



ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Nascantur in Admirazione

"Let Them Be Born in Wonder."

St. Thomas K-10 School Newsletter September 5th, 2023

School Mission Statement

St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic School exists to form disciples of Jesus Christ. Educating in the Eucharistic culture and classical intellectual tradition of the Catholic Church, students are led to encounters with the transcendental good, true, and beautiful. In wonder, confidence, and virtue, students are prepared to engage our broken world for the glory of God, the good of others, and for their own sanctification.

Virtue for the School Year: Faith

- Assenting, through grace, to God's revealed truth

Virtue for Margaret Mary Term: Truthfulness

- Telling the truth when one ought, as one ought



~ Upcoming Events ~

Today, September 5th

ESP begins today! – 3:10-5:30 every full school day

Tomorrow, September 6th

Dress-up Day

September 7th

Back-to-school night for parents in the parish hall, 6:30-8:00 p.m. Parents only.

September 8th

All-School Eucharistic Procession, directly after school Mass



A Visit from Dom Chrysostom Maria

Last Thursday, Dom Chrysostom, a monk from Silverstream Priory on a home visit, gave an engaging talk to and answered questions from the 5th-10th graders. He described the monastic life as a type of spiritual warfare and also explained the various layers and meanings of his monastic habit. Later, he had a wonderful time visiting with students of all grades during lunch! Here he is sharing his wisdom with our 3rd graders.



Preschool Fun!



From the Headmaster

I hope you all had a restful Labor Day weekend. My family was able to get away for a few days up north. It feels as if now the school year is *really* starting, with everything in full swing.

I look forward to seeing you all at parent night this Thursday at 6:30 p.m. Every family will be given a printed copy of the family handbook, which I have updated to reflect current school practices and realities, including the new upper school. As in years past, there will be pages to sign and return. Please note that, though I know this can make things more difficult for some of you, this is a parents-only night.

Thank you to all the parents that came to our feedback session on the Extraordinary Form school Masses. We had a very positive discussion about the way in which this form of the Mass can both fit with the character of our classical Catholic school and help deepen its love and understanding of Catholic tradition. The current plan is to offer one EF Mass in the coming weeks (date still TBD) and then reflect on how the students are praying with it and on the broader feeling of the school community. In the meantime, I will be working with the students to introduce them to the basic flow of the Mass, highlighting aspects that are different or unfamiliar. Ultimately, fruitful participation in the EF Mass comes with time and a growing acclimation to this form's overall rhythm and feel.

Classical Education and Latin

At parent night this Thursday, as I did last year, I will be reviewing what we mean by "classical," a term often used in many ways and not easy to understand clearly. You might recall that last spring I wrote a summary of significant differences between classical and conventional approaches to education (available on our school [website](#)).

One thing that I did not address in that summary was the role of Latin in a classical education. For centuries in the West after the fall of the Roman Empire, Latin was the chief language of learning, with Greek taking on a growing importance as well after the 14th century. Latin was the vehicle of significant developments in theology, philosophy, and the sciences. It was also the basis for learning grammar and literature in the Trivium, especially since it gave students access to ancient Roman authors. This language, though dead, is inextricably tied up with our culture, its development and identity. It is also one of the key influencers on our own language, such that knowing Latin provides students with a way to know English through one of its origins.

The role of Latin in our education becomes even more significant in the context of a classical Catholic education, since Latin is not only culturally important and

formative of the mind, but also a common thread in our long tradition of prayer and worship in the Roman Rite of the Church. Whether offering the Sacrifice of the Mass in the Ordinary or Extraordinary Form, we are part of the Roman Rite, whose distinctive language is Latin. Though Latin has long ceased to be a *vernacular* language, it has remained a *sacred* language, a language set apart for prayer and worship. A distinct sacred, liturgical language is a common feature of the ancient, apostolic rites of the Church and of the Orthodox Christians. It contributes to the sense that we are doing something set apart in the Mass, something different than what we do in day-to-day affairs. It also, as I pointed out to the students, connects them to a tradition of praying in their own rite.

