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# 2018

## FR. PEDRO ARRUPE, SJ

### WRITING CHALLENGE

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SPONSORED BY:  
THE ZIMMERMAN FAMILY FOUNDATION  
& THE JOHN TEMPLETON FOUNDATION

## WHAT IS THE PEDRO ARRUPÉ, SJ WRITING CHALLENGE?

The *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

# THE PEDRO ARRUPE, SJ WRITING CHALLENGE AWARDS BREAKFAST

## BREAKFAST EMCEE

Louie Hotop, SJ

## WELCOME REMARKS

Michael O'Hagan

## PRESENTATION OF FINALIST AWARDS

Nicky Schifano

## PRESENTATION OF WINNERS & READING OF ESSAYS

Kimberly Smith & Rhonda Zimmerman

Student Participants

THANK YOU TO ALL WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED  
TO THIS WRITING CHALLENGE, ESPECIALLY:

### ESSAY READERS

Joe Barrett  
Roger Burch  
Karen Burlage  
Ed Clements  
Ellyn Coughlin  
Walt Coughlin  
Elizabeth DeWaard  
Sammy Eckrich  
Barb Fuchs  
Stephan Graham

Connor Frick  
Estefany Hernandez  
John Micich  
Nancy Padron  
Paul Ritzdorf  
Vianney Rodriguez  
Joe Simon  
Kim Smith  
Margaret Tezak  
Eve Vaccaro  
Eugene Wiggs

### CHALLENGE SPONSOR

The Zimmerman Family Foundation

John Templeton Foundation

## WINNERS AND PRIZES

### 1ST PLACE

*Anne Zimmerman Scholarship*  
Jesus Tiscareño, *Class of 2018*

### 2ND PLACE

*The Zimmerman Family Scholarship*  
Valeria Gomez, *Class of 2018*

### 3RD PLACE

*The Zimmerman Family Scholarship*  
Ana Sophia Aviña, *Class of 2021*

### FINALISTS

Ariana Coria, *Class of 2021*  
Axel Fuentes, *Class of 2021*  
Erika Guardado, *Class of 2021*  
Jennifer Maes, *Class of 2021*  
Waleska Rivera, *Class of 2019*  
Ashley Trujillo, *Class of 2018*  
Anelia Velasquez, *Class of 2018*



# PROFILE OF THE ARRUPPE JESUIT GRADUATE AT GRADUATION

Open to Growth  
Religious  
Intellectually Competent  
Loving  
Committed to Justice  
Work Experienced

## 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? Describe how you have personally grown into this definition since coming to Arrupe Jesuit.

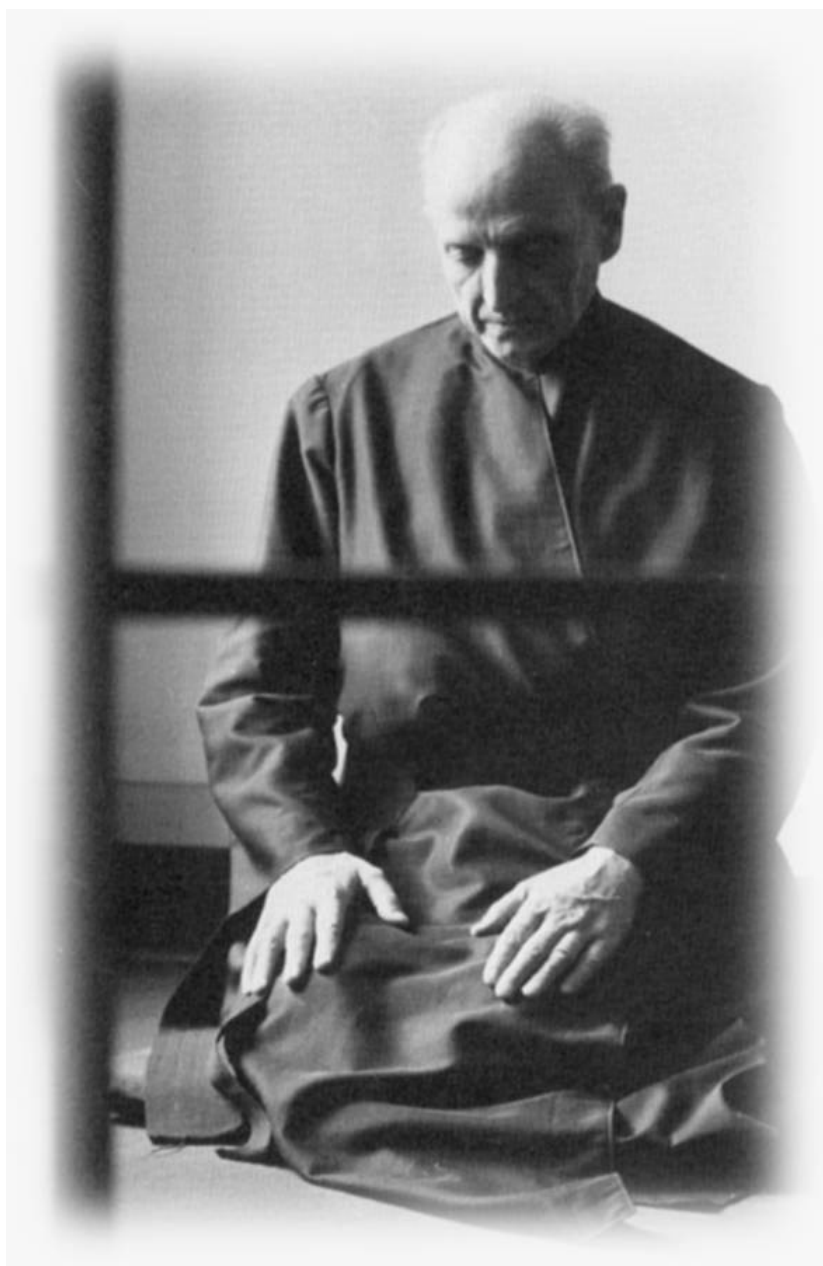
### *ELEVENTH: CHOICES*

While a student at Arrupe Jesuit, there have been moments when you have faced difficult decisions. Describe a situation or event in which you have made a choice that best reflects you as a man or woman for others. If you did not make this kind of choice, what might you have done differently?

