the greater community. How do you see yourself using both of these Grad at Grad characteristics to influence your community now, and into the future?

TWELFTH: *CARRYING IT FORWARD*

Look back over your time at Arrupe Jesuit. You've had opportunities to be a man or woman for others; additionally, you've been impacted by men and women for others both within and outside our school community. Now, envision how you will carry forward what you've learned from others and about yourself. How will what you've learned about being a man or woman for others impact how you live your life after Arrupe Jesuit?

WINNERS AND PRIZES

1ST PLACE

Anne Zimmerman Scholarship, Macbook Air
Eliana Ortega, *Class of 2023*

2ND PLACE

The Zimmerman Family Scholarship, iPad
Mariela Garza Cancino, *Class of 2023*

3RD PLACE

The Zimmerman Family Scholarship, Kindle
Jade Santana Hernandez, *Class of 2026*

FINALISTS

Amazon Gift Card

Ashley Guevara, *Class of 2023*
Sebastian Tamariz Bautista, *Class of 2023*
Katie Chiunti, *Class of 2024*
Julia Martinez, *Class of 2024*
Kamila Ruiz, *Class of 2024*
Jesus Diaz, *Class of 2026*
Briana De La Cruz, *Class of 2024*

1ST PLACE

ELIANA ORTEGA
CLASS OF 2023

A Tooth Fairy in the Dark

One never thinks of themselves to be an inspiration for others yet we so easily know who inspires us. Growing up I felt I had no role model or guidance. No ten year old wants to grow up to be the same as those that hurt them. With seemingly no role model I still gave trust when I was always betrayed and I gave love despite the numerous times I felt neglected. My younger self struggled to have hope in people because how can someone have hope that people will help others when no one would help me. I found knocks at my door to be the least helpful.

Hearing knocks at the door scares me. Everyone in my family knew just to open the door because the door is unlocked 80% of the time. Knocking happened when my mom was fighting with a boyfriend. The most memorable knock came from a boyfriend with a restraining order. I hoped the knock was the officer trying to follow up...it wasn't. I rushed my sisters to my mom's room, and they hid under the bed trying to soften their whimpers. I promised them I would return telling them everything would be okay even though I didn't believe it. I walked back to the door and locked it as I heard him knocking on the windows. I moved cautiously back to my sisters, making sure to not be seen through the back door. At that moment, there was a sound of keys, and the doorknob turning as I ran to the room.

"What are you girls doing under there?" my mom asked. Relief flooded through me. Then I saw him behind her. Why had she let him in? Then the arguing began, and I rushed into the living room to see my mom thrown from the front door to the tree stump in the yard. That day he broke my mom's tailbone, which can take up to twelve weeks to heal. He stayed much longer. I learned a lot of anatomy during my mom's abusive relationships. One squeeze of super glue, pressure for thirty seconds, and some tears will mend a split-open scalp. Concealer hides bruises, not just eye bags. Concealer couldn't help the seizures though it seemed to blend what she could remember. Not asking questions can save you from needing concealer. My sisters and I never figured out why she let him in.

Seizures clouded my mom's memory. Though we told her each time what we'd witnessed, she picked the safe route and believed what the boyfriend claimed had happened. The pattern, once established, repeated itself. My sisters and I would ready our bedroom to look at our glow-in-the-dark stars on our ceiling and talk. The stars were crucial because we could fixate on them rather than the yelling and thrown objects in the living room. The stars transported me, as I held my sisters, into a new world where our mom chose us, where she looked at the stars with us. As their tears dried and their sniffles became snores, I tried to think of how to give them this future.

My first thought was money. I need enough to earn enough to live independently, to rely on my own income. I never want to have to stay in a situation only for financial reasons. I realized money alone wouldn't be enough. What we had needed was someone to listen to us and guide us. I knew therefore I needed to pursue a higher education for several reasons:

- I need to put my experiences into perspective
- I need to break out of this toxic cycle. Seeing my older sister fall into the same pattern has been a shock and a heartbreak.
- I have discovered within myself a strong desire to help others, to try and break others out of the patterns that have them ensnared.

With little guidance as to being a woman for others it was always something instilled in me. Even after all the hurt I endured at the hands of others I wanted to extend that hand to help others. This realization revealed itself amongst many on my journey to pursuing a higher education. I realized being a woman for others didn't stop with my sisters and similarly won't stop once I graduate. I had little to no guidance and as life continued I found friends, classmates, teammates, teachers, and cooperate work study partners to nourish my emotional intelligence and intellectual competence.

