

ROOTED *in* FAITH

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

June 2026

As we reflect on a school year of faith, growth and promise, we do so with sincere gratitude for your generosity and shared commitment that continue to strengthen Saint Thomas School. Your support is more than financial – it is transformational. Every gift helps shape the daily experience of our students and advances our mission of forming young people in faith, knowledge, and character.

We are excited to share this new version of our quarterly newsletter and a clear picture of the impact your generosity makes possible. Our endowment has grown to more than \$3.4 million and over \$300,000 was distributed directly in support of our students, teachers, and school programs this year alone.



- Tuition assistance – \$95,000
- Educational Support Services – \$75,000
- Curriculum & enhancements – \$50,000
- Technology upgrades – \$45,000
- Building & Grounds – \$20,000
- Classroom resources – \$15,000

It all adds up to 333 students growing, learning, and thriving!



This year brought meaningful milestones for our school community. Saint Thomas School was recognized by the Cardinal Newman Society as a recommended school, affirming our commitment to Catholic excellence. We also completed the National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools (NSBECS) accreditation process, providing valuable guidance as we begin to develop our next five-year strategic plan.

Looking ahead, the future is filled with promise. At the time of this writing, 47 new students and 23 new families have joined our community for the 2026–27 school year. We look forward to this fall's Emerald Auction, the school's signature bi-annual event chaired by volunteers Lindsay Keegan and Abby Bosscher, which continues to provide vital support for our school.



The stories in this edition reflect the lasting impact of a Saint Thomas education. As we celebrate this year's graduating high school seniors preparing for their next chapter, we are reminded that each of them carries forward the faith, values, and purpose nurtured while they were here at Saint Thomas. Though their journeys are unique, they are united by the compassion, confidence, and character that shaped them into thoughtful leaders and servant-hearted young adults. These stories highlight the enduring legacy of faith, leadership, service, and community that defines our school. Thank you for being part of this proud tradition.



Trust the Magic

Inaugural School Year in our Brand New Preschool Center



Following years of planning, fundraising, and prayer, we opened the doors to our brand-new, state-of-the-art Preschool Center on August 26, 2025. This new center allows us to serve children ages 3 to 5 as they learn, play, and grow in their love of the Lord. We were honored to welcome Bishop Walkowiak for the ribbon-cutting ceremony, marking a blessed beginning in this new chapter.



Your support of the Educational Foundation brings the excellence of a Saint Thomas education and the teachings of our Catholic Church to our littlest learners - what a gift!

Catholic Central students joined us for music, storytime and of course, lots of fun!



of New Beginnings

Father Stephen Brings the Joy in His First Year as Saint Thomas Pastor

Joy is contagious at Saint Thomas, and Father Stephen brings it with him wherever he goes. As he completes his first year as Pastor of our parish and school, his presence has already become a defining part of the Saint Thomas experience. Four mornings each week, he can be found at the carline greeting students with a wide smile, a fist bump, and an enthusiastic welcome to begin their school day. Whether he is cheering alongside students at pep rallies, participating in faculty/student basketball games, or joining a spirited game of tag football at noon recess, Father Stephen is fully present in the life of the school. Approachable, energetic, and deeply authentic, he connects with students and families through laughter, storytelling, and his unmistakable love of sports – especially the Tigers, Lions, Red Wings, and Pistons. His joyful presence reminds our students that faith is not distant or reserved for Sundays alone, but something lived each day in community, celebration, and connection.



As Pastor of Saint Thomas and shepherd of our school community, Father Stephen brings compassion, joy, and a faithful presence to the lives of our students and families. During bi-weekly confession opportunities, he quietly welcomes students seeking to place their burdens before the Lord, offering each child peace, understanding, and God's forgiveness. Deeply committed to the mission of Saint Thomas, Father Stephen believes in forming students not only for academic success, but also as compassionate and confident leaders in the Church and the world. Through his joyful leadership, prayerful guidance, and unwavering trust in God's plan, he continues to inspire our community and remind us that God is always at work, making all things new.