### *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?

THE PEDRO ARRUIPE, SJ  
WRITING CHALLENGE  
WINNING ESSAYS



# 1ST PLACE

# JESUS TISCAREÑO CLASS OF 2018

## The Beginning of a Future Platinum Producer

Insert, choose, load, play, and let go. These are the steps I follow when deejaying and performing a set. Music has always ventured with me and I have always been connected with it. Until my performance at homecoming, I did not yet realize that with music, you can enjoy being able to live in the present rather than think about the past and future. My background with music has not always been clear to me, but I knew that music would be my focus for the future. Here at Arrupe, we learn that being men and women for others is a strong trait that every individual should have. I know that being able to participate as the deejay for the school's pep rallies and homecoming has been a great way to demonstrate this lesson. Teachers, who have attended pep rallies for many years, have let me know that ever since I have started to be the school's deejay, the pep rallies have been more enjoyable and entertaining. This has given me great motivation and assurance that my passion is enjoyable for others as well. At homecoming, being able to witness a peer being moved through my music has been a very meaningful experience in my life.

My start with loving music was long ago in elementary, but my turning point toward my mentality of why music is effective changed in middle school. I know I created tracks for enjoyment and to share them with others. I believed that deejaying was just for entertaining crowds and a way to experience your favorite artists perform live. In middle school I went through a hard time, being with unloyal friends that would joke about me and push me to be someone that I knew was not me, nor that I wanted to be. Like a leper in Biblical times, I isolated myself as best I could to keep away, but nothing changed. After the discovery of great deejays like Skrillex and Yellow Claw, I had the feeling of being able to escape these troubles and began to feel confident about my decisions and actions. I was able to survive the rest of the year by joining new groups of people from my class for lunch and for assistance with homework. Music allowed me to step up and take control of my actions and disconnect myself from those who did not appreciate my friendship.

Even at the start of high school, I struggled with the understanding of why music was so effective. It was a thought that rarely crossed my mind until the beginning sophomore year, when I began to produce music. In my studio (my room), I did my best to create a track that made me feel like I was on stage. The feeling of bringing enjoyment to those in the crowds at concerts and those who struggle in school, as I did, is one of the reasons for my passion. It took me four songs to ask myself and wonder: Why is music so enjoyable for me? The answer was clear, but little did I realize that the answer applied to other individuals, as well as myself.

Senior year, I took a month to prepare for homecoming. Then came the day, and I was surprised seeing one of my classmates walk through the door. I knew that this person was having problems outside of school and was struggling with problems that most people ignored on a day to day basis. I went on with homecoming and halfway through the night I saw this person once again, enjoying the dance. My classmate looked as if nothing was going on, as if the problems vanished, as if the worries had just faded. That was my revelation that the ability of being able to use music as a way to live in the present did not just apply to me.

Being a man or woman for others is a trait we wish obtain, but what many people do not understand is that we may be men or women for others and we do not have the slightest clue that we are serving. In performing for homecoming, I realized I was being a man for others because I was assisting someone by playing music and allowing my peer to live life at the moment. This person was most likely not the only one that had problems that night. I was humbled to be ambushed with compliments about my performance and I heard good things about that night. I unknowingly served not only myself, but moreover, peers.

My revelation of music's true capabilities has impacted me greatly and has lead my mindset of performing and producing to change. After graduating and moving on from Arrupe Jesuit, I will continue to perform and produce for the service of others, allowing them to discover music's possibilities. After my experience with homecoming, I came to the realization that the beauty of music's positive effect on my peers is the reason why I am passionate. Money and fame controls the actions of many artists and deejays, but homecoming has shown me that money and fame should never be the reason for my actions in music. I perform and produce for my peers, not for myself and will continue to do so because of this experience. If I ever let money or fame guide my actions, I will be acting for myself, not for the service or enjoyment of others.

2ND PLACE

VALERIA GOMEZ  
CLASS OF 2018

"We must first recognize our own values, because we're the only ones who will devote our entire lives to them." In my junior year, on my Kairos retreat, we were told to "Live the Fourth" from then on, but what we value will determine in what manner we carry out God's unique mission for us. Living the fourth means to carry forward the lessons we discerned on the retreat in accordance with God's mission of service and love throughout the rest of our lives.

Through the short course of my life I have learned about who I am, and who I value. I come from a family with a broken home. I come from a family of six that was born into a three-bedroom, 800-square-foot house. I come from generations of poverty. I come from an immigrant family pursuing the American Dream. I was also born into a family of the most hard-working people I know. I was also born into a family of selfless love. I was also born into a family that goes through hardships, but only gets stronger and more united each time. I was also born into a family that has been knocked down, but perseveres anyway. I was also born into a family that faces negative stereotypes and prejudices poisoned in racism with grace and humility. I am who I am because I am privileged to have people in my family that guide me through the good, the bad, and the great times.

When I got to Arrupe, I knew I was going to be given an education, but I had no idea that that Arrupe was going to offer me the values that have helped me mature and grow beyond my own expectations. These values are the six grad at grad traits, and among them is committed to justice. This year I wasn't sure how I was going to live the fourth, but I thought the senior service project was a good start. I was then assigned to do my service at a non-profit organization called The Growhaus whose mission is that organic food should be a right, not a privilege. They are located in the middle of a 'food desert' community to create the opportunity for low-income families to eat

healthier diets. I am interested in becoming an environmental attorney in the future, which drew me to this great organization. I went in expecting to be a guest in the community, but instead, I became welcomed to be a part of it. I like to joke and say that there I got eight more Latina mothers, because well, that's what it felt like. We were in a very impoverished neighborhood and the predominant culture is the minority of Latinos. I didn't know that I was going to be assisting in leading a cooking class, or participating in a zumba class. I didn't know that there was a youth active class to promote a healthy lifestyle, or a fluffle of newborn bunnies. I knew that the community was very tightly knit and integrated among distinct cultures, which is something that I don't seem to see much of lately. Kindness is something that you are able to perceive the moment you speak to someone, and in the two short weeks that I spent there, I was left astounded by the people who showed me that generosity can lead to an invaluable opportunity to better yourself. I believe that in serving others, it becomes a service to yourself. This comes from Pedro Arrupe's philosophy, "to be men and women for others." I learned that it is immensely rewarding to know that you were able to contribute to those who were doubtful of where their next meal would come from. In making an impact in my community, I found that I received inner fulfillment.

