

From The Tradition

September 13th

As we build our school culture and foster our partnership with you, we'd like to share with you some Catholic traditions we are instituting at school so that you can continue them at home. At our morning assembly, we've selected a prayer to pray every morning. After a few weeks and the students become familiar with that prayer, we will switch to another prayer so the students are exposed to different prayers found in our Catholic tradition.

For the last two weeks of morning assembly, we have been praying a traditional morning prayer called *Morning Offering*. There are many versions of this prayer, but the one below is the one we have been praying in the mornings at school. We'd like to share this with you so that you can continue to pray this prayer at home and maybe even know it by heart one day.

Morning Offering

O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary,

I offer you all my prayers, works, joys, and sufferings of this day,

for all the intentions of your Sacred Heart,

in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass offered throughout the world,

in reparation for my sins, for the intentions of all my relatives and friends,

and in particular for the intentions of the Holy Father.

Amen.

September 20th

The Meaning Behind Our School Crest

Have you ever wondered about the meaning behind the St. Thomas Aquinas Academy School Crest? When making the crest, the school's founders looked to our Catholic tradition to provide beautiful imagery with rich symbolism. We talked

about this with the students at morning assembly on Monday, so we'd like to share this with you as well.

The **twelve stars** are a sign of devotion to our Blessed Mother, for the twelve stars in her crown: "A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars" (Revelation 12:1).

The **Chi Rho** is an ancient symbol formed by the first two letters (PX) in the Greek word Christos, affirming the centrality of Jesus Christ in all that we learn and do.

The **sunburst** is a symbol frequently included in artistic representations of St. Thomas Aquinas and represents the light of faith. Sacred Scripture and the teachings of the Catholic Church are lenses with which we approach our studies and help us grow in our relationship with God. This symbol also has a Eucharistic meaning, resembling Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament as adored in a monstrance.

The **quill** is another symbol associated with the "Angelic Doctor". In Aquinas' writings, he demonstrated that the gift of our human reason can be used to come to know about creation and our Creator. As St. John Paul II stated in his encyclical *Fides et Ratio*: "Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth...".

The **waves** represent our home of Tampa Bay, and remind us to place complete trust in Our Lord. "At once [Jesus] spoke to them, 'Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.' Peter said to him in reply, 'Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.'" (Matthew 14:27-28).

September 27th



Why is St. Thomas Aquinas our Patron?

In some ways, you might say St. Thomas Aquinas chose us! The board began to meet in January 2022, and St. Thomas Aquinas' feast day falls on January 28. Since Aquinas is the patron saint of Catholic schools and students, we decided to ask for St. Thomas' intercession by praying the novena leading up to his feast.

In praying this novena, St. Thomas Aquinas emerged as truly fitting patron for our school. Firstly, St. Thomas Aquinas beautifully demonstrated that faith and reason are complementary ways of coming to know the Truth. Brilliant but not only cerebral, Aquinas also composed sacred music to lift the hearts of the faithful. As it was, and is, our goal to help students come to know, love, and serve Christ, we loved that Aquinas

would be a patron for coming to know Christ through faith and human reason, as well as through the beauty of art.

Interested in learning more about St. Thomas Aquinas? See our recommendations below:

- To learn about the life of St. Thomas Aquinas, we recommend *St. Thomas Aquinas: The Dumb Ox* by G.K. Chesterton.
- To learn about the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, we recommend two books by Dr. Peter Kreeft including *Practical Theology: Spiritual Direction from St. Thomas Aquinas* and *A Summa of the Summa*. While Aquinas' writings can be lofty, Dr. Kreeft has a knack for taking the complex and making it simple.

October 4th

The Aquinas Archangels

Last week, we announced to the students our official school mascot - the Archangels! We chose this mascot because one of St. Thomas Aquinas' nicknames is *The Angelic Doctor*. He is called this for two main reasons:

#1 He had a great devotion to the holy angels and wrote more about angels than any other Doctor of the Church. His theology of angels is one of the most comprehensive in all of Church history.

#2 Two angels came to him from heaven and bound a cord around his waist, saying, "On God's behalf, we gird you with the girdle of chastity, a girdle which no attack will ever destroy ..." The angels' gift preserved St. Thomas from sexual temptation and bestowed upon him an enduring purity that ennobled all his thoughts and actions. Because of this, St. Thomas is called upon by those facing temptations that arise against preserving their chastity of life, regardless of their vocation.



The Temptation of St. Thomas by Diego Velázquez, c. 1632

Here at St. Thomas Aquinas Academy, we hope that our students are inspired by the virtue of St. Thomas and strengthened by a devotion to the holy angels. The Archangels, Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, are always with us to protect us, teach us, and heal us, all according to God's will.

Saints Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, pray for us!



