THE MORE MESSAGE

Summer 2026

Mary Garden to be Re-built After Damaging Summer Storm

A storm tore through Middletown on July 4th that wreaked havoc throughout the valley. Many residents sustained property damage and power outages. St. Thomas More Academy lost multiple trees, one of which fell directly onto our Mary garden.

According to a Frederick News Post article written by Erik Anderson after the storm, “The area likely experienced a "microburst" event, a phenomenon in which "a narrow column of wind" can exert extreme force in an area of about 1 to 5 miles wide, according to Erik Taylor, a meteorologist with NWS Baltimore/Washington forecast office.” The article continued to report that “When the storm subsided, Chris Coda (an STMA neighbor) went to assess damage at St. Thomas More Academy, where his children go to school, and he found that a large tree had destroyed a small outdoor shrine to the Virgin Mary. The shrine's pedestal and surrounding benches had been broken, but the statue of Mary remained intact.”

Story continues on page 2.

St. Thomas More Academy
103 Prospect Street
Middletown, MD 21769

Patricia Neumark

A Note From the President of the Board

Current Board of Directors

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As the new school year begins, we are filled with gratitude for the gift of our school community; our students, families, faculty, and staff who come together each day to learn, serve, pray, and grow in faith.

The start of school is always a season of renewal. It brings new beginnings, new friendships, new opportunities, and, perhaps most importantly, a fresh invitation to place our faith in God and share our faith through service. As St. Teresa of Calcutta reminded us, “Do small things with great love.” May that spirit guide us throughout the year, in our classrooms, on our playground, in our homes, and in the many ways we serve one another.

This year, our community will also experience a beautiful reminder of renewal in our Mary Garden. After storms damaged the garden, we will be rebuilding and restoring this special place dedicated to our Blessed Mother. The work may take time, but there is something deeply meaningful about beginning again. As we clear away what was damaged, plant anew, and watch the garden slowly come back to life, we are reminded that God brings beauty and new growth even after difficult seasons.

The garden can serve as a symbol for our entire school year. We may encounter challenges, unexpected storms, or moments when things do not go according to plan. Yet, with faith, patience, and the support of our community, we can rebuild, grow, and flourish. We are asking for the support of our community in the restoration of the Mary Garden. Please consider donating to our ongoing Brick Campaign and through joining our St. Thomas More Society. Information on both programs may be found online at www.stmamd.org. Thank you for your generosity!

I invite every member of our school family to make this a year of renewal, prayer, perseverance, and joy. May our students grow not only in knowledge, but also in wisdom, compassion, and a deeper relationship with Christ.

May Mary, our Mother, watch over our school community throughout the coming year. And may our restored Mary Garden become a place where students can pause, pray, and remember that after every storm, God can bring forth new life.

Welcome back, and may God bless our students, families, faculty, and staff with a joyful and grace-filled school year!

Help Re-build STMA’s Mary Garden

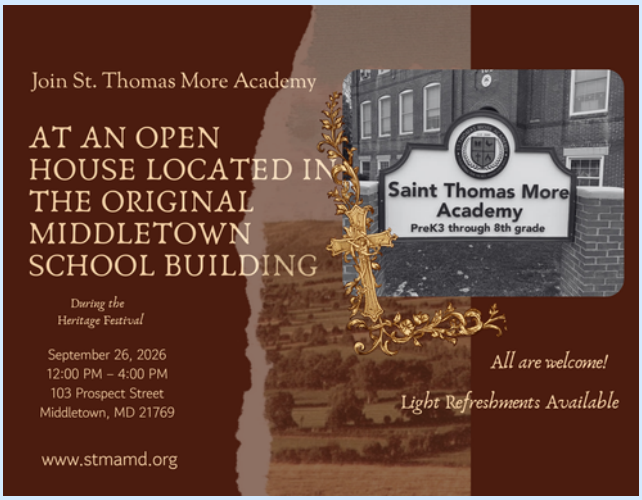
The Mary Garden will be rebuilt using the unscathed statue of Mary. The existing bricks as well as new pavers will be used to create a slightly larger rosary garden with a knee wall surrounding it similar to this rendering below. Estimates have come in at $17,000 to complete the re-build. Will you help STMA cover this cost?

