



Saint Thomas More Academy, Inc.
Board of Directors

Kirk Doran, President
Margaret Freddoso, Vice President

April 30, 2022

Dear Saint Thomas More Academy Community,

Congratulations on the fulfillment of our inaugural year! Saint Thomas More Academy has been the fruit of prayer, sacrifice, and trust in God. It exists, most importantly, because our children deserve a school where faith and reason, the sacraments of the Catholic Church, and a time-proven pedagogy work together to unite us in a flourishing community of love. But there is also an amazing story behind it. Like a river, the school has many sources, but here we want to share a few of them so all of us can more fully rejoice in the unexpected graces of God.

On August 30, 2016, Diana Philpott began discussions with local families about how a Catholic classical school could arise in South Bend. Kirk came away from that meeting on fire for a school that we could build right away – but God had different, and better, plans. The next four years gave Diana and her friend Lisa Kearns time to develop the curriculum that made STMA’s first year so successful. A second inspiration came on October 6, 2019, while Kirk was praying in his library. He asked God, “What should I do with the time in front of me today?” And in response, he felt a strong call to ask Margaret about her father’s school, Aquinas Academy in Pittsburgh. He was surprised at this unexpected and very specific message. But, convinced by the strength of the prayer that something important was about to happen, that very day Kirk learned much from her about one of the founding inspirations of STMA, and all the good it had done for so many families over the last twenty-five years. In his typically impatient fashion, he immediately asked Margaret whether she was interested in leading the charge to start such a school here, but, once again, it wasn’t God’s time, so nothing came of it – or so it seemed!

Meanwhile, God had been planting the seeds we needed to begin. On August 12, 2020, Elliott Kane suggested to Margaret that the time was right to start a Catholic classical school for South Bend. Margaret doesn’t even remember when Kirk proposed the idea in October 2019, but Elliott’s suggestion came with a special light and strength that convinced Margaret this was something God wanted to happen. Margaret had seen the abundant fruits of Aquinas Academy for her own family and for many others, and she was filled with a deep peace about the venture that has not left. But she was also under no illusions about the commitment and sacrifices required, and having watched her father lead Aquinas for 25 years, Margaret knew she didn’t have the gifts and personality needed

to spearhead the endeavor. At the time, Pete and Kirk happened to be meeting weekly for breakfast, and when Pete mentioned to Kirk that the founding of a school was on our minds, Kirk immediately sensed that the pieces were finally coming together. Hearing about Kirk's enthusiastic desire to found a school first for Maggie's sake, and also for the children of South Bend, and knowing a bit about his talents and personality, Margaret felt certain that he was the one to lead the project, and asked Kirk whether he would serve as STMA's founding President. Kirk had never considered leading this endeavor, and had been hoping to serve another leader and give advice as needed. But, remembering the clarity of the message of the year before, remembering how surprised he had been that such a strong message should have borne no fruit, and predicting that Margaret's request might be the long-awaited fulfillment of a message that he had felt so clearly, Kirk took a leap of faith and said, "Yes!" On October 11, 2020, we held the first board meeting of the new school. There was no question as to who would be our patron: his intellectual virtues, support for education, and courage to serve God rather than men made St. Thomas More the perfect saint to inspire our mission.

From there, the growth of the school has been nothing short of a miracle! Looking back on this journey, we can see how God reached out with just what we needed exactly when we needed it, and especially so in the gift of fellow workers in the vineyard. So many names come to mind, more than we can ever fully thank: our spouses Maggie and Pete, Theresa, Dani, Tiernan and Elliott, Ray and Mary, Andrew and the other Andrew, Heather, John, Anthony, Father Cyril, our many benefactors, and, most of all, our amazing staff and families. Thank you for believing in this mission, for trusting in God, and for taking a leap of faith with us. Our children deserve nothing less. We entrust this school to God's providence, and offer it to him in gratitude for his everlasting mercy and love.

Yours,

Kirk Doran, President

Margaret Freddoso, Vice President