Life after Arrupe is impacted by my CWSP placement. I aspire to bring my intellectual competence and emotional intelligence into Dentistry. As my pursuit of higher education should not be limited by a financial barrier I believe a prestigious practice should not as well. I dream of providing dental care that was modeled to me at my work-study placement, and I hope to continue to use my commitment to education to achieve this goal. I know the path will be challenging, but I am determined to continue learning, both in traditional higher education environments and from the professionals who are modeling care for their patients and community. Prioritizing my education will continue to remain at the forefront of my dreams, in addition, I hope to remain true to my dream of positively impacting my community. Impacting the community to me will be providing affordable dental care to the underserved community and bringing a prestigious practice that will ensure quality dental care to those who would otherwise not have access. My dream became less about what I could gain, and transformed into what I could give to others.

Attending a Jesuit high school, you hear the daily admonition that our purpose is service. It seems it has taken root in me. I've been a child of chaos and fear. Now I want to be a woman for others and purpose. I have learned from my experiences, which have shaped me but don't define or control me. This does not mean we disregard what we've gone through; instead, we take these experiences and grow. I want to be for others a star, a bright star on the ceiling when the room is dark.

**2ND PLACE MARIELA GARZA CANCINO
CLASS OF 2023**

Looking Back, Moving Forward

I looked up and our eyes met. I saw recognition in her eyes and felt a pit in my stomach. My classmate, a volunteer at Growing Home food pantry, recognized me as I sat in the waiting room with my family, waiting our turn to pick out some food. I felt shame and tried to distract myself with the miscellaneous items in the room, hoping that this was something she would keep to herself. For as

long as I can remember, my family has sought out the aid of food pantries, hopping from one to another in search of adequate aid. It was normal for me but when I started school I noticed that no one else seemed to be in the same situation. I grew embarrassed of the fact that my family needed extra help while others did not. I never mentioned anything and went out of my way to hide that fact, often hiding my own face when I recognized someone I knew. But in this one instance during middle school, my efforts proved useless.

During my freshman year of high school, I was introduced to the idea of being “men and women for others.” The concept of helping others has always appealed to me as giving back to others is one of my goals in life. I know that I would not be where I am today without the help and support of so many people along the way. It is only fair that I try to provide others with the same opportunities that I was awarded. The opportunity to do just this presented itself when the pandemic struck and school days diminished. I suddenly found myself with an abundance of free time. My mom, who continued receiving aid from Growing Home let my brother and myself know that they were searching for volunteers as demand skyrocketed but available help decreased. We decided to take advantage of the fact that we had Fridays off to begin our volunteer work at the same food pantry that gave us aid. I was able to meet with volunteers that had helped out my family and specifically I met Ruby, the then volunteer coordinator who helped my mom. My older brother and I began making food bags and carts to distribute to waiting families. In this way, I grew a new perspective. Standing on the other side, I could more clearly understand the sufferings of others who, although they received the same aid as my family, had very different circumstances. Curiously I also met a volunteer who was the mother of my classmate who I had recognized a year earlier. I learned that they too received aid from the pantry and my previous fears of being judged were unfounded.

To this day I continue offering my time to this organization. I have learned many valuable lessons that will carry on through the rest of my life. Very early on I was introduced to the importance of communication as many of the participants do not know English and are in need of an interpreter. In one instance I witnessed how one lady was trying to communicate with one of the volunteers about whether or not they had eggs available. She was using her hands to attempt to draw a picture but the volunteers were not understanding. She then turned to me and was relieved that I understood her and was able to get the food she needed. Instances like this touched me deeply as I have been witness to how my own parents struggled to navigate life in the U.S. with only a menial understanding of the language.

The most valuable lesson I have learned was problem-solving. I have been the subject of many participant’s discontent where I have been yelled at or demanded of. It was in these often unsettling circumstances where the ability to problem solve was incredibly useful. I credit this not only to the workers at Growing Home but also my experiences at Arrupe Jesuit High School where I was taught to problem-solve in team and individual projects. For example, I learned that when I am overwhelmed, I should not try to tackle issues by myself but seek out help. This is exactly what I did when problems arose in the food pantry. I let go of my own need to be independent and sought out the advice of others so that unpleasant situations could be smoothed over.

