



Durham Catholic District School Board

# St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School

**Motto: "Together, We Can Make a Difference"**



## **In the Beginning**

St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School is a vibrant school community situated in south-central Oshawa, Ontario. The school opened in September 1965, with a student population of 180 students from Kindergarten to Grade 7. The school was blessed in December 1965 by Monsignor Paul Dwyer.

By 1968, enrolment had grown to 274 students in Kindergarten through to Grade 8, and an addition to the building was started. This addition consisted of a library and eight classrooms, which were completed the following year. In November 1970, the addition was blessed by Father B. Mahoney, Pastor of Holy Cross Church.

For a number of years, St. Thomas Aquinas C.S. was the site for Intermediate Industrial Arts/Family Studies for the Oshawa schools.

Since September 1987, St. Thomas Aquinas C.S. has hosted the French Immersion Program for the eastern schools of the Durham Catholic District School Board. The program has continued to thrive over the years, and has expanded to include both French Immersion (Grade 1 entry, first implemented in September 2010) and Extended French (Grade 4 entry). St. Thomas Aquinas C.S. has been proud to promote French culture and the development of functional bilingualism over the years for many graduates.

In September 2008, the school boundaries in Oshawa were redrawn following an Accommodation Review Process, and students from Holy Cross Catholic School were welcomed to the school with open arms. Further renovations to the building were completed in 2009 in order to upgrade the office and library areas and to make improvements to the Kindergarten classrooms and schoolyard in preparation for a Full Day Kindergarten program, which began in September 2010.

St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School is affiliated with Holy Cross Parish in Oshawa, and has enjoyed a close relationship with its pastors over the years. Through the sacramental preparation of the children, and the countless school Masses, parish priests have made a great impact on the students at St. Thomas Aquinas C.S. Since 2005, we have been privileged to be guided by Father Keith Callaghan, who makes numerous memorable visits to the school, celebrating Masses both at Holy Cross and at neighbouring church, Assomption de Notre-Dame, located adjacent to the school.

### **The History of St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School and the Surrounding Area (Student Essay)**

As one of the oldest schools in Oshawa, St. Thomas Aquinas has a rich history and a fascinating story. The history of the school is both large and fascinating, and it's about to be told.

St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School was built at 400 Pacific Avenue, Oshawa, in 1965. It was one of the twin schools built that year (the other being Sir Albert Love Catholic School). Its original enrolment was 180 students from Kindergarten to Grade 7. At the time it was built, the Oshawa Civic Auditorium was brand new,

and Bobby Orr was playing for the Oshawa Generals. The Oshawa Truck plant had just opened, and the 401 had only been open for 12 years. When our school was built, Colonel Robert McLaughlin was still alive (until 1972), the Jubilee Pavilion in Lakeview Park was just been renovated, and Medicare had just been created. In the United States, the average cost of a house was \$13,600, the average car cost \$2,650, and gas was 31 cents per gallon. Slowly, though, Oshawa grew, and so did the population of students going to St. Thomas. The school was used as the home for woodworking class and home studies. Students rotated by bus to different schools to attend different classes. The classes were held in the back hallway, which is why they have so many plugs, for the saws. Home studies were for sewing and cooking. Woodworking is pretty self-explanatory. In 1968, there were 278 students from Kindergarten to Grade 8. That same year, because of the high enrolment, an addition was constructed. It was comprised of a library and eight classrooms. In 1970, the school was blessed by Father Mahoney. At that time, the Beatles had just broken up, and there was no such thing as the Durham Region. Throughout the years, St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School's population continued to grow, especially with the addition of the French Immersion Program. Today, the school contains over 400 students from Kindergarten to Grade 8.

The school's name came from the Saint Thomas Aquinas who was born in Lombardy, Italy, in 1225. Throughout his childhood, he constantly was asking the question "What is God?" He taught Theology in the University of Paris. He wrote the book *Summa Theologica*. It is the book in which he attempts to answer the question "What is God?" St. Thomas Aquinas was canonized in 1323 by Pope John XXII. He is the patron saint of academics, Catholic schools, colleges, learning, students and theologians. This saint is a truly perfect match for our school.

It's easy to see that St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School and its community has a fascinating history. There is much more of a story to tell, but that story could go on for pages. St. Thomas Aquinas school continues to thrive with a present school enrolment of 419 students and proudly serves the surrounding community.

*Prepared by: Daniel Van Veghel, Grade 7 student at St. Thomas Aquinas in the spring of 2012. This history was the winning essay in the Oshawa Historical Society's "Look Back Essay Contest."*

**Clergy associated with the school over the years include:**

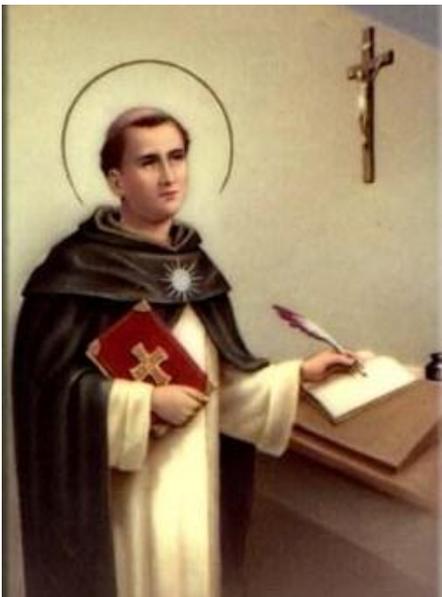
Father Matthew Darby (1964–1970)  
Father Edward Law (1968–1970)  
Father Stanley Blackwell (1970–1971)  
Father Bernard Mahoney (1970–1979)  
Father Vincent Amodeo (1979–1993)  
Father William Lynch (1993–1994)  
Father Ron Calhoun (1995–2001)  
Father Diego Fero (2001–2003)  
Father Guenter Petricek (2003–2005)  
Father Keith Callaghan (2005 to present)



*Father Keith Callaghan celebrating Mass with students at Assumption de Notre-Dame Church, 2011.*



*Parents serve the traditional turkey luncheon to the students, Christmas 2011.*



### **Our Patron Saint**

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) is best known for his writings in philosophy and theology. He was a brilliant man who had extraordinary powers of concentration. This intellectual man was also very humble. He prayed often and acknowledged that all his gifts came from God. Thomas Aquinas is a Doctor of the Church and his feast day is January 28.

## School Prayer

Blessed St. Thomas,  
Please listen to my plea  
I elicit your help to make sure  
That my memory does not fail me  
And that I will always remain  
Dedicated to my studies.  
I trust in your influence,  
O blessed St. Thomas.  
Amen.

### Principals

Frank Helferty (1965–1971)  
Sr. Eileen Mohan (1971–1975)  
Wilf Clavette (1975–1980)  
Gerry Noonan (1980–1984)  
Lionel Kelly (1984–1987)  
Beryl Cameron (1987–1988)  
Gene Kiernicki (1988–1994)  
Michel Tisi (1994–1999)  
Patti Orecchio (1999–2004)  
Kate O’Quinn (2004–2010)  
Rosemary Leclair (2010–present)

### *Contributors:*

*Rosemary Leclair*  
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*Andrew Godin*  
*Doran Aughney*  
*Catholic School Council*  
*Intermediate Division Students (Look Back Project) – Winning entry by Daniel*  
*Van Veghel*