As my senior year at Arrupe Jesuit draws to a close, I am committed to justice by being a woman for and with others, because in serving the people, you serve God. Next year, I will carry forward those same values that Arrupe has taught me at the university I will attend. Anyone can have a strong intellect, or an impressive resume, but not everyone has the character to found a strong ethical base. Later on, I want to serve others through a career in law, and I realize that the right decisions are not always easy, but they are the most worthwhile and will offer me the best recompense which is satisfaction in myself.

The history of my family has shaped who I was, am, and will become, from before I was born. Their decisions, hardships, and successes have guided me and molded my way of thinking. They have taught me the value of persistence and empowered me to chase my dreams. I value the grad at grad traits Arrupe taught to me and the mission of service they introduced to me. I believe in the right to offer equal access to natural food, regardless of socioeconomic background, and I stand for justice. Now I know how I will live the fourth for the rest of my life. I am called to carry forward the responsibility of service of others, and value the smallest gestures of kindness to the grandest expressions of God's love.

3RD PLACE

ANA SOPHIA AVIÑA  
CLASS OF 2021

### What Being Generous Can Do

Why are some of us drawn to be kind and generous when we can instead care for ourselves rather than others? There are many of us that choose to ignore the needs of others. I think it is important for people to be generous for many reasons: it shows that one is not selfish and that they care for others. Acts of kindness reflect God's love because He still gives us aid and hope whether we are

bad or good, he still cares for us. We are drawn to be kind and generous because we do not want to see others suffering or hurting.

A time when I experienced generosity was when many people from my Church made and gathered food to give to the homeless. It was an early Saturday morning, people from my Church had gathered together to let each other know what was going to be done once we arrived downtown. My mom woke me up early in the morning and we went to the store where she bought and prepared food. I still did not know what it was for or where we were going. Then we arrived at the Church which surprised me because it was a Saturday morning. At that time, a good helper and volunteer from my Church came up to my mom and I and he explained what was going to happen and why we were going to do what he had planned. After that everyone got ready and some gave others a ride to minimize the amount of cars being driven. Once we arrived, we placed the food on the tables we had taken out onto the sidewalk. Soon a lot of homeless people came lining up. They had smiles on their faces as they were being treated and cared for.

It brought me joy seeing that spark of hope light up for them. It also brought me sadness knowing and acknowledging their way of life; them having to live out on these streets not knowing what could happen and waiting for another generous act to come their way. I still feel the way I felt when I was experiencing that generous act, the only difference is that now I picture others showing compassion to those in need, and that each day, each generous act, they have more and more hope. This relates to what I have experienced at Arrupe because I am now able to realize and am now open-minded to the great opportunities and experiences that Arrupe has given its students. Being generous is something I want to strive for because ever since I have gone on that trip to downtown, I felt this feeling saying that I am barely starting and I am far from finished. That moment was so meaningful to me because it opened a door that I had never gone through. In other words, I am now open to being kind and generous because I felt joy in seeing the people so happy knowing that others care for them.

That moment of kindness has changed me because I now see an act of kindness as something bigger than just an act. Because of acts of kindness, people are receiving what they need. To me, that is something great and amazing and heartwarming. I think of others, how they might be feeling and what they might be going through. I think of how others need warmth and comfort during such harsh times. It is not just myself anymore, it is the world. I remember riding my bike home from school, and on my way home I saw an elderly man sitting on the sidewalk with ragged clothes, a can in hand, and a teddy bear on his side to give him comfort. At that moment I thought, if I had all the money in the world I would use it to help people like him. I hated to see anybody like that, it tore me apart knowing that all I could do was give him the two dollars that I had in my pocket, and that other people will drive past him as if he did not exist. I gave him the two dollars and he held on to them as if they meant everything in the world. To him, those two dollars meant everything, while others will see those two dollars as less than a hundred dollars. He thanked me so many times my eyes watered from mixed emotions: sadness and joy. It pained me so much that all I could do was say "you're welcome" as many times as he said "thank you." I rode off on my bike always remembering him sitting on the side of the road holding on to those two dollars. After that I still felt empty; I have not done the most I can do, but I am just starting.

When others are in pain, I believe it is a natural response for us to want to help them. When others are suffering, it is easier to walk away than to stay and lend a helping hand. People do not realize the needs of others and therefore the people in need think that they are not cared for and they are less hopeful. Many of us are not aware of what it is like to help somebody, but others cannot



walk by another one of us without helping. This impacts society because it impacts the life of others. It affects their thoughts and it changes their feelings. In the end, people get to choose what they want to do, either to ignore others or care for them .

FINALIST

ARIANA CORIA  
CLASS OF 2021

Picture this: you come across a person in need of help. You comfort them and provide them with the support they need. Just minutes later you can see their frown become a smile and their depressing vibe become a ray of happiness. Generous acts are actions that we take out of the kindness of our hearts to help people we think are in need or simply something we do to give back to our community and loved ones. Being a generous person can be an important part of life because it can help people who are in need of help, physically, and emotionally. Having this characteristic could be life-changing for yourself and for the person you are helping. Acting out of generosity is reflecting the love that God has for us. The Greatest Commandments talk about loving God with all your heart and mind and to treat your neighbors as you would treat yourself. Seeing a simple smile appear in a person's face or receiving a hug from them could turn your whole day around because you would have the satisfaction of making a difference in someone's life. When we think of being kind and generous to someone, we might not think about how much of an impact it can actually have on them; that simple act of kindness can possibly make them rethink their life choices.

