

Dear Saint Thomas School Community,

I was honored and humbled to be able to accept, on behalf of Saint Thomas School, the Catholic School's



for Tomorrow 2010 Innovations in Education Award in Minneapolis last week. This is a national award given out by Today's Catholic Teacher magazine to 12 schools, a combination of both elementary and secondary schools, in one of six different categories. As I sat in a room filled with the award sponsors, several prominent supporters of Catholic education, and the representatives from the other 11 winning schools, some coming from as far away as Hawaii, I was both awestruck and grateful. I was awestruck at the level of

commitment, dedication and faith evident in that group. I was also awestruck and grateful for the generosity of each sponsor who presented not only the individual awards to each school, but also gave each winning school a special gift from their company. These gifts included a SMART board, a \$1,400 Professional Development Kit, a classroom full of the latest Microsoft MOUSE Mischief technology, the 13 DVD Echoes of Faith series, gift certificates, and even a giant 5 pound chocolate bar specially labeled with our School name and the award we received. WOW! We knew we were to receive an award and a banner, but the other gifts were a total surprise. But, despite the glamour, the gourmet food, and the magnificent gifts and people, the one gift I was most awestruck and grateful for was the chance to be a part of something as special as our own Saint Thomas the Apostle Catholic School family.

As I listened to the stories of the winning schools and the testimonies of the sponsors presenting the awards, I reflected on the stories that make up the fabric of our own school and mission. I have told people that marketing Saint Thomas is easy because once we get parents and students inside the doors, Saint Thomas virtually "sells" itself. Let me clarify what I meant. No, the hours and commitment I spend to market the school, work on the website or edit the Pieces are not easy. People ask me why I don't get a "real" job that actually pays a salary if I'm going to work so many hours. People may think I'm an anomaly to work the way I do, but at Saint Thomas I'm not. As a matter of fact, I don't know one person at our school—teacher, administrator, volunteer, aide, maintenance man—who does just what they need to in order to get by....**everyone** goes "over and above." That's part of what makes Saint Thomas such a special, award winning school. The "retention" rate of our wonderful teachers, staff, and administrators has nothing to do with how much they make "monetarily" nor, obviously, is it why I or the many other volunteers continue to work the long hours we do.

You see, it's all about our mission and about living out this year's school theme, "We Are One Body in Christ." It takes all the members of Christ's body, each with his or her own unique and special gifts, to work together at a common mission, to produce the fruits such as those that can be seen at Saint Thomas School. **Dynamic Education Centered in Christ** is our mission and it's one we take to heart. What those in the marketing world would call our "talking points" are not just marketing tools, they have become the promises we make to our parents and students. We stand behind these promises...all of us...from

administrators to teachers to those on the payroll receiving stipends, to volunteers. All of us are part of the Body of Christ who, along with our students and families, make up the fabric and living spirit of Saint Thomas School.

I sat at the Awards Banquet listening to Mary Baxter and Holly Lake, two of our teachers who attended the banquet with me, as they shared with the sponsors seated at our table their faith, their ideals, and their commitment to our mission. It confirmed again why I do what I do and why I am so grateful to be a small part of this wonderful gift from God. I want others to be able to know and share in the blessing that is ours here at Saint Thomas. If you could have heard those two amazing teachers talk with such wisdom, conviction and love about why they are at Saint Thomas and how they want to share Christ's love and their love for the Church with their students. If you could watch them interact with their students as I have done, you would see not their hands, but Christ's hands reaching out to His little ones; not their words, but Christ's words teaching and healing and guiding those precious children. Mary and Holly aren't the only teachers here who feel that way or who teach that way. That's part of the gift. Their excitement and commitment and faith are shared by the rest of the faculty and staff.

Catholic education--it's not about religion class or being able to talk about God. It's SO much more. It's about faith and education being so intertwined that you can't separate them. It's about living out our faith and our mission in every moment of every day in such a tangible way. It's about sharing that God-given gift whether we're teaching math or science or history, or acting as a recess supervisor, or working with a child with special needs or special talents, or leading our student body in praising at Mass when we're celebrating the gift of the Eucharist! ...Or even when we're sharing with others about Saint Thomas the Apostle Catholic School. What a gift! What a blessing! If you haven't already done so, come take a look. Like I said before, once you're here, Saint Thomas sells itself...well, not quite by itself, we have a lot of help. The Lord is working powerfully through His dedicated servants!

Kathy Barth

Marketing Coordinator, Webmaster, Newsletter Editor

Grateful and Blessed Parent

