



Merry & Bright!



FROM OUR FAMILY TO YOURS, MERRY CHRISTMAS!

As we enter this season of reflection, gratitude, and giving, I'm delighted to share with you this edition of the Education Foundation newsletter and invite you to, once again, be part of something truly meaningful.

Within these pages, you'll find inspiring updates from our school, highlights of programs made possible through the generosity of donors like you, and stories that capture the heart of our mission, not only in present day, but from days gone by. You'll read about incredible fall events, historical reflections, and powerful examples of how your support continues to shape the lives of our students and school. This letter marks the beginning of our **Annual Appeal**, and I want to take a moment to share why your support matters now more than ever.

The Education Foundation was established with a vision to ensure that a Saint Thomas education would always remain accessible and sustainable. What began more than four decades ago as a promise to future generations continues today through the generosity of donors like YOU.

This year, the foundation is providing \$211,000 to support our students and school. These funds make a real and immediate difference by helping provide tuition assistance, classroom improvements, support teacher salaries, curriculum enhancements, and technology upgrades. Your generosity sustains not only our programs, but the very mission of Saint Thomas itself, ensuring that our students can learn, grow, and thrive in faith-filled excellence for years to come.

Our long-term goal is simple: to grow the endowment so that every family who seeks a Saint Thomas education receives it, and our school can continue to thrive for generations to come. Thanks to your generosity, the Foundation's endowment now stands at \$3.3 million and growing.

There are many meaningful ways to for you to give. You'll find several options listed on the inside back page. Whatever you choose helps shape the future of Catholic education in our community while leaving a lasting legacy.

As this season of Christ's birth begins, we wish to thank you for being part of this mission and for standing alongside us in faith and vision.

Betsy Adystra



A MULTI-GENERATIONAL LEGACY

Rooted in Faith

If someone were to ask us about our Catholic faith and how we found it, most of us would say that we were raised Catholic. Likewise, our parents, grandparents and beyond would say the same. This multi-generational commitment to Christ is the reason Saint Thomas has been here for 100 years – faith not only passed down within households but one that fills our classrooms with children eager to grow in their love of the Lord, just like their parents and grandparents. Our faith is a guiding light, moral compass, and firm foundation gifted to us at Baptism and carrying us through life's joys and challenges – a constant in an ever-changing world. Our school and parish simply wouldn't exist if it weren't for the longevity of our faith, each generation following in the footsteps of the one before with a steadfast belief in Christ and the good that comes from a Catholic education. We are grateful for our community of supporters that, regardless of generation, have given of their time and treasure to ensure our future.

GRAND FRIENDS' DAY October 17, 2025

Our Saint Thomas community gathered for one of our most cherished traditions – Grand Friends' Day. The morning began with an all-school Mass, where students, grandparents, and grand friends came together in prayer and thanksgiving. Our church was filled with the presence of the Holy Spirit as generations united in faith. It was a beautiful reminder of the love and support that strengthen our families and of the Christ-centered community that makes Saint Thomas such a special place. We are deeply grateful for the many hearts and hands that made this day such a blessing.



Following Mass, the joy continued with the awarding of the Red Glasses, a cherished movement begun by a school family that celebrates living boldly, loving big, and passing it along. This year, we were delighted to award our very first grand friend Honoree – Jamie McCabe. A grandmother to four of our students, a dedicated school board member and a true Southern joy. Jamie has brought warmth, generosity, and a knack for keeping our student uniforms and our lives organized. Her spirit and commitment perfectly embody what it means to be a Saint Thomas grand friend. The celebration continued with a heartwarming kindergarten performance, classroom visits, and time to connect over light refreshments – filling our halls with laughter, hugs, and stories shared across generations.

It was a morning overflowing with celebration, community, and faith. A wonderful reminder of how blessed we are to share these moments. The love, encouragement, and pride our grand friends bring to our students each day nurture their faith, inspire their curiosity, and strengthen the spirit of Saint Thomas. They are more than special guests, they are champions of our students, rooting for their successes and helping them shine. Thank you for being such an important part of our Saint Thomas family.



100-YEAR CELEBRATION MASS October 18, 2025

On Saturday, October 18, our parish and school family came together in joyful celebration of our 100th Anniversary – exactly 100 years to the day since the very first Mass was celebrated in 1925.

Bishop Walkowiak joined us for this historic liturgy, offering a moving reminder of gratitude for all who walked before us and for those who continue to carry our mission forward today.



“Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me,
O God, till I declare your power to the next
generation, Your might to all who are to come.”