I remember asking when I was in 7th grade if there was any possibility of me helping out the elementary schoolers in my last 30 minutes of my 6th period and they said yes. My first day going to help in the classroom the teacher introduced me. I stared at the class and told them my grade, how old I was and how excited I was to get the chance to work with them. As I looked at every single little kid in the room, I saw their hopeful and happy faces; seeing all these beautiful 5-6 year old children warmed my heart. There was one kid in particular who drew my attention. I remember perfectly. His name was Andrew and he sat by himself all the way in the back. I asked the teacher why he was there and she told me he was not the best behaved in the class. I felt like I could relate to this little boy because at the time I was struggling a little with behavior as well. I wanted to help this boy and prevent him from making future choices that he would regret. I would go play with all the little children during their break and hand out snacks. I can remember playing Go Fish and seeing their adorable smile and hearing their cheerful laugh fill the room. For a lot of people their happiness relies on electronics or something else, but at that moment all my happiness came from hearing these kids' laughter. I saw the little boy, Andrew, in the corner. He was alone, sad, and bored. Everyday I was able to go volunteer at the elementary school I would go check in on him and ask how he was doing. I would talk to him and explain that the behavior he is putting out there was not going to get him anywhere. When he would throw a tantrum or get mad and interrupt the class, I would pull him to the side and try to calm him down. Throughout the months I did, in fact, see an improvement because his outbursts in class and his rude responses came to an end. He would go

and try to socialize with his classmates and from all this you could see a smile grow on his little face.

Seeing this little boy improve his behavior and turn his life around made me overjoyed. Knowing that I had a small part in that change made me open my mind up and realize that if a little boy had the strength to change why could not I. From that moment on I had improved my behavior and gotten my grades up. It made me so happy to know that I was able to help a little boy be happy. I felt a warmth rushing through me and a smile start to form on my face. Even though it was not a tremendous act of kindness it made a significant difference in that boy's life as well as my own. To this day, when I look back I can feel the same warmth in my heart and that same smile forming. Regardless of how long ago this was, it makes me feel like a better person because I had the opportunity to make a change in someone's life and still get to help and play with the little ones.

Going back and remembering the times that I visited and volunteered at the elementary school make me realize that from that moment forward I have become a more helpful person. Also, I have noticed that I cannot stand seeing people sad or alone. I am always wanting to help others and I feel like I have become more outgoing when it comes to making others happy. Experiencing that moment of change with the little boy has impacted my life because it had made me realize that even a small gesture could turn someone's life around for the better. It made me want to help others more when they are not at their brightest. Coming and becoming a student at Arrupe has helped me become more accountable, social, and it has helped me build a better work ethic. Throughout my time at Arrupe I feel like I have grown and matured into the person that I have strived to be. Along with building good character I have also developed incredible friendships. These friendships have taught me to have more compassion and patience which has helped me when helping others. Having compassion has also driven me to help others. When seeing my friends or others in pain it is that compassion in me that drives me to immediately try to help them in any way possible.

Big or small, a simple act of generosity can cause an enormous change in someone's life or even your own. By being generous we are living God's greatest commandments. We are being imitators of God by showing the love and kindness that He would show to us. When I would go and help the little boy control his temper and make friends, I never did it because I thought or expected to get something in return. On the contrary, I did it because I saw a sad and lonely boy who needed help. When we show generosity and kindness towards others we are helping them, however, we are also helping ourselves build good character. By acting off of generosity we can slowly start to change our society. By doing something kind, we can encourage people to do the same and our generous acts can continue to multiply and spread. It is important to do good things for others and think of others, but do not go acting on generosity just because of that, do it for yourself as well because you can learn more about yourself through the service of others.



# FINALIST

# AXEL FUENTES CLASS OF 2021

Why does Generosity even matter today? Why would someone even think about showing generosity if they don't gain anything? Generosity is meant to make a person feel joyous. Being generous is the most difficult but best rewarding job someone can do, even if you do not get paid or noticed for it. Generosity can be shown in different ways as small as giving money to a homeless man or helping build a water well in South Sudan.

My dad is the most generous person that I know. My father grew up with absolutely nothing but he was ambitious enough to create his own engineering/electronics company in Mexico from the ground up. However, my father gave it all up for my family and me. Mexico was a very dangerous place when my family lived there even though they had everything that they ever needed with my dad having his own company. He brought more than enough money to the family to keep themselves living a really good life. My father decided to move his family to the United States, even though he knew he had to give up everything that he worked for. Once my family came to the United States, they lived in a small apartment with only one room. My father ended up working as a garbage collector for the flea market. Imagine living your dream of having the best house you can get and with enough money to keep yourself maintained, then have it all taken away from you and be considered as a low class person

I took pride when I found out my father did this. I do not know anyone who is willing to give up everything to keep their family secured in a foreign country. This made me rethink what being generous actually was because I did not think that it was possible for anyone to be that selfless. To this day I still take pride in what my father did for.

I've asked myself how can I show as much generosity as my father has his whole life? He is the person that really inspires me to live a generous life. I've helped my 8th grade teacher build a water well in South Sudan. Our 8th grade class hosted a bazaar and donated what we gained to a nonprofit organization named Water for South Sudan. I've also given up my time to teach a group of 13-18 year olds to understand Catholicism better and how to answer their questions about Christ. I was 14 years old when I taught people that were older than me. I always help my church set up retreats and plan events. However, I do not think that it is enough! I am ambitious no matter what I strive for. That's why I try to be as generous as my dad everyday no matter how hard it is.

Anyone can show generosity in their own way no matter how big or small. Now that I have experienced generosity I know what generosity is. The real question is why do we **not** show generosity? I would say we do not like showing generosity because it is human to just think about ourselves and be selfish. Most of us might make excuses saying we do not have the time and we're just too busy, but in reality we are just concerned only with ourselves, our advantages, and our own pleasure. But we need to see through our selfishness and be more concerned about the people around us. Like I said before, being generous is the most difficult but best rewarding job someone can do. Even if you do not get paid or noticed for it! When we give generosity We lift a burden, We relieve stress, We give hope, and that's a reward! God has given us money and homes not just so that we are thankful, but by our generosity and hospitality to make many people thankful to God.

