

# UST Past and Present

## In the Beginning

*April 28, 1947*

The State of Texas approved the University of St. Thomas charter and by-laws on April 28, 1947, making it the first coed, undergraduate Catholic university in Texas.

The founding was a culmination of years of planning by many people, including the Most Reverend Christopher E. Byrne, D.D., bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Galveston, the Rev. Thomas P. O'Rourke, C.S.B., and Mr. George W. Cottingham Sr., editor of the *Houston Chronicle*.

Opening shortly after World War II had ended, UST began with 13 founding faculty and staff members and 42 full-time and 28 part-time students. Classes, taught in the Link-Lee Mansion, cost approximately \$300 a year.

The students organized activities such as the Student Council, the *Bluebonnet* newspaper and the Legion of Mary; several dances were held, including the Christmas formal and a barn dance at the Strake Stables, *way out* in the country on Memorial Drive. The most notable event was Mardi Gras in 1950, where 15,000 people attended.

In 1951, twenty students graduated in the first class, setting UST on a path toward success. It was truly a university "born from the heart of the Church."

## Congregation of St. Basil

### ***Basilian Fathers***

*"In 1947, the Basilian Fathers had a vision of a great university in Houston which would be at the service of both the Church and society."*

The Most Reverend Joseph A. Fiorenza  
*University of St. Thomas: Celebrating Fifty Years*  
1947-1997

The priests of the Congregation of St. Basil first came to Texas from Toronto, Canada in 1899, to establish a school for boys in Waco. The next year, the Basilians came further south to Houston to found St. Thomas College for Boys (now St. Thomas High School).

In pursuit of bringing a Catholic college to the diocese, the Rev. Thomas P. O'Rourke and the Rev. Vincent J. Guinan were among the key Basilians who founded the University of St. Thomas in 1947.

Over the years, Basilian priests have served UST as presidents and administrators, professors, director of the physical plant, residence hall advisers, directors of Campus Ministry, recruiters, spiritual advisers and much more.

Today, Basilian priests continue to actively serve the UST community in a variety of capacities, and the Basilian vision lives on.

# Educating Leaders of Faith and Character

The University of St. Thomas builds young men and women of faith and character, educates them to understand themselves and their world and motivates them to act in accordance with Catholic values.

UST President Richard Ludwick believes that as a Catholic university, UST provides a framework of values within which students can strengthen their faith, build their character and become lifelong learners.

Learning about the world requires an education from an institution that understands its own values as it endeavors to educate students about global challenges and opportunities. UST seeks to develop the entire person: spiritually, academically, socially and athletically and provides the knowledge, the discipline and the goodness of countless role models to inspire its graduates to do what is right.

## The University Today

After celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> year as an institution of higher education, the University of St. Thomas remains a juxtaposition of tradition and change. Founded in 1947, the University remains Houston's only Catholic university. With a current enrollment of approximately 3,300 students, UST strives to maintain that small campus feel, while providing a large campus experience.

Campus life stays active and engaged through large-scale events such as Celt's Day of Service, Homecoming, Deck the Mall, Wonderful Wednesdays and Neewollah, and varsity athletics brings both pride and tradition to the community. The UST Research Symposium continues to be a highly regarded academic event held annually, while spiritual events such as the Mass of St. Thomas Aquinas, living Stations of the Cross, and the Mass of the Holy Spirit follow a schedule of Church celebrations.

With Dr. Richard Ludwick beginning his third year as president and the start of two new athletic programs – baseball and tennis – there continues to be a heightened level of excitement on campus this year. Grounded in the liberal arts, students are offered majors in over 35 areas of study including those in STEM, nursing, business, international studies and education, and to date, approximately 24,000 students have graduated from the University.

The University of St. Thomas embraces the core values held by our Basilian Fathers: goodness, discipline, and knowledge and teaches these core values to the students throughout the curriculum. UST continues to work towards its pursuit of becoming one of the great Catholic universities in America.