Psalm 71:17

The celebration continued with a parish dinner where generations shared memories, laughter, and stories of faith. A special highlight of the evening was honoring Mary Rapp, our oldest parishioner at 104 years, whose presence stood as a living testament to a century richly blessed by God’s grace.

For 100 years, Saint Thomas the Apostle parish and school have been a place where faith and learning flourish side by side. In 1925, 75 families gathered to break ground, placing their trust in God and in the power of a Catholic education. Nearly a century later, their prayers continue to bear fruit: today, 325 students from 200 families fill our classrooms, chapels, and hallways with joy, curiosity, and love for our Lord.

As we look to the next century, we do so with grateful hearts and steadfast faith. Our community remains strong, our enrollment vibrant, and our commitment to Christ-centered education unwavering. Families continue to seek what Saint Thomas has offered for generations – a school that not only educates, but also nurtures and inspires. From the joyful 100th Anniversary Mass to the stories shared over dinner, we are reminded that while much has changed since 1925, our essence remains the same: a dynamic education centered in Christ, carried forward by each generation of students, families, and parishioners.

Saint Thomas the Apostle Parish and School – Celebrating a Century Centered in Christ.

FROM THE STAGE OF HISTORY...

In 1961, a group of Saint Thomas parishioners staged their first theatrical production, *The Mikado* by William Schwenck Gilbert. The cast of 48 performers was supported by three directors, a producer, a prompter, and dedicated teams handling stage, make-up, costumes, and promotions. Reverend Noel Fay, our pastor and producer, called it a great first success, noting, "The ultimate success cannot be attributed to any one individual... a coach is only as good as his team makes him appear."

Thus, the TheatreCrafters were born. From 1961 through the early 1970s, they brought joy to the community with dozens of plays and several song fests. Some of the favorites included *Finian's Rainbow*, *Brigadoon*, *Oklahoma*, *The Boy Friend*, *George Washington Slept Here*, and the beloved *Annie Get Your Gun*. Their performances, were frequently featured in the Grand Rapids Herald newspaper and established a lasting tradition of creativity, collaboration, and community spirit at Saint Thomas.



Joan Mead created this life-size horse for the production of *Annie Get Your Gun*. This remarkable creation appeared on WOOD-TV's *Buckaroo Rodeo* with Buck Berry taking Joan's talents from stage to screen.

INTRODUCING THE *Friendship Fund*

Honoring the memory of Dan and Joan Mead

The Friendship Fund, created in honor of Dan and Joan Mead, celebrates two beloved members of the Saint Thomas community whose generosity and dedication left a lasting mark. Dan was a founding force behind the Education Foundation, serving faithfully for decades as treasurer. Joan shared her creative gifts throughout the parish and school as a teacher, artist, and the imaginative talent behind the beloved TheatreCrafters productions.

Inspired by a childhood act of kindness that showed her the power of compassion, Joan carried that spirit into every part of her life. Gifts to the Friendship Fund honor their legacy by supporting our students, strengthening our school, and sustaining the vibrant Catholic life of our community. Contributions to this fund help with essential school programs and activities while continuing the generosity that Dan and Joan so beautifully modeled.



"Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

2 Corinthians 9:7

...TO THE HEART OF TODAY

The Foundation is providing \$211,000 this school year to help sustain a vibrant, faith-filled learning environment rooted in academic excellence, spiritual growth, and strong community values. Every dollar you give breathes life into our mission, helping students learn, grow, pray, and play in ways that reflect God's love and purpose for them. Your generosity strengthens every promise we make to our families each day. Together, we are shaping hearts and minds for Christ, ensuring that each child encounters not only knowledge but also the joy and grace of living a life grounded in faith. We are deeply grateful for your continued partnership and prayers as we carry this mission forward.



Virtuous Faith



Servant Leadership



Rigorous Academics



Peaceful Climate



Intentional Technology



Empowered Community



THE SAINT THOMAS EDUCATION FOUNDATION FULFILLS ITS MISSION BECAUSE OF YOUR UNWAVERING SUPPORT

DYNAMIC MISSION

= dynamic KIDS!