# FINALIST

## ERIKA GUARDADO CLASS OF 2021

Generosity is important to people because it shows you the purpose of a human being. Jesus teaches us to be human by helping the sick, the poor, the oppressed, women, children, and sinners. We should love one another just like how Jesus did. This world may not be a perfect place, but by doing a generous act it makes the world a better place. Generosity shows us that all humans are created equal. These generous acts make us realize that we are not alone. By someone doing a generous act, it inspires you to want to do the same because you want that person to feel what you did.

When I was in 6th grade, my mom, my brother, and I went to Burger King. It was snowing really bad. We got our order and we saw a homeless person. I asked my family if we could go sit with this homeless person and my family agreed. The homeless seem to be very content, and we talked to him for awhile. All of a sudden, we saw fleas all over him. We all felt bad, and my mom decided to go KMart to buy him a jacket, a blanket, clothes, shoes, tools for his work, shampoo, a rosary and something to shave all his hair and beard. We told him to meet us the next day at the same time at Burger King. After that we did not see him until a month later. He seemed to be full of light. He shaved all his hair and beard, without a flea in sight. He seemed healthier and clean. He was so fulfilled with happiness when he saw us. He was very grateful for our help, and he told us he will remember us for a long time.

When I experienced this, it made me realize how grateful I was to meet this person. People would not even go near this homeless man. It reminded me how Jesus felt love for the homeless and always helped them out when others did not go near them. What I felt was this warm feeling that fulfilled my heart. Words could not explain how I felt. I felt speechless. That day changed me because I realized how grateful I am to be where I am, I always try to help any homeless person in need. I realize how Jesus works in people and this helps to grow my faith and to be like him. He wants us to help his brothers and sister because we are helping him. This day proves to me that there is a God and it took my faith to another level.

This homeless man helped me realize that everyone is fighting a battle. People tend to want to fight their battles alone. But if we do fight alone, we have more of a chance to fail. When someone does a generous act in our life, they remind us that we are not alone in our battles. As I attendo Arrupe, I try not to fight my battles alone. I let people I trust help me through my battles. If I push everyone away and try to fight alone, I will likely fail.

People want reassurance that they matter in this world. It is important to be generous because you can comfort that void they have inside them, and you never know if you will inspire that person to be generous. This inspires my faith to grow by remembering that Jesus is in everyone you see. Jesus helped the people no one wanted to be around. We should do the same because they are children of God too. The littlest things can impact someone's life to become a better person and to help their faith grow. If everyone was generous, we would not have selfishness, pettiness, or hatred in this world. Everyone would not think they were alone in their struggles.

## FINALIST

## JENNIFER MAES CLASS OF 2021

It was one of those unexpected days; I came into the car after a day of school to see my mom crying. To see my mom crying was rare. I asked what was wrong and had to wait a few minutes so she could catch her breath and relax. She said earlier she was scheduled for a doctors appointment and they thought they might have found a lump. I told her everything was going to be okay and to not worry. Fast forward a couple weeks: she took a biopsy and CAT scan to see if she was positive for breast cancer.

On January 21, 2017 we had just finished grocery shopping and were in the car. My mom's phone rang; it was the doctor's office calling to tell us the results. It started off with a friendly greeting then the doctor said "Are you sitting down?" which instantly threw me off, but hope was still there. My mom replied with a simple yes. The doctor said the results came back as positive for stage 2 breast cancer. The drive home was somber and filled with devastation.

As days passed by she was confused on how this could happen from just one year to the next. This came out of nowhere. Most importantly how were we going to go through this? How were we going to tell everyone? At this time it was only my mom and I and a few other family members, but they had a life of their own that they had to take care of themselves. We started by telling my brother and his girlfriend first. We invited them for dinner and explained what the results were. We slowly started telling the family. During this time my mom did not feel like telling people and felt ashamed. It took a while for her to accept it herself.

During March my mom was taking chemo and going in and out of the doctors office every week. When she was going through chemo she started losing her hair and felt tired all the time. Money was also becoming more tight because surgery, chemo, and radiation wasn't cheap and it was only my mom and I. In order to keep us stable my mom still had to work part time at her job during her chemotherapy. She was willing to push herself the extra mile to make sure I was still getting a good education at a private school and since my birthday was in March she managed to pay for my birthday party and have my uncle drive me to the party with friends. To me that was the greatest gift I could have ever asked my mom to do for me.

By now my whole family was aware of what was happening to my mom. Together as a family we made a schedule. My brother would go over the house during the summer to cut the grass and go grocery shopping with me since my mom wasn't able to. My uncle was spending over \$500 a week on us by sending us gifts and delivering us food. Since my mom was sick and we did not have much family around but my brother, A family at my school volunteered to take me from and to school each everyday till my mom got better. The family did not have to do this, but from the kindness of their heart they helped us. Because of people like that family, they make the world a better place.

This event has affected a lot about me. It showed me God's acts to do good in other people. I saw love and solidarity as a family. This experience hasn't just changed me it's changed my family to become more open to God's gifts. God's gifts are amazing and we should use them for good.

# FINALIST

# WALESKA RIVERA CLASS OF 2019

"You write your life by the choices you make, you never know if they have been a mistake. Those moments of decision are so difficult" (Helen Mirren). The choices one makes can often lead to consequences but those decisions are what makes everyone unique in their own way. There is never the right path to take; our consciences might tell us to do one thing or another.

A time when I experienced a difficult decision was when I was a freshman and I volunteered at the soup kitchen. It was a crisp October morning; when I woke up the leaves were falling from the trees, it was like any ordinary day and I as usual continued my daily routine. I had signed up a couple weeks before to volunteer to go help out at the soup kitchen for that afternoon. I arrived at school and continued my day, which had seemed like hours to me, but the afternoon came and I would finally be able to go to the soup kitchen. The school bus rolled up to the front of the school. "Ready to go to the soup kitchen?" was what Fr. Drew had said. I was excited because I had never done something like this before in my 14 years of life. On the bus ride there I had imagined that I would just be serving food at the soup kitchen but my imagination was a little far from the reality. As the bus arrived at the soup kitchen I was ready to get to work.

