

FAX RELEASE

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Subject: School Opening

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CATHOLIC DISTRICT
SCHOOL BOARD OF
EASTERN ONTARIO



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Official Opening and Blessing Celebrated at St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic High School in Russell

Kemptville - St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic High School in Russell celebrated its Official Opening and Blessing on Thursday, September 30, 2004, with the help of the area's Catholic community. *Archbishop Marcel Gervais* of the Archdiocese of Ottawa celebrated the Liturgy of the Word and blessed the new school with the assistance of *Father Tim McCauley*, school Chaplain, and *Father John Whyte* of St. Andrew's Parish in Barrhaven.

During the ceremony, Archbishop Gervais stressed the importance of the relationship between the parish, family, and school, emphasizing that, "The school is not a substitute for parents in the matter of Faith. The school is an extension. It is the example of parents that matters more than anything else."

Special guest speakers for the event included Board Chair *Ron Eamer*, Director of Education *Ann Perron*, Co-Chair of the Catholic School Council of Mother Teresa Catholic School (Russell) *Jennifer Clothier*, Catholic School Council Chair of St. Bernard's School (Finch) *Ellen McNaughton*, Provincial Education Officer *Anne Noseworthy*, Mayor of Russell *Michael McHugh*, MPP *Jean Marc Lalonde* and Federal MP *Don Boudria*. Prescott-Russell Trustee *Sue Wilson* and Dundas-Stormont Trustee *Denis Sabourin* presented Principal *Richard James* with a ceremonial school plaque. St. Thomas Aquinas students *Eric Bouchard*, and *Naomi Wood* assisted Vice-principal *Karen Mac Kinnon* as Masters of Ceremony. Naomi Wood had the honour of cutting the official ribbon during the ceremony.

A ceremonial St. Thomas Aquinas school key was presented by Ms. Perron. She said it was symbolic of opening doors for future opportunities for students. She stated, "Upon entering this door, we encourage students to dream, learn and grow spiritually, academically and socially for years to come."

Ms. Perron said the new school was created as a collective effort with a rich history of support. "This support is reflected in the strong Catholic tradition and support from our parishes, our schools, parents and students. Without our students we have very little really. They are our hope for the future. Today, I can't help but reflect on our Board theme for this year – 'Being the Body of Christ as Communities of Hope'. The hope we feel for our students is almost tangible and will be realized in the days and months ahead."

In his address, MPP Jean Marc Lalonde discussed how the construction of St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic High School has filled the need for English Catholic secondary education in Prescott-Russell. "This school is important for the growth of this community."

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Russell Mayor Michael McHugh stressed the important contribution of the people who helped make the school a reality. Mr. McHugh asked the gathering to, "Learn the history, not only of your patron Saint, but of the people who made this school happen. This is a living dream."

"Our prayers are answered with the building of this school," said Board Chair Ron Eamer in his address. Mr. Eamer thanked Mr. James and Ms. Mac Kinnon for their tremendous work in getting the new school up and running. He added, "This new building is entrusted in your care, and it is your responsibility to ensure that the students receive the ultimate in Catholic education. We are proud of the community and of this new facility."

Principal Richard James noted that the new school was named after the universal patron saint of all Catholic schools. He added, "St. Thomas Aquinas combined great learning with great humility. It is inspiring to have such a faith example for all of us to look to in our new high school."

The opening of St. Thomas Aquinas CHS marks the continuation of the initial Grade 9 secondary program that began last year under Principal *Kerry Lamming* at Mother Teresa Catholic School in Russell. The new St. Thomas Aquinas will provide programs for Grades 7 to 10 this year - expanding over the next two years to a full Grade 7 to 12 school.

As one of the newest secondary schools in the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario, St. Thomas Aquinas provides state-of-the-art facilities on a 40-acre site at 1211 South Russell Road. The 72,000 square-foot facility houses 24 classrooms and features a 9,000 square-foot divided gymnasium, a cafetorium with a stage and a separate wing for Grade 7 and 8 students. The school has three science labs, two computer labs, student services offices, music rooms, arts rooms and special education classrooms, as well as a chapel, student library and an atrium. *Father Herman Falke* of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Osgoode and St. Brigid Mission in Manotick, a renowned artist specializing in ornate woodworking, handcrafted scriptural woodcarvings to adorn the school's chapel and altar.

St. Thomas Aquinas CHS opened its doors in September with a staff of 35 and an enrolment of approximately 330 students.

*(For more information, contact Brian Perkin, Communications Officer,
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Learning and Growing Together In Christ