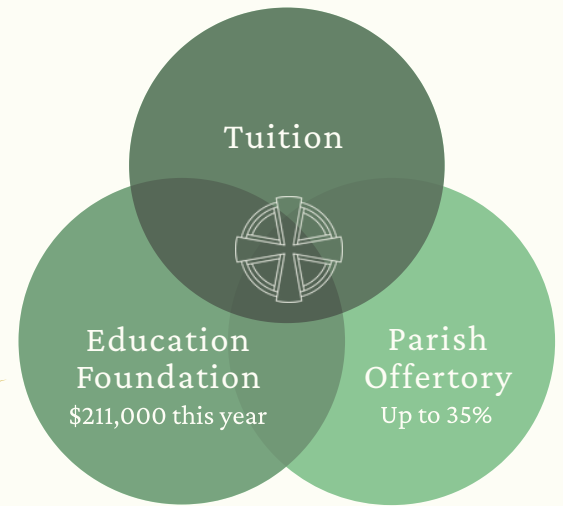


OUR MISSION

The Education Foundation stands in support of the educational and spiritual objectives of Saint Thomas the Apostle Catholic School by raising, protecting and administering funds.

How is a dynamic Saint Thomas education FUNDED?

For more than 43 years, the Saint Thomas Education Foundation along with tuition and parish offertory, has faithfully served our community, ensuring lasting financial support for our students and school. We are blessed to be one of just a few diocesan schools with our own education foundation!



WHAT DOES THE FOUNDATION FUND AT THE SCHOOL?

Thanks to the unwavering generosity of many, the foundation has grown steadily over the past four decades. Today, we manage an endowment of \$3.3 million.

This year alone, we are providing \$211,000 in support to all Saint Thomas students. These funds help sustain a vibrant faith-filled learning environment rooted in academic excellence, spiritual growth, and strong community values. We faithfully steward eight named scholarships, providing additional aid to our families with greatest needs.

You can make a dynamic impact too!

Whether you choose to give financially in *any* amount, volunteer your time, or simply help spread the word, your support makes a meaningful and lasting impact on our students, teachers, families, and the greater Saint Thomas community.



Contact us to get INVOLVED, DONATE, OR LEARN MORE.
We LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING FROM YOU!

MAKE AN

Impact!

Making a tax-deductible donation to the Saint Thomas Education Foundation supports a Christ-centered education at Saint Thomas School.



1

CASH OR CHECK

Cash or check donations made out to the Saint Thomas Education Foundation.

Saint Thomas Education Foundation
1449 Wilcox Park Dr. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49506
616-459-4662

2

1925 GIVING SOCIETY

Named for the year Saint Thomas opened, the 1925 Society honors supporters who contribute \$1,925 or more over the course of a single calendar year.

3

DONOR ADVISED FUNDS

A tax-advantaged investment account that provides the ability to grow your charitable contribution over time and the flexibility to manage donations at a pace that's comfortable to you.

LEGACY SOCIETY

This Society honors those who make a planned gift, either publicly or anonymously.



QUALIFIED CHARITABLE DISTRIBUTION

5

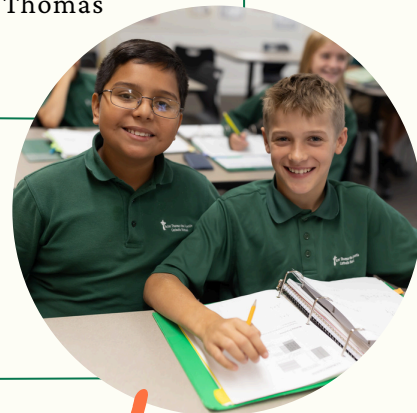


ONLINE DONATIONS VIA QR CODE

Scan the QR Code with the camera on your smartphone and tap the link that pops up to efficiently make a donation via credit card or bank account.

4

If you are 70.5 years or older, consider adding the foundation to your annual retirement account distribution plan. Checks can be made payable from your financial institution directly to the Saint Thomas Educational Foundation.



THANK YOU!



May your holiday season be filled with God's grace and the warmth of family and friends. Thank you for walking alongside us in faith and supporting our mission and students so generously.



"We just celebrated our very first birthday of the foundation! We would certainly welcome all suggestions about how we can strengthen and help this marvelous project grow."

A Letter to parishioners from Father James Cusack, December 2, 1984



Please accept the enclosed gift of:

☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$1000 ☐ \$2500 ☐ \$5000 ☐ Other _____

Please direct this gift to:

☐ Where needed ☐ Education Foundation Endowment ☐ Friendship Fund ☐ Other _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State & _____

Zip: _____ Email: _____

Phone: _____

☐ I have included the Education Foundation in my estate plans.

☐ I would like to learn more about including the Education Foundation in my estate plans.

Thank You!



Cut along the wavy line and return in enclosed envelope OR scan the QR code to donate online!
Gifts to the Saint Thomas Educational Foundation, a 501 (c) (3), are tax deductible