

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**ANNUAL VINCENT J. GUINAN
DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI OF THE YEAR AWARD
GIVEN TO DRS. ROBERT & REBECCA LEBLANC**

(HOUSTON – May 1, 2006) – Because Drs. Robert and Rebecca LeBlanc exemplify the core values of the University of St. Thomas, they will both receive the Vincent J. Guinan, CSB, Distinguished Alumni of the Year Award at commencement on May 20, 2006.

Robert and Rebecca met at the University of St. Thomas and were married at St. Anne's Church on April 11, 1971. Their one adult son, Jared, is a UST alumnus who practices law in Houston. During their lives, the LeBlancs have lived the values expressed in the University's mission statement: "By pursuing excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service, we seek to embody and instill in our students the core values of our founders, the Basilian Fathers: goodness, discipline, and knowledge."

Rebecca Massey LeBlanc, a native of Victoria, graduated from the University in 1970 with a degree in history and English. She began her career teaching English at Klein High School, where she also served as counselor. Having decided that her skills might be better utilized as a psychologist, she embarked upon a Ph.D. in psychology at Texas A&M. After years of commuting, she earned her degree and has practiced in the FM 1960 area ever since.

For more than 20 years, Rebecca has served in various ministries at Christ the Good Shepherd Catholic Community and at the Chapel of St. Basil. At

the University of St. Thomas, she has participated in activities ranging from the annual fund-raising phone-a-thon and speaking to various parishes on St. Thomas Sunday to serving as president of the alumni board. She was also involved in the selection of the new president, Dr. Robert Ivany. As president of the alumni board, Rebecca also served on the UST Board of Directors.

A Houston native, Robert LeBlanc graduated from the University of St. Thomas in 1969 with a degree in education. He began his teaching career at his first alma mater, Sam Houston High School, in a teaching environment he likens to the sitcom of the period, "Welcome Back, Kotter." During these hectic days, he earned a Master's in Education at University of Houston in 1973. He and Rebecca then moved from the Heights to Spring and their jobs at Klein High School.

Robert's extraordinary teaching skills earned him various promotions, and he began working on his doctorate in education at the University of Houston, which he earned in 1980. After this, he became assistant superintendent of student services in the Klein district. Twice he turned down offers of the superintendent position because he thought he could best serve students where he was. Then, in 2002, he became an assistant professor of education at the University of St. Thomas and director of educational administration. Today, he is an associate professor.

Like Rebecca, he spent his spare time in various church ministries and volunteer work, including the Knights of Columbus. He is presently coordinating a fledgling chapter of the Knights at UST.

Academically, Robert has earned the respect of his peers by presenting at more than 10 major events in his field and by authoring at least 13 papers.

The Vincent J. Guinan Alumni of the Year Award has been given since 1968. Past winners include Tom Horan, V. Gregory Hartford and Cheri York Hartford, Dr. Herbert Edmundson, Most Rev. James A. Tamayo, D.D., Barbara Hurwitz, Patricia "Poppy" Linbeck Doyle, the Most Rev. John Edward McCarthy, the Most Rev. Ricardo Ramirez, CSB, and many others.

The Vincent J. Guinan Distinguished Alumni Award honors individuals for leadership and service to the University, the community and in his or her field of endeavor. Fr. Guinan was a Basilian priest and founding president of the University of St. Thomas.

The University of St. Thomas is a private institution committed to the liberal arts and to the religious, ethical and intellectual tradition of Catholic higher education. UST remains dedicated to building leaders of faith and character.