When I entered the soup kitchen the following volunteers and I were directed to the kitchen. The kitchen was a small area and there were a couple of homeless people in the dining area waiting to be served. As the soup kitchen director gave us instructions for each volunteer to be assigned a different task, I was assigned to put bread on the plates as every other volunteer placed different foods on the plate. As we had finished preparing the last plates of food, we still had a couple more minutes to stay before we headed back to school. In the meantime my friend and I were getting to know some of the homeless and talking to them, but one particular story from a homeless man really got me thinking. I had shaken the man's hand to introduce myself and he told my friend and I about something he had recently encountered.

The man had said that he was sick and that when he went to the hospital they attended him for an hour and he was already in a room receiving health treatment. But a couple of minutes later the hospital kicked him out because he was homeless and wouldn't be able to pay; but the thing was that he had medicaid yet the hospital still kicked him out. So after I heard his story I was devastated and angry because no human being should be refused the right to health care and no human being should be treated with such disrespect or judged by their social status. When it was time for us to leave I left with a completely different mindset.

I was glad that I could serve the poor but I questioned if I actually made a difference in their lives or if I did anything at all. I had chosen to think that I actually did something to help but it was a difficult decision to accept. After listening to that man's story of being neglected by a hospital it just made me wonder if I could actually help someone in a situation like his. But at the time I was only 14 and thought that no one would take me seriously because of my age the fact that some people wouldn't consider this an issue.

After this event I realized that one person's story can change one's reality and I was affected by this event because I knew that no one should be denied to their human rights. I still felt like I

could have done more and at these points in time I felt like I wasn't a woman for others because I could have made a difference to help homeless people be cared for. After this event I began volunteering more to help out the community because there's a lot of people in the world that need to be helped. In the future I want to create a charity or open up a homeless shelter that would provide meals, a place to stay, and medical assistance. If I could go back to the past I would because I would try to make an even bigger change to that homeless man's life or change every homeless person situation to have the human right to health care. I had realized that the things that we take for granted the most are the most valuable important things in our lives. "In any given moment we have two options to step forward into growth or to step back into safety" (Abraham Maslow). I have chosen to step forward and make a change in other people's lives because what good is it to see a problem and let it happen because it hasn't happened to yourself.

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ASHLEY TRUJILLO  
CLASS OF 2018

Imagine a shy girl who would dislike to go out and have conversations with the people in public. That was me at one point in life; however, that is not the young woman I am today. I was inspired to be who I am today by the courage of the people at my church, more specifically a girl named Nicole. She taught me that you should never be scared to be who you are, let alone not to be scared to go and help those who will never know you and do kind acts of service for them. It was through actions that she did, such as being a catechist teacher or an annual event planner that inspired me to be a person who gave back to her community just as she did. When I first saw these acts of kindness, I did not have any real reaction because I thought it was a job that she got paid to be a part of; when I found that she did not get paid, I was surprised because this showed me that she truly loves what she does and that getting paid means nothing because the reward was knowing that she helped serve people. Now, as a volunteer for my parish, I love the reward and I know exactly what she felt. It is a feeling that brings joy to your heart and sense of accomplishment that money can not buy.

Going into high school was a huge turning point for me; right from day one we were taught to be men and women for others. I have carried that value with me since the very day that I learned it and I will for the rest of my life. When I was a freshman, I knew that I did not want to be a shy and timid person anymore, but rather be one who is involved in service within and outside of my school. I discerned and learned from what my church community has taught me through their actions and decided that one way to give back would to be an active member in my church just as they are. Throughout the twelve years I have been involved with church, I have been an altar server, a catechist teacher's aide, a retreat leader and a volunteer at annual events. As an altar server, I serve in a close way to Christ; I participate in the mass in a way not lot of people can. I show kids who are younger than me that it is a rewarding way to take part in the mass. As a catechist teacher's aid and retreat leader, I show the people at my parish who are roughly my age that spreading and teaching the word of God is something to be proud to do. I volunteer my Sunday nights and sometimes my weekends to teach kids and teenagers about God. I also show them that yes I may



have other activities or tasks to do during my freetime, but instead I choose to spend it with them. When I was a freshman, I thought that being a man or woman for others simply just meant doing acts of service for those who need it, but now as a senior, I have have learned that it is way more than just that. Today, I define being a man or woman for others as a person who who will live not for themselves but for God, Christ and the good of others, for God lived and died for all the world. He values, encourages, and and fosters an inner constitution so strong that it's contagious and radiates outward. It manifests as selflessness in action and describes a thriving culture with many diverse people working together, sharing, volunteering, reflecting, pursuing justice and having concern for anyone who is marginalized. When all are working for and with others, all are equal.

These events have affected me as person because I am now I am a deeper follower of Christ and what his teachings are. Nicole and my church community have opened my eyes to see that I can achieve great things in life and some achievements maybe smaller than others; however, nothing will change the devotion I have to serving everyone around me. I have made changes in my life and as a result I have gotten to know myself even more. This has led me to be a person that constantly gives of herself whenever help is needed. Plans I have for the future include stopping my participation as an altar serve and starting to be a Eucharist minister instead. Since I will be attending Regis University in the fall, I want to be involved in more activities that include being connected with Christ and doing service while at the same time continuing an education that all starts with God.