The Power of Community, Faith and Prayer

Saint Thomas Alum Peter Dieleman's Inspiring Story

Peter Dieleman's journey has been a living testament to the power of prayer, faith, and community. Since his brain cancer diagnosis in 2019 at the age of 11, the Saint Thomas community has faithfully surrounded Peter and the Dieleman family with love and unceasing prayer through the Saint Thomas Prayer Warriors. From the long hours of surgery, to recovery and rehabilitation, and throughout each step of his school years, countless prayers were lifted asking God to guide the hands of his doctors, strengthen Peter's spirit, and carry his family through every challenge. Today, as Peter graduates from Catholic Central, we rejoice in God's abundant grace and the blessing of witnessing this remarkable milestone, made even more meaningful by Peter receiving the James P. Gardiner Award at Convocation. This award honors a student-athlete who demonstrates exceptional perseverance, inspirational courage, and strong citizenship while overcoming significant adversity to compete in Cougar athletics.

Peter's mother, Lucyna, reminds us that life is a gift. Through this journey, she has shared the importance of total surrender to God's will, the strength found in community, and the miracles that can unfold through faithful prayer. The Saint Thomas Prayer Warriors continue to stand as a beautiful reminder that when we come together in faith and love, God's presence is made known in powerful ways.



Leadership

At Saint Thomas, education goes beyond academics to form students grounded in character, faith, and purpose. From preschool on, students are encouraged to discover and develop their God-given gifts through academics, the arts, and service. Even our littlest learners engage in art, music, and movement alongside core academics, fostering creativity, critical thinking, and personal growth. These opportunities continue throughout elementary school, with music and performing arts programs beginning in fourth grade and beyond. A Saint Thomas education forms the whole child, preparing students for academic success and lives of faith, leadership, and meaningful impact.



Students showcased their artwork at the Diocese of Grand Rapids Catholic Schools' Art Show at Cathedral Square this spring.



Students earned top honors in the Michigan School Band & Orchestra Association Solo & Ensemble Festival, where they performed for adjudicators earning ratings based on their musical achievement.



From Peter, Paul & Mary to Forrest Frank our Saint Thomas gym was filled with music, joy, and incredible student talent at our annual Spring Concert



Fourth through eighth graders delighted audiences with their performance of the Lion King.

Beyond Saint Thomas, Our Alumni Shine: Albert Diaz

Saint Thomas alum Albert Diaz has continued to delight crowds with his natural stage and performing talents at Catholic Central, where during his high school career he has been in every musical and stage performance ranging from Shakespeare to Shrek and many in between. Albert was nominated for Catholic Central's "Man of the Year" award – one of the most prestigious honors a Catholic Central senior can receive – voted on by classmates, it recognizes those who have shown outstanding dedication, spirit, and support for their class and school over their four-year career.



Takes Center Stage

Through faith, service, leadership, and character formation, students are taught to lead with compassion, recognize the needs of others, and serve their communities with kindness and integrity. Our student leadership model empowers students to become confident, faith-filled leaders who are prepared not only for success at Saint Thomas, but also for meaningful contributions in their future schools, workplaces, and communities.

In high school, Saint Thomas students are recognized by teachers and administrators for the respectful, responsible, and compassionate way they carry themselves. Many are nominated for and selected to receive honors such as Man or Woman of the Year. The values instilled here create a foundation that stays with our students long after graduation. This school year, we have many examples of our alumni returning to help our students learn, grow, and thrive. We are forever grateful and proud to know their hearts are still connected to Saint Thomas!

Saint Thomas Alums Give Back



Graduating seniors from Catholic Central attended our spring all-school pep rally!



Catholic Central students helped lead a retreat for our 7th graders in preparation to become the school's 8th grade leaders for the 2026-27 school year.

Our alumni are proof that investing in a Saint Thomas Christ-centered education prepares children to be leaders in our world, long after they leave the four walls of Saint Thomas. Thank you for being a part of this legacy!

Introducing the "Excellence in Learning Society"

Investing in Every Student's Future

The *Excellence in Learning Society* is a newly established foundation initiative dedicated to supporting the academic and spiritual formation of every student. Guided by the mission, "Equipping Every Student to Learn, Grow, and Thrive," the Society helps ensure that every classroom is equipped with the high-quality curriculum resources teachers need to provide exceptional instruction and meaningful learning experiences.