Many popes in the 20th-21st centuries have written about the importance of Latin in the Church.¹ They recognized the way in which it expresses the Church's universality – being a common language across nations – and its immutability – being a dead language, not subject to the ordinary changes undergone by spoken languages and thus particularly suited to consistency in prayer and theological expression.

Considered strictly from the point of view of its conceptual intelligibility to the average Catholic, Latin seems to raise a “barrier” to actual (or “active”) participation. However, “actual participation”², as Pope Benedict pointed out³, includes much more than literal comprehension of this or that prayer or the external things we say and do. Indeed, our praying the Mass is ultimately a participation in a sacred *action*. Latin both helps us to offer fitting worship to God and to participate deeply in the sacred action of the Mass, immersing us in its mystery that is simultaneously veiled and manifest. This, of course, is not to say that literal comprehension or rational reflection is unimportant for actual participation. Really, for both forms of the Mass, preparation is required for our students to enter more deeply into the mystery of the words and actions they encounter in the liturgy. In addition, for the Extraordinary Form, we will be sure to provide, for reading-age students, missals and translations of the readings and propers.

Finally, in the Roman Rite, Latin is intimately tied to the tradition of sacred music, the foundation of which is Gregorian Chant. This music holds “first” or “princely” place⁴ among liturgical music in the Roman Rite, and it is music specifically written for and with the Latin tongue. I am excited to grow our upper-school schola and to

¹ See <https://www.prayinglatin.com/papal-teachings-on-latin/> for a nice collection of quotations from popes.

² Or the Latin *actuosa participatio*, as *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, drawing from Pope St. Pius X, put it in par. 14.

³ https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20070222_sacramentum-caritatis.html - par. 52.

⁴ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, par. 116 – my translation. The Latin reads “*principem locum.*”

increase the familiarity of all the students with this rich tradition of music. The goal is that all of them will be versed in singing the Ordinary together in Latin, and that a growing number will be able to sing at least some of the propers as a part of a directed schola.

Eucharistic Procession and Blessing of the School

As a reminder, we will have a Eucharistic Procession and blessing of the school directly after all-school Mass this Friday, which is Mary's birthday! If you can make it work, please join us. It would be lovely to have many parents with us to mark the beginning of the school year placing under the protection of Jesus and Mary! Also, I can neither confirm nor deny that there will be a lunch-time treat in honor of Mary's birthday....

Parent Association

Pia Gavigan and Bob DiMattia, our president and vice-president, will be setting up our first parent association meeting for this school year. It will likely be scheduled right after drop-off one morning in the coming weeks. As we work to organize upcoming school events and brainstorm about ways for parents to support and serve the school, please consider coming to the meeting to join in the conversation.

FACTS Incidental Billing

Incidental billing, God-willing, will be open beginning tomorrow. This will allow parents to pay for everything from field trips to lunches to ESP through their FACTS portal.

Little Flowers

Please see the attached flyer for more details on this after-school program for girls.

Men's Monday Basketball

Dan Mishler, a St. Thomas parishioner, along with myself, are organizing a casual men's league at the St. Thomas gym. This group has existed for a number of years and recently switched to playing at St. Thomas. It currently consists of a number of St. Thomas parishioners and other Catholics, and we are hoping to broaden its membership to bring on board other St. Thomas folks. Games are on Mondays, beginning at 8:30 p.m. and ending at 10:30 p.m. St. Thomas dads are welcome to come out to play! Please let me know or Dan (dpmishler90@gmail.com) if you would like to come. We will begin with an open gym/pick-up format over the next couple of weeks, after which point we will organize committed players into set teams of around 7 players. We'll then get a set schedule and game times. This is an

invite-only group, so please do not invite other players without checking with us first.

Parish Events

Please consider volunteering for the parish picnic on September 10th. I will be monitoring the gym and would love help there, but other positions are needed as well. Please contact the parish if you have some availability between 1:00 and 3:00 that Sunday.

Also, please note that the Play and Pray group will be restarting in mid-September. It is open to anyone and will meet on Thursdays from 8:30-10:30 a.m. More information to come.