I am incredibly grateful for these experiences, the positive and the negative because I know they will translate to my new life outside of Arrupe. I want to carry forward giving up my time for the well-being of those around me as I know how much of an impact that has on families like

mine. As I move on to college I will be able to seek out help and work better in collaboration with my group as I know working in teams brings about amazing results that I cannot bring about by myself. Most importantly to me, I want to use my position as a leader, to make those people seeking my help in the future feel comfortable and unashamed to need assistance so that they never feel the need to hide as I did when I was younger.

I often hear these lessons described to me by professionals who have not only chosen careers in the nonprofit sector but in several other fields dedicated to helping their community, such as optometry. Attending college, an opportunity afforded to me by Arrupe, will help me fulfill my aspirations to continue giving back to my community. In building a career in optometry or possibly a non-profit setting, I know I will be able to leave the world a better place. While not everything will go according to plan along the way, I know my learned experiences will help me be successful, and I will continue to learn and grow to be the best woman for others I can be.

3RD PLACE

JADE SANTANA HERNANDEZ

CLASS OF 2026

More Like Jesus

“By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth” (The English Standard Version, 1 John 3:16-18)

Generosity is represented by acts of kindness, love, compassion, and most importantly, giving freely without an expectation of receiving something in return. To be generous we can give what God gives into the world and make light in the darkness. The simplest acts of generosity may sometimes be overlooked, but to see and experience them shows that there is goodwill, kindness, and love all around us.

Last December at my church, we hosted an event called Operation Christmas Child. People come and get a few shoe boxes and choose the age and gender of the child that will be given this box as a Christmas present. In the boxes, people will fill them with socks, clothes, toys, notebooks, jewelry, toiletries, and one of the most important things that is given, a personal note for the child to let them know they are cared for and loved. Watching people stand in line and sign up to be part of this amazing mission, you can see the room be filled with love and kindness. They are choosing to give to others they don't know without expecting anything in return. There was Good Will all around. While I was volunteering I saw that many boxes were overflowing and were maintained by rubber bands to make sure nothing came out. It was one of those events you see where you can't help smiling. A few months had then passed and during an event, my church showed a video talking about Operation Christmas Child. During the video, I saw a group of kids from Mexico holding those boxes and looking really excited. All of them bounced with the biggest smiles, all in anticipation to open a small shoe

box. Being able to experience the impact my church is making is super amazing to see and it inspires me not only to help my community but those in need.

Operation Christmas Child made a significant impact on the way I can give to others. It was very exciting to be a participant and give to someone I have never met and will never meet. Not knowing how much would fit in the shoebox, I was filled with excitement, happiness, and joy to buy t-shirts, bracelets, hair accessories, toys, and stuffed animals. I was thrilled to know that the child would experience the joy of receiving a shoebox filled with love and kindness. At Arrupe, their goal is to teach us how to be a man and woman for others. They provide us with many opportunities that enable the act of generosity. For example, there is a club called Generals for Justice where they go out and help the community by making sandwiches, helping at local events, and making cards for the elderly. Another way Arrupe helps us enact generosity is by giving us volunteering opportunities such as, helping during mass, helping with report card nights, being involved in small discussions, and offering our time during admission season welcoming incoming freshmen. Being part of Arrupe, I am always learning the importance of Good Will, kindness, and love.

From the beginning of freshman year to now I have seen and learned ways to help by giving my gifts, talents, and time to others. My family, my church, and Arrupe have taught me how there are no limits when giving generously. In these past months I have opened up to volunteering more not only in my church but also in my youth group. In my church I volunteer every Sunday as a greeter. However, it's not just a simple handshake or a small smile, but it's being able to make everyone feel welcomed, loved, and safe. Every Tuesday I also volunteer as a greeter in my youth group. This impacts the new students by being welcomed by one of their peers. At Arrupe I have also opened up to helping my peers with classwork, homework, and being a helping hand. This paves a way to ensure that I am able to show generosity.

Good Will, Kindness, and Love are all around us. It's in the smallest acts of generosity to the biggest. Each with its own impact. Experiencing first hand what God does in our lives is extraordinary. This inspires me to keep spreading the beautiful acts of kindness, love, and generosity, in hope that I, and many others, can be a little more like Jesus.

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)