

# The Charism of the University of St. Thomas

The University of St. Thomas is a Catholic University, founded by Archbishop John Ireland in 1885 and named for St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). We are grounded in our relationship to the universal Catholic Church. This informs our **vision**, **mission** and our **convictions**. A "charism" is a special gift given by the Holy Spirit to serve others. Our charism is grounded on the vision of Archbishop Ireland, the intellectual rigor expressed in the work of St. Thomas, and the moral guidance of Catholic Social Teaching, all of which, like our present mission, are inspired by Catholic Intellectual Tradition. These sources help us to articulate our impact on the lives of students and our contributions to the broader community.

## OUR FOUNDER ARCHBISHOP JOHN IRELAND



John Ireland served as Archbishop of St. Paul from 1888 until his death in 1918. He was an immigrant who became a nationally recognized civic leader. Ireland was a visionary who was committed to promoting the common good. He championed racial equality and he often formed strong, working relationships with people of diverse backgrounds and different viewpoints - two practices that pushed against the cultural norms of his time. He understood that access to higher education could help unlock more active participation in society. With that in mind, he founded the College of St. Thomas, which, at the time, primarily served the disenfranchised immigrant community. The college would provide a "comprehensive" and "practical" education so its graduates would become leaders in all aspects of society, including the Church. He challenged them to, "Seek out social evils and lead in movements that tend to rectify them." Ever the optimist, Ireland famously said, "I see no backwards voyage across the sea of time; I will ever press forward. I believe God intends the present to be better than the past and the future to be better than the present."

## OUR PATRON ST. THOMAS AQUINAS



Archbishop Ireland chose to name the new college after St. Thomas, the most influential scholar in Church history. In doing so, Ireland gave direction to the school based on St. Thomas' work, notably his belief in the unity of faith and reason, his commitment to "inquiry into the reasons and principles of things," and his innovative thinking. That is to say, Archbishop Ireland wanted to train students in the rigors of intellectual life. St. Thomas' methodology sought dialogue to move past polarized extremes. For him, all forms of knowledge are to be explored for all corners of creation contain the imprint of God. Truth is found in the examination and synthesis of competing ideas. This offers an ideal foundation for the education, grounded in the liberal arts, aimed to promote the good of persons and society.

## CATHOLIC CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Catholic social teaching, found in magisterial Church documents, directs us to take direct action to encounter the dignity of others and to create the conditions of solidarity within our communities. The principles of Catholic social teaching challenge us to think critically about ourselves and our world, fueling innovative problem solving that serves to advance the common good.

## Catholic Intellectual Tradition

The University of St. Thomas advances the vision of Archbishop Ireland, continues the intellectual rigor of St. Thomas, seeks to live Catholic social teaching, and participates in the broader Catholic intellectual tradition. We educate the whole student while preparing each one to become an ethically-minded leader.

# The Charism of the University of St. Thomas: *All for the Common Good*

- **We work so the future will be better than the present.** Archbishop Ireland
- **We invite the examination of competing and complex ideas.** St. Thomas Aquinas
- **We educate the whole person.** Catholic Intellectual Tradition
- **We form ethically minded leaders.** Archbishop Ireland
- **We reach across differences to encounter the dignity of others.** Catholic Social Tradition
- **We know that all corners of creation contain the imprint of God.** St. Thomas Aquinas
- **We are a community where faith and reason coexist.** Catholic Intellectual Tradition

The University of St. Thomas community owns and lives out this charism. It is embedded in the Mission Statement, Vision Statement and Statement of Convictions that guide our work and life together. It is integrated into academic pursuits and student activities. It compels us to be a community of engaged service to change our world and with it, ourselves. We welcome those committed to searching for knowledge and to living *all for the common good*.