FINALIST

ANELIA VELASQUEZ  
CLASS OF 2018

*Silence falls over the building while students are stopped dead in their tracks to their late classes, bowing their heads in silence. Not in shame of course, but out of respect for 5th-period prayer.*

*God,*

*I believe that I am in your loving presence. You know me and all of my needs.*

God has been something in my life that's been a "thing." I never really knew what to make of what I was learning in my middle school Saint Catherine of Siena, but I learned the traditions and followed along like a lamb to a Shepherd. Coming to Arrupe, I was exposed to actually meeting God, and meeting myself too. God was this all-knowing being that everyone in the Church loved and worshipped. He was the one to throw beautiful tragedies at us, and we loved him more for giving us the opportunity to sort it out. For a long time, I worshipped God like a king that saw me as just another face in the crowd. In my theology classes over the years, I have learned more about the Catholic faith. I've learned about the Sacraments, remembered the prayers, and learned biblical stories and their deeper meanings. But it wasn't enough for me. I needed to know more. Recently in my Senior Theology class, we have been asked to ponder on big questions. These big questions went from topics like, "What happens to me when I die" to "Is God real? What is my purpose?" And

for a little bit, these questions threw my faith off balance. I gave my entire soul, and trusted in God with every bone in my body... but was he even a being? Was he a figment of my imagination? Was the Catholic faith just surrounded by a bunch of lunatics that created this in our heads to cope with the obstacles of life? Was this false hope? Were our souls fictional? These questions pressed my mind every day. Every second I spent pondering this question, slowly drove me more insane because I didn't know the answer, I didn't know what to believe. I was challenging and arguing with God for a sign. Even before this encounter, I would always wish to the air for God to make the candles flicker to show me that he was present and with me. I never got a response until mass one day. I entered the church and found myself to be petrified. I felt like I was breaking into someone's house. I felt unwelcomed because I made up in my head that this God *thing didn't want me here if he was real. I sang from an empty heart in the choir. Everything felt wrong and distorted. After I had sung the Alleluia for the mass, I read a line in the Church pamphlet that said, "In God I trust, I shall not fear."* I felt my heart drop as I realized this was the sign I was yearning for; I felt overwhelming guilt and mercy wash over me. I scrambled to my feet after being on my knees in prayer to run to the bathroom and cry. I cried and prayed for forgiveness. I prayed that I wasn't crazy. I begged that it was indeed God reaching out to save me. I asked for a sign to show that this trust, this love, wasn't for nothing. Through this experience, God taught me that he's the almighty, but that he knows me. Now I see God more like a very loving friend that I can jump off a bridge for, my clutch. The friend I can argue with only to grow a stronger relationship not stray away like broken bark on an oak tree. The priest said several times during that mass that it was ordinary, but it turned out to be the communion that saved my faith.

God,

*Send the light of your holy spirit to help me review the event of this day.*

My experiences at Arrupe have been unwordably remarkable; even though sometimes I would hate to admit it because of long nights of homework, and early morning feet being dragged away from the security of my warm bed. Besides my teenage hardships, Arrupe has given me the opportunity of learning so much. I've learned about God, I've learned about Trigonometry, I've learned new students' names and studied their personalities to make them my friend, but all in all, I learned how to find myself. Every day at Arrupe, I wanted to make sure every second I spent was worthwhile. I have always been insecure about time because I felt like it went by too quickly. You look at the clock one moment and the next time you look, you see it's five hours past the time you were supposed to be asleep. With the knowledge of times uninterrupted lack of mercy stabbing the back of my brain, I tried my best to be mainly involved in my High School experience. One of the challenges I forced upon myself was joining Arrupe Jesuit's very own, Boys Baseball Team. I figured that if the boys could play, so could I. I was as capable as all of them. I was terrified of judgment though, and I feared that they would read my cover and toss me off the team. But I courageously went to the tryouts, while dragging my Best Friend Llubia alongside with me, and gave my all to prove I was ready to play. I learned that fighting against my anxiety gave me an opportunity to be a woman for others. The team accepted us as not only new ordinary team members but new people apart from the Baseball family. There was no difference in how we all represented ourselves. It was just a team of souls that were ready to execute in a ball game.

I am sincerely in love with the thought of equality, but joining the Boy's baseball team wasn't enough

for me. I still felt like I needed to do more with my experience. Something you should know about me is that there is this powerful gift God has granted me to have the power of; That gift is the universal language known only as Music. Music enchants me, and it is one of the only things that allows me to lose track of time. I noticed how Arrupe didn't have many artsy classes or clubs, so I decided to make my own. With my diehard team of friends, we all made a club named merely, "The Music Club." Though we are small and not many people show up, we are still excited about even having the club alive. When we meet up for practice, it's so natural and beautiful how the music flows through our souls and makes us a stronger closer club. At the club, we practice for Mass to make it a more memorable experience. By creating this music club though, I was able to form a band called Quarantine the Rejects. This is the part where you should start taking notes because I guarantee that you'll hear us on the radio one day. I made this band with my bestest of friends. We all believe in this band so much. Our purpose is to play music that holds no genre because of our unique tastes. Our music holds so much power in itself that we are excited merely about the idea of getting into the world and making everyone listen. We are an all-female band, and our mission is to make it on billboards to prove that "Anything boys can do, girls can do better!".

*God, Help me to recognize the blessings of this day. I thank you for your many gifts.*

At Arrupe, there is a continuous vibe that flows through our walls. The most important thing to all the teachers and staff members are the students and how they send us off into the world. I feel that their particular mission is to help us know how we can change the world. And though to many of you it might seem like a very hopeless farfetched future, just by everyone in this building supporting us, loving us, and believing in us, we are capable of doing such beautiful things to this world. Some of the things that we are blessed to have in our school are our regular retreats. One of the retreats that made a significant impact on my attitude in life was the Freshman Retreat. Keep in mind that I had a bitter attitude towards life because I've been bullied before and told to give up several times. The message of our retreat was "To Set Yourselves on Fire." It came from St. Ignatius's teachings to "Go Set the World on Fire." The upperclassmen and school staff welcomed our class into the school in the most embarrassingly perfect way. We were all a bunch of nervous Freshmen that expected much more turmoil from our upperclassmen due to the stereotypical movies that played on Disney when we were younger. Though, throughout the entire day, we were introduced to each other. We got to play twister, dance randomly, play hide and seek, and reflect on all of our experiences. It was so beautiful to me that I am sure it will be the best memory Arrupe can send me off with. It showed me that this school wasn't going to let me drown, they were going to teach me how to swim, stay afloat, and eventually show one hundred more people how to swim. At the end of the retreat, the leaders and grounds crew of the Freshman Retreat showed a video of the experiences we had that day. It was so heartwarming to me that I declared that day that I would never let myself give up or break because I had the support I needed here right in front of me. All I needed to do was flick the match. I never thought setting myself on fire would feel so good.

