



News Release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Second Collection Opens Doors for University of St. Thomas Students**

HOUSTON (July 20, 2007)—Three incoming University of St. Thomas freshmen have received scholarship awards from Second Collection, a yearly collection taken up in parishes across the Galveston/Houston Archdiocese, which funds student scholarships to the University of St. Thomas/Houston and to the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. The money collected for UST goes directly into the Fr. Monaghan Scholarship Fund. Last year, generous parishioners in the Galveston/Houston Archdiocese helped the University raise more than \$100,000.

**Paloma Rodriguez—Keeping the Faith**

Faith has had a significant role in shaping recent Mt. Carmel High School valedictorian Paloma Rodriguez' future. A recipient of the Fr. Monaghan Scholarship, Rodriguez has gone to Catholic schools since childhood and to her, coming to the University of St. Thomas just seemed like the next step. The incoming freshman, who plans on majoring in business, says the University's religious-based curriculum was a strong factor in her decision to choose UST over the University of Houston.

“A Catholic education helps you to develop a strong sense of morality that allows you to make ethical decisions in the business world,” she says.

Receiving the scholarship was also a determining factor. Rodriguez says that without it, she probably would not have the opportunity to receive the kind of Catholic-based higher education she will receive at UST. Realizing the impact this scholarship will have on her future, Rodriguez is very grateful to all of those who donated to Second Collection.

“Having a scholarship kind of humbles you,” Rodriguez says. “You receive it for all the hard work you've done and it makes you really grateful for the people who have donated money.”

A well-rounded student in high school, having been involved in sports, student council and the National Honors Society, Rodriguez says she wants to become a UST Presidential Ambassador and get involved in community service projects.

### **Ready to Experience a Catholic Education**

A Catholic education has always been of interest to recent Pearland High School graduate Christi Torralba. The honor student and recipient of the University of St. Thomas President's Scholarship has attended public schools since childhood and was ready to experience an education rooted in Catholicism.

"I've really grown in my Catholic faith in the past few years and I've always had a desire to attend a Catholic school," Torralba said. "Catholicism seems evident in every aspect of St. Thomas, even in the architecture."

In order to receive the President's Scholarship, incoming freshmen must have graduated high school with a 3.5 or higher GPA or have been in the top 20 percent of their class and also have scored a minimum of 1250 on the mathematics and critical reading portions of the SAT. Torralba said the scholarship has made attending UST a possibility and was ultimately a determining factor. Torralba plans to major in elementary education and theology and is interested in teaching at a private school in the future. She also plans to become involved with Catholic Daughters when she begins classes in the fall.

### **UST Becoming a Family Tradition**

For incoming freshman and president's scholar Vy Pham, the University of St. Thomas is becoming a family tradition. Pham's cousin Michelle Dang graduated from the University in 2002 and her cousin Michael Pham is currently a sophomore. A graduate of St. Agnes Academy, Pham has attended Catholic schools since childhood and wants to continue a faith-based education.

The future biology major was also impressed by UST's highly regarded pre-med program, as the University boasts a 72 percent medical school acceptance rate. Pham considered Baylor, Rice and Texas A&M among several other schools, but was attracted to UST's rich history and philosophy. The President's Scholarship was the final push she needed.

"Receiving the scholarship made me really proud and I feel that all my hard work has paid off. It really encouraged me to go to St. Thomas," Pham said.



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Pham plans to attend medical school after completing her undergraduate degree and is interested in becoming a pediatrician.

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