

St. Thomas More Church

August, 2007

Dear St. Thomas More School Parents:

There has been a great deal of news lately regarding Catholic schools in our diocese and through out the country. It is no secret that the costs of running a parochial school continue to rise faster than our income. We think everyone would agree that the sacrifice is worth what each parish family of St. Thomas More School endures to ensure a quality Catholic faith based education for our children.

In 2006-7, the cost of educating each child was nearly \$3,800.00. Yet, our tuition remains affordable at \$2,495.00 for one child. The parish subsidizes this difference through the Sunday collection. Many of our school families regularly attend Sunday Mass at St. Thomas More and generously contribute to the parish either at Mass or electronically while some do not. We feel that regular Sunday Mass attendance is an important part of our children's Catholic education. Attendance at Sunday Mass not only reinforces what children learn at school, but gives parents the chance to model the lifestyle of a practicing Catholic. We also acknowledge the Church's teaching on this matter. Attendance at the Eucharistic celebration on Sunday and Holy Days is a serious obligation. Catholics must attend with exception only for grave situations or illness.

After careful review, Parish Council, the Parish Finance Committee, and the School Board have all agreed to implement an in-parish tuition policy for all registered parish families attending St. Thomas More School. We have been selected as the ad hoc committee to design, communicate and implement this program. We as committee members and school parents feel very committed to this effort.

To qualify for in-parish status, each family must meet three criteria:

- 1) The family must be registered members of St. Thomas More Parish.
- 2) Each school family must regularly attend Sunday and Holyday Mass at St. Thomas More a minimum of 27 times each calendar year as recorded by use of the Sunday envelope or a loose check deposited during the Offertory collection at Sunday and Holyday Mass and
- 3) Each school family must contribute at least \$10 a week to the parish or a minimum of \$520.00 during a calendar year.

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Failure to comply with these policies will result in the family being switched to out of parish tuition for the following school year. Out of Parish tuition for 2007-8 is \$3,800.00 per child or \$1,305.00 more than the in parish rate.

We will begin to transition to a full implementation of this policy beginning this year. You will receive an update regarding your Mass attendance and contributions for calendar year 2007 in January of 2008. You will also receive a mid year update in the summer of 2008 for the first half of the year. Beginning in January of 2009 and each subsequent January thereafter, each family will be categorized as either an in-parish or out-of-parish based upon your family's Mass attendance and contributions. This timing is planned so each family is notified prior to the beginning of each new school year's registration.

We have looked at implementing this program for a number of years. Many parishes in our diocese have already successfully implemented a similar program.

A more detailed in-parish school family policy is enclosed for your reference.

We hope every family strives to make this transition over the next 16 months. The goal of the program is for our children to learn and understand the importance of their faith by practicing it as a family while it also strengthens our parish and school communities.

May God Bless each of our families.

Sincerely,

John Duncan
Parish Council

Joe Evans
President, School Board

Chris White
Finance Committee



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Policy & Procedure

Policy Name: In Parish Criteria for School Families

Date: August 2007

The purpose of this policy is to outline the criteria for establishing each registered school family as either “in” or “out” of parish for setting their school tuition rate.

Issue

During school year 2006-7, the cost of educating each child is more than \$3,800.00. Yet, our tuition remains affordable at \$2,495.00 for one child. The parish subsidizes this difference through the Sunday collection. Many of our school families regularly attend Sunday Mass at St. Thomas More and generously contribute to the parish at Mass and/or electronically while some do not.

During calendar year 2006, 188 registered parish families paid the in-parish tuition rate for their children to attend our parish school. However, the frequency our families attended Mass and contributed to the parish varied:

- 56 families (30% of the total) contributed a total of \$125,453 or 74% of the total school family contributions to the parish.
- 52 families (27.7% of the total) contributed a total of \$34,110 or 20% of the total school family contributions to the parish.
- 59 families (31.3% of the total) contributed a total of \$11,666 or 6.8% of the total school family contributions to the parish.
- 21 families (11.2% of the total) contributed a total of \$316 or 0.2% of the total school family contributions to the parish.

These contributions are parish only donations and were made during Sunday Mass or electronically through the Finance Office.

Many families who currently receive the in-parish tuition rate do not attend Sunday Mass and/or financially support the parish.



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Policy

The parish policy regarding how a school family qualifies for in parish or out of parish tuition has been approved by Parish Council, the Parish Finance Committee, and our School Board. It is the goal of the parish to continue to support those families that are active and financially support the parish and not support those who are not.

To qualify for in-parish status, each family must meet three criteria:

- 1) The family must be registered members of St. Thomas More Parish.
- 2) Each school family must regularly attend Sunday and Holyday Mass at St. Thomas More a minimum of 27 times each calendar year as recorded by use of the Sunday envelope or a loose check deposited during the Offertory collection at Sunday and Holyday Mass **and**
- 3) Each school family must contribute at least \$10 a week to the parish or a minimum of \$520.00 during a calendar year.

Failure to comply with these policies will result in the family being switched to an out of parish tuition rate for each child for the following school year.

Every registered parish family will receive a letter beginning in January 2009 denoting their status as either “in” or “out” of parish regarding their school tuition rate for the next school year. The family status will be set each year in January based upon their previous calendar year’s results.

The policy does not apply to those families already classified as “out of parish” or to new school families enrolling for their first year in the school. The full “out of parish” tuition rate will be for each child. There is no sliding scale for out of parish tuition reductions for more than one child enrolled in the school. Families converted to “out of parish” tuition will remain as registered members of the parish.

Transition

Each registered parish family with children attending St. Thomas More School will receive letters recapping their Sunday and Holyday Mass attendance and contributions in January 2008 (for calendar year 2007) and in summer of 2008 (for the first half of 2008). The first letter establishing the family tuition rate for the next school year will be



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issued in January of 2009 (for calendar year 2008) and will be based on each family meeting both the Mass attendance and contribution objectives.

Sunday Mass attendance

Sunday Mass attendance will be recorded based upon the use of a Sunday collection envelope, loose check, or note deposited in the Sunday collection during Mass. Multiple envelopes deposited at one time will be collectively recorded as one Sunday Mass attendance. Families who contribute electronically need to deposit their empty envelope in the collection basket and check the "I/We give by a Credit Card or through electronic fund transfer" box.

Contributions

Contributions are defined as those donations to the parish through the Sunday collection at Mass, at the office, by US mail, by credit card, or electronic funds transfer. They include Parish Debt Reduction contributions. Contributions do not include donations for any special designated collections.

Donations made outside of Sunday or Holyday Mass is posted as contributions and not for Mass attendance.

Families are encouraged to enroll for the automatic credit card or electronic funds transfer program. Enrollment forms are attached as an enclosure to this policy.

Other

The enforcement of the policy is the responsibility of the Business Manager. Only exceptions to the policy may be made by the Pastor for very unusual circumstances.

Families receiving financial assistance will have their contribution goals adjusted to the same rate as their assistance. However, they are still responsible for meeting the Sunday Mass attendance objective.