This year at Arrupe has also been a year of revelation. It's been hard to wake up early and sacrifice time to finish homework at night, but I realize now that I am a Senior, that it is all worth it. I have the opportunity of going to college. I have acceptance to several universities, my top choice being the University of Colorado Denver. I will be doing a double emphasis in Music Business and Recording Arts with an Audition Track, so I'll have a full circle of the program. I realized that I am so blessed to



have such a hard-working college counselor. Though she hounds me and sometimes gets mad about scholarships I have procrastinated on, I know it is because she genuinely cares about my education and where I go in life. I am excited about the opportunity of furthering my education. I am also very thankful for my experience in the Senior Service Project at our school. Senior Service Project is an event where a handful of seniors get to go out into the world and serve while journaling their experiences to share with the Juniors as they reflect on their choice to also serve. This was a particularly valuable experience for me because Service is one of the places where I get to see God upfront. I want to use my experiences and write them into my music to give people the raw truth about our world. Though these vast opportunities are immensely important to me, I want to thank my teachers individually for training me so well to have such excellent writing skills, personality, speaking skills and generally, never giving up on us. I was able to get my first job at Starbucks with the training I received from the Corporate Work Study Program(CWSP). I turned in an exceptional resume, cover letter, and I totally killed the interview. I've noticed through working there that CWSP might have trained me a little too well. People often say I act way older than I am, and that's a massive compliment to me. Thanks to CWSP, I was able to fight back my anxiety and awkwardness to show and express myself. Everything we've become here builds up to the ceiling. Our experiences hide in these walls. We are all more than just a school. We are a family. And I am excited and ready to expand this family to the world.

*God,*

*I ask your forgiveness for my failing this day. As I look towards tomorrow, show me how to be the person you want me to be.*

Though I may fail often, I've learned a way around it. My idea is to love. Love everything. No matter how much it might hurt to love that thing, love it anyways. I found this to be true in my faith in God, in the homework I was unfortunately given, in the attitude and hatred arguments I've held, and even in myself. I have failed at a lot of things in this life, but I realize now that those failures were all steps to my success. With the help of my dad, he taught me this.

One of the things he encouraged me to do is write my future in pen. This may seem like absurd advice to give, but my dad made sense of it like this: "Write your future in pen. If you mess up, then you can cross it out and write the next thing to try. If you do this girl, you'll be able to look back after you succeed, and see where you came from". Our failures are as important as our successes. This year has been one to tackle with because even with all of these wonderful events happening, tragedy was bound to appear somewhere. This year my mother was diagnosed with Cancer. It's a heavy bomb to recover from, but it's something that I feel like makes me stronger. After she told me this, she would tell me nearly every day that when she dies, things will be better. These experiences made me so scared of everything. It made me stop believing in God; it made me stop believing in my future, it made me stop believing in myself. I wake up every day and rush to my mom's room, tapping her foot, just to make sure she is still alive. One day I fear this Cancer may win. But I had to learn to love this obstacle God was throwing at me. I couldn't let my hope die because it seems now that I was the only one to remind my mom that hope was an ultimate cure. I believe that one day she is going to be Cancer-Free, and I'm going to smile so hard at her and say, "I told you so mom." During my Arrupe experience, my parents also have divorced and fought several times. I hate mentioning this, but it is essential for my story. My parents made me present in their arguments by making me the messenger. Most of the time though, it seemed as if I was the one being shot down. I had to

carry these things on my back like a cross, but I did it willingly. While doing all of this, I made sure to keep up with my music. I am a self-taught musician on Piano, Guitar, Ukulele, and Vocals. Music was one of those things that tended to the wounds of being shot down as a messenger and mending my heart together again after watching my parents break theirs several times. It hasn't been a walk on the beach though, I doubt myself heavily with my music, but merely because I have high expectations of myself. Sometimes I gave up because I didn't understand how to switch from chord progressions efficiently and I didn't think anyone would like my lyrics. I kept at it though and eventually fixed my confidence by playing in front of my parents. I remember the expression my parents had on their face when I revealed myself to them. Their lifeless composure turned into hope. Now everytime my dad hears me sing or watches me perform; he cries. One because he is a big baby, but also because he is very proud of me.

I was able to read their expressions because it was one that I often saw at school. I saw it in my Math teachers face when I got an equation that I didn't quite understand. I saw it in my English teacher's face as I showed them what I was honestly thinking. I saw it in my Spanish teacher's face when I told her that her lessons were helping me be able to talk to my Grandmother after 18 years of awkward interaction. I was able to fail and realize that failing was a vital part of success because of everyone at Arrupe. I was able to love everything even if it hurts like Cancer, Heartbreak, or Bullet wounds with the help of the staff here. I can freely express myself and be Anelia Maria Velasquez aka "Rocket" because of everyone in this building and present in this room right now. None of this would be possible without your contribution to Arrupe. I wouldn't have stood up to gender stereotypes; I wouldn't have loved music as compassionately as I do, I wouldn't have sung aloud at mass, I wouldn't have even met God. I would never have even taken the time to think about speaking in front of everyone and telling them my experience. I know for a fact, that this school set a fire inside of me that is impossible to kill because even when I'm down, the fire burns dimly. I want to say to every one of you with every bone in my body, every particle of my being, and my entire soul, Thank you. Thank you for helping me grab ahold of my rope. Thank you for giving me a purpose. Thank you for making me feel important, and thank you for helping me find this missing person. I am Anelia Maria Velasquez, and I am surpassingly thankful to be a part of the Arrupe Jesuit High School Graduating Class of 2018. I'm a woman for others in my Service and Confidence of being able to know who I am and where I'm going and just this one quality will help me to show others who they are and throw them the rope to redemption.

*The students resume after the prayer to walk to class realizing that maybe it isn't as bad as it seems. They know that they can depend on bright futures. So they pick up their paces as they speed walk to their next class, to their subsequent failure, to their next step in their future.*



CELEBRATING 5 YEARS OF GREAT WRITERS! THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF THE CHALLENGE.

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 ARRUIPE, SJ  
(1907-1991)