At its heart, this initiative reflects a commitment to forming the whole child – mind, body, and spirit. Each day, teachers work diligently to meet students where they are, challenge them to grow, and nurture their God-given potential. To do this well, they rely on strong, thoughtfully selected curriculum and instructional resources that support academic excellence, targeted learning, and faith-integrated education. The *Excellence in Learning Society* exists to ensure these essential tools are consistently available – not limited by budget constraints or left to chance – so that every student has the opportunity to succeed.



Quarterly Middle School Award Ceremonies celebrate academic, social, and community service



Today's classrooms require more than a one-size-fits-all approach to learning. Through the *Excellence in Learning Society*, we envision a school where every teacher is fully equipped to help students learn, grow, and thrive, and where every student has access to engaging, high-quality learning materials tailored to their needs. Gifts to the Society directly support curriculum and instructional needs across all grade levels, including core academic materials, intervention and enrichment resources, faith-based instructional tools, classroom technology, and digital learning supports.

We invite you to join us in this important mission of ensuring that teachers have the resources they need to inspire learning, foster growth, and help every student thrive. By becoming a member of the *Excellence in Learning Society*, you make a lasting impact in every classroom and in the lives of our students for generations to come.

Saint Thomas MAP Test Scores are Rooted in Excellence

Science

Saint Thomas students scored near or above 90% across all grade levels – exceeding diocesan averages by 6%!



Reading

We exceeded diocesan averages in nearly every grade – most notably our youngest grades having nearly perfect scores. Reading proficiency in the younger years is linked to success in all subjects!



Mathematics

Scoring above 90% in nearly every grade level, we scored better than diocesan peers by nearly 4%!



With sincere gratitude, we thank all who support the Saint Thomas Educational Foundation and our mission to provide an accessible, high-quality Catholic education.

We are honored to recognize the individuals, families, companies, and foundations listed below for the lasting impact they make on our students and school.

Thank you

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Cut along the line above 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.

Signing Off for Summer....

As Saint Thomas celebrated its 100th anniversary, I found myself reflecting on the people and traditions that helped shape our parish community. With summer upon us, the return of golf season and our annual Boosters Golf FORE Sports event, it felt like the perfect time to revisit the story of the legendary Saint Thomas Golf League. Special thanks to Denny Wooldridge, whose careful records preserved nearly six decades of league history.



Dick Wildey holds the hole-in-one ball from his first ace on July 12, 2002 at Grand Rapids Golf Club.

Founded in 1946 by Msgr. Raymond Sweeney, the league began with 28 golfers at Ridgemoor Golf Course and remained a cherished part of parish life until 2004. More than a weekly game, it created fellowship, friendship, and community beyond Sunday Mass during a time when many families were rebuilding connections after World War II.

Over the years, generations of parishioners – and clergy like Fathers Fay and Voss, and Msgr. Sweeney – joined the league, gathering on courses including Ridgemoor, Saskatoon, Forest Hills, Alpine, and Grand Rapids Golf Club. Father-son pairings became common, stories were shared over dinners after play at Forest Hill Inn or the Red Lion, and lasting friendships were formed one round at a time. As longtime member Buck Wooldridge once said, "We've got guys in their 80s, 20s, and everywhere in between."

That spirit of camaraderie continues today. Since 2004, the Saint Thomas Boosters have hosted the annual Golf FORE Sports outing, raising funds to support student athletes while strengthening community through fellowship and generosity. This year's outing, held May 15 at The Mines Golf Course, welcomed new faces and generated tremendous enthusiasm and support for Saint Thomas athletics. That kind of community spirit is simply par for the course.

*"FORE" the Love of Community (and Mr. Ted).
Saint Thomas Golf FORE Sports 2025*



Two STA teachers spanning the decades: Don Bruckman & Adam Baxter at the Golf FORE Sports 2020 Outing

Though the original league has passed into history, its legacy remains. What began as a simple gathering of parishioners became a lasting reminder that community is built not only in church pews, but also in the friendships, on the fairways, and in the traditions that bring people together across generations.

Where tradition meets the next generation

Congratulations to the Catholic Central Girls Golf Team on bringing home their third straight state championship. These Cougar golfers include three Saint Thomas alums who achieved All Conference honors during their four years:

- Kelsey Preston - 4X All Conference – CC Female Athlete of 2026!
- Margaret Deimel - 3X All Conference
- Mary Irwin - 1X All Conference

It has been a great four year run for these student athletes and we are excited to see how they all perform at the next level.



... see you in the fall!