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The New VISION

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Essay writers tell of lessons of St. Paul

500 take part in Serra Club competition

Nearly 500 students in the **Diocese's schools** and parish religious education programs participated this year in the Serra Club of Tucson Essay Contest, addressing the question: "What does the life of St. Paul teach me about being a follower of Christ?"

The winners were announced last month at the club's fifth annual awards

luncheon at El Parador restaurant:

Grades 4, 5 and 6 – First place, Brianna Robillard, **St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School**, Tucson; second place, Graciella Jones,



Holy Angels School, Globe; third place, Josefina Jaramillo, **Sacred Heart Catholic School**, Nogales; fourth place, Lydia Kennedy, Holy Angels School, Globe.

Grades 7 and 8 – First place, Sarah Thygerson, Holy Angels School, Globe; second place, Alexa Leon, Sacred Heart Catholic School, Nogales; third place, Erika Yee, Sts. Peter and Paul School, Tucson; fourth place, Katy Cook, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School, Tucson.

High school – First place, Charles “Casey” Hoyack, St. Luke Parish, Douglas; second place, Lou Anne Wegrzyniak, **Immaculate Heart High School**, Tucson; third place, Sierra Goodine, Immaculate Heart High School, Tucson; fourth place, Lucia Dabdoub, **Lourdes Catholic High School**, Nogales.

Following is the essay that won first place for Brianna Robillard:

“When I think about my faith today, I think of how Saint Paul changed his life, and then taught others about the love of Jesus. I think it is so fascinating how Jesus chose Saul, who used to kill Christians, to be a follower after he blinded him with a bright light. But Saul could have been bitter and hated Jesus more, but instead he really opened his eyes to the mission he had to do. He chose to change his name to Paul, and then travel throughout the world and teach other people in foreign lands about Jesus’ love.

After Paul chose to follow Jesus, he taught many people about the love and the importance of forgiveness. He taught people including myself that people have a choice in their life of who they want to follow. Saul could have chosen to continue to kill Christians but he chose to follow Jesus instead. He also revealed that no matter what you have done, even killing people, can be forgiven if you ask Jesus to forgive you. Saint Paul was so brave that he even died for his love for Jesus. I have learned so much about my faith because of his teachings. I hope that I can be as brave as Saint Paul, to show others how much I love Jesus.”

Following is the essay that won first place for Sarah Thygerson:

“In the scriptures there are many examples and bright leaders that we can follow, one of them being the humble apostle Paul. There are many ways in which each person can relate to his life. We then take what we learn and apply it to our daily lives. There are three main events found in the scriptures from his life that show us how to be a follower of Christ. The first one comes from Acts 7:54-83, before Paul was a Christian. The next one is Acts 9:5-6 and the last one is Romans 1:1-7 where Paul becomes an apostle of Christ and serves him.

In Acts 7:54-83 Paul, known as Saul, was considered a degrading persecutor against Christians. This specific scripture passage tells about how Paul was present and approved the stoning of Stephen. This teaches me that even though someone looks different or believes differently, that I should not degrade or treat them poorly. Instead, I should treat them with respect and kindness. I need to be just and love everyone. When I do this I am being a follower of Christ.

The next scripture that I can learn from in Paul’s life is Acts 9:5-6. This is when Saul was on his way to Damascus to arrest more Christians. He was then struck and blinded by a light from Heaven. God then told him to stop with his persecuting and go to the city to learn what he must change. This teaches me that I must do what God asks and follow his teachings. If we choose not to do this then we will not be happy with the consequences that follow.

The last thing that Paul teaches me is that we need to stand up for Christ and what we believe. We must teach God’s will to all those we can. Like Paul, even though the Jews were angry with him he still taught the word of God to a multitude. Not only did he preach God’s will, but wrote it down so that we may learn from it. As it says in Romans 1:1-7, Paul became a righteous man and was an apostle of Christ. Paul stood up for Christians until the day he died in 67 A.D. as a martyr.

Paul was and still is an example of a righteous man. We can learn great things from him, to love and serve others, follow God and teach the word of God. He wrote scriptures for us so that we, too, can change our lives and be happy. When I follow the good examples in Paul’s life, I am being a follower of Christ.”

Following is the essay that won first place for Charles “Casey” Hoyack:

“Too often we as young people turn to material wealth and away from the Holy Spirit and our Christian values. Our society can idolize these things and further turn our hearts and minds away from Christ. Learning to live as a true disciple of Christ is what we can learn from St. Paul.

St. Paul was a Jewish tentmaker who persecuted Christians in his native Tarsus. Paul even approved of the murder of the martyr, Stephen (Acts 8:1). The life-changing moment in Paul’s life was his conversion on the road to Damascus where he was blinded. The Lord told him, ‘I am Jesus, who you persecute. But get up and go into the city, where you will be told what you must do.’ (Acts 5:9). Paul would eventually become one of the Church’s great missionaries, traveling throughout Asia Minor, Arabia and as far as Spain spreading Christ’s Good News. That is what young people and all people must understand about Paul’s journeys. God has a road to Damascus for all of us. We are all disciples but we must be willing to answer the call of the Holy Spirit.

Every day there are opportunities in life to go forth on our own road, teaching nonbelievers about the goodness of Jesus’ message and setting an example for others. Sometimes we choose this Christian road, while other times we choose the roads of sin and personal gratification. Even though we may sometimes ignore God and turn away from Him at times, God is a forgiving and loving God. All of us, like Paul, must answer the call to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ.”

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