

Father Merrick Bednar “Conviction of the Heart” 2021 Scholarship

Overview

The “Conviction of the Heart” Scholarship is a **character scholarship** awarded in memory of its namesake, Fr. Merrick Bednar, parochial vicar at St. Bernadette Parish from 1990-1995 who died in 1997 at the age of 33. Given annually since 2003, this scholarship is awarded to a college-bound high school senior from St. Bernadette Parish who best exemplifies the qualities and ideals of Fr. Merrick, and whose life and faith are lived with great conviction.

About Fr. Merrick

Inspirational...compassionate... faith-filled...loving. These are just a few of the many words that would describe Fr. Merrick Bednar – a beloved priest at St. Bernadette’s whose life and ministry played out in powerful and profound ways.

Fr. Merrick was well known throughout Western New York for having undergone a heart transplant at the age of 23, followed by a bone marrow transplant a decade later and cancer in between. He passed away on May 12, 1997 – remarkably, on the 7th anniversary of his ordination – while awaiting a second heart transplant.

Most would agree that it was not Fr. Merrick’s suffering that endeared him to so many; it was the way he lived his life despite the many challenges he faced. In fact, he always believed his life was an incredible and precious gift – one that showed the true goodness of God. He chose to live that life with integrity, intensity, and an abundant gratitude for all he had been given – making a difference in the countless number of lives he touched and becoming an inspiration to all who knew him. With his zest for life, a wonderful sense of humor, a true concern for others, and an unshakable faith, he seized each day and lived his life with real **conviction of the heart**.

Selection Criteria

The committee that awards this scholarship carefully reviews all nominations submitted. While academics and extra-curricular activities are not overlooked, **the emphasis of this award is on the student’s quality of character – that is, how the student lives his/her life and faith with real conviction on a daily basis.**

That said, the importance of the student’s letters of recommendation cannot be overstated. They should be written by individuals who know the nominee well and can provide real insight into the student’s character. **An impersonal or “generic” letter – or one citing only academic or extracurricular achievements – does little to strengthen the nominee’s application.**

In addition to being in good standing (i.e. attend Mass weekly, receive the Sacraments, provide service to those in need, etc.) with Saint Bernadette Parish, each applicant shall be required to **submit the following no later than Sunday, April 25th, ²⁰²¹ to be considered for the scholarship award (Please note that any application received after April 25th must unfortunately be disqualified):**

1. An essay no longer than **3, typed, double-spaced pages** discussing what being Catholic means to you, the importance of faith in your life, and examples of your convictions exemplifying Christ in your life.
2. Three written recommendations from individuals close to you that **could comment on your Faith-based convictions discussed in your essay**. These individuals might include family members (**limit one recommendation from family member**), clergy, teachers, friends, etc
3. Attached 2021 application form

Selection:

A panel of six committee members will each year select the student who through their good standing in the Parish, written essay and accompanying recommendations most closely exemplifies Father Merrick’s ministry here at Saint Bernadette Parish.

2021 Award amount: \$1,500 (Ceremony at the 11am Mass on Sunday, May 16th followed by a small reception for the recipient and his/her family) Note: Pending COVID restrictions

**Father Merrick Bednar “Conviction of the Heart” Scholarship
2021 Application Form**

Applicant Name:	First: Middle Initial: Last:
Address:	Street: Town/City: Zip Code:
Phone Number:	()
Email:	@
Baptism:	Name of Parish Baptized: Address: Date Baptized:
Confirmation:	Name of Parish Confirmed: Address: Date Confirmed:
High School Graduation:	Date of Graduation: Name of High School:
College You Will Be Attending:	Name of College: Address: Curriculum: or if undecided, please check []

Instructions:

1. Please fill out this application form completely and legibly as per instructions above.
2. Complete your essay and ask for 3 Letters of Recommendation (**WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT YOU PROVIDE EACH PERSON YOU ASK FOR A LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION WITH THE ATTACHED INFORMATION SHEET**)
3. Submit this application, your essay and three recommendation letters by Sunday April 25th, 2021 to:

Conviction of the Heart Scholarship Committee
C/O Saint Bernadette's Faith Formation Office
5930 South Abbott Road
Orchard Park, New York 14127
Attn: Father Merrick Scholarship

Please direct questions to Ralph Jeswald @ (716) 982-2975 or rjeswald0528@hotmail.com

**Father Merrick Bednar “Conviction of the Heart” Scholarship
Letter of Recommendation Information and Instructions**

***** IMPORTANT *** PLEASE READ**

Your letter of recommendation should be no longer than one page in length and ***should discuss the selection criteria listed below based upon your relationship with the applicant. Citing specific examples of how you have witnessed the applicant’s faith in his/her life is very important. Please note that traditional comments about scholastic achievements and club membership, although noteworthy are not the scope of this request. A “generic” letter – or one citing only academic or extracurricular achievements – does little to strengthen the nominee’s application.***

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Selection Criteria

As part of the application process, the applicant will be writing an essay discussing the following faith attributes:

1. What being Catholic means to him/her,
2. The importance of faith in his/her life, and
3. Examples of convictions exemplifying Christ in his/her life.

Please put the following information at the heading of your letter:

Applicant name

Your name

Your relationship to the applicant

When complete, please sign your letter and give a copy to the applicant so he/she may submit with the completed application form.