The Three Archangels with Tobias by Francesco Botticini, c. 1471

November 15th

Why We Pray for the Holy Souls in Purgatory

During the month of November, the Church asks us to pray for the holy souls in purgatory. The Church finds roots in praying for the dead in the Book of Maccabees and when Jesus prayed for his friend, Lazarus. In addition, the Catechism of the Catholic Church states:

All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven. (CCC 1030)

By praying for the souls in purgatory, we are reminded that the mystical Body of Christ actually exists in three "states": The Church Militant represents those of us on earth, the Church Triumphant represents those already in heaven, and the

Church Suffering represents those in purgatory. The souls in purgatory can no longer merit anything for themselves because they cannot do penances to atone for their sins. But God, in His goodness and mercy, allows for our prayers and sacrifices to aid the Church Suffering finally and fully enter into their Master's Joy.

Every morning during the month of November we have been praying the Eternal Rest prayer at morning assembly. We not only pray for our loved ones who have died, but we also pray for those souls who have no one to pray for them.

Eternal Rest Prayer

*Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them.
May the souls of all the faithful departed through the mercy of God, rest in peace.
Amen.*

December 6th

The Season of Advent

Advent is a season marking the beginning of the liturgical year in the church calendar. It is a time of preparation and anticipation leading up to Christmas. The word "Advent" comes from the Latin *adventus*, meaning "coming" or "arrival," symbolizing the anticipation of Christ's birth and the hope for his second coming. The season of Advent is a season of waiting as we reflect on the significance of Christ's first coming and prepare spiritually for the celebration of his birth. It also invites us to reflect on the hope for Christ's future return.

Advent lasts for four weeks, beginning on Sunday closest to November 30th and leading up to Christmas Eve. Each week of Advent focuses on a different theme, often related to hope, peace, joy, and love. These themes help to guide reflection on the significance of Christ's coming into the world.

A common tradition during Advent is the use of an Advent wreath, typically made of evergreen branches. It holds four candles, with one candle lit each Sunday during Advent. A fifth candle, called the Christ Candle, is often placed in the center and lit on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. The candles represent the themes of hope, peace, joy, and love.

What new traditions will your family begin during this Advent season as we prepare for the coming of Christ? If you are looking for some ideas, check out some of these [free resources from Dynamic Catholic](#).

December 20th

What are the Twelve Days of Christmas?

Christmas and Epiphany are two significant Christian holidays that are part of the liturgical calendar, each with its own meaning and traditions. Christmas begins on December 25th, and celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ, Son of God and the Savior of the world. The story of Jesus' birth is told in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, which describe how Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem, where Mary gave birth to Jesus in a manger because there was no room at the inn. The birth was heralded by angels, and the event was witnessed by shepherds and later visited by the Wise Men (Magi). Christmas marks the beginning of God's incarnation as a human being in the person of Jesus. We believe that through Jesus' birth, God entered the world to bring salvation to humanity.

The Epiphany is celebrated on January 6th and is a feast day that celebrates the revelation (or "manifestation") of Jesus Christ as the Son of God to the Gentiles. It traditionally commemorates the visit of the Magi (the Wise Men) to the newborn Jesus in Bethlehem. Their journey to bring gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the infant Jesus, symbolizes the recognition of Jesus as the King of the world by people from all nations. Epiphany celebrates the moment when the divine nature of Jesus was revealed to the broader world beyond just the Jewish

community. It emphasizes that Jesus came not only for the Jewish people but for all people, making his divinity known to the Gentiles through the visit of the Magi.

Christmas and Epiphany are closely linked in the liturgical calendar. Christmas marks the birth of Jesus, while Epiphany celebrates the revelation of Jesus' identity as the Messiah to the wider world. In the Roman Catholic Church, the twelve days between Christmas and Epiphany are observed as the Twelve Days of Christmas, with Epiphany serving as the final celebration of the Christmas season.

Although society typically starts celebrating Christmas the day after Thanksgiving and promptly stops on December 26th, as Catholics we should keep holy the season of Christmas and celebrate the feast of the Epiphany with intentionality. Here are some ideas for doing just that:

- December 25th - Go to Mass and read the narrative of the birth of Christ in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 2 verses 1-20.
- December 26th - Celebrate the Feast of St. Stephen, the first martyr, and imitate his self-sacrifice by performing an act of service for someone in need.
- December 27th - Celebrate the feast of St. John the Apostle, who survived drinking poisoned wine, by participating in the tradition of bringing wine to church for a special blessing. Ask your priest if he will do this!
- December 28th - Celebrate the feast of the Holy Innocents by blessing your children with holy water.
- December 29th - Celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family by consecrating your family to the Holy Family.
- January 1st (Holy Day of Obligation) - Celebrate the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God by going to Mass and praying a rosary.
- January 2nd - Celebrate the Feast of Sts. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen, who were best friends and wrote about the art of friendship, by spending time with a friend and telling them how grateful you are for them!

- January 3rd - Celebrate the Feast of the Most Holy Name of Jesus by talking about how important it is to not take the Lord's name in vain and how powerful it is to say the name of Jesus out loud.
- January 4th - Celebrate the Feast of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton by praying for your teachers!
- January 5th - Celebrate the Solemnity of the Epiphany of Our Lord by reading Matthew 2:1-12, eating a King Cake, and blessing your house using blessed Epiphany chalk (get this from your parish!) and [the Epiphany house blessing from the Roman Ritual](#).