The STMA Legacy Brick Campaign offers a unique opportunity to leave a lasting mark on the new Mary Garden by purchasing personalized bricks. These bricks not only contribute to the creation of a serene and beautiful garden space but also serve as a lasting tribute to loved ones, commemorate special occasions, or celebrate personal achievements. Each brick, engraved with a custom message, becomes a part of a collective legacy, enriching the community and enhancing the garden’s tranquil ambiance. By participating in this campaign, you support the ongoing efforts to create a meaningful space for prayer and reflection. Please scan the QR Code to contribute to the brick campaign.

New Rosary Garden Inspiration (AI generated)

Fall Events to Note

Alumni and former families are invited to STMA's Fall Open House Saturday, September 26 from 12 to 4



Please Support STMA's Annual Race for Education on Friday, October 9. (Rain Date 10/16)

Help students beat last year's donation total of $22, 455!

More Ways to Support STMA

- STMA will once again serve as a drop off center for Cross Catholic's Box of Joy program. Dates to drop off shoeboxes filled with gifts for children in need are November 11-13. Boxes and materials may be picked up from school beginning November 2.
- Discover Catholic Schools Week is November 15 through 21. In support of Catholic education, please consider a financial gift to St. Thomas More Academy on "Giving Tuesday", which is November 17.
- Grandparents' Day is Tuesday, November 24. Plans are underway to make this beloved STMA event one of the best ever. Mark your calendars!
- Join STMA for the 2026 Student Christmas Performance which will be held at the Weinberg Center for the Arts in downtown Frederick on Wednesday, December 16. An alumni gathering will be held after the performance.

St. Thomas More Academy Spirit Wear and Christmas Ornaments

STMA is excited to announce that the PTO has set up an online spirit wear shop that is open all year long. There's a shopping link on the school's website. Items will be delivered to the school monthly for pick up from the office or items may be shipped to homes for a fee. Proceeds benefit the STMA PTO. Shop at https://stma.spiritsale.com/

Limited Edition STMA Christmas Ornament

$20.00 Each

Alumni Spotlight - STMA Graduates in Religious Vocations

Nicolas Fogleman, STMA Class of '22 graduated from high school this Spring and will begin his first year of college seminary in the Fall at Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary in Ambler, PA.

Nicolas said, "My decision to enter seminary was influenced by education, prayerful discernment, and the example of other priests".

Nicolas shares that the 4+ years at STMA gave him a strong Catholic education, laying the groundwork for his future discernment. His freshman year at the Avalon School in Wheaton deepened his knowledge of the Faith and was also when he seriously began to discern priesthood. Switching to homeschooling with Classical Conversations allowed him to attend daily Mass, weekly adoration, and frequent confession, which were invaluable for his discernment.

Nicolas says, "The example of several faithful and joyful Catholic priests in our Archdiocese inspired me and convinced me that the life of a priest was joyful, fulfilling and incredibly beautiful! Of course, my parents have played (and continue to play) an irreplaceable role in my discernment. They encouraged me to follow God to whichever vocation that He wanted for me. Without these, I cannot imagine I would ever have entered seminary in the first place".

Chris Nelson, STMA Class of '20 shares that he first felt the call to the priesthood in third grade at STMA on Vocations Day of Catholic Schools Week. Chris shared that "A priest had come in to give his vocation story, and I had gone up after to ask him a question: "What's it like living alone in a rectory?" While I do not remember this priest, what he looked like, his story, or even his response to my question, I do remember what he said afterwards: "That was a great question. Have you ever thought about being a priest?" That question stuck with me and continued to recur throughout elementary and middle school."
"When COVID hit my eighth-grade year, I had a lot of time to reflect. It was over COVID that I first encountered the Lord in prayer, although it would be many years before I would understand that encounter, and that I decided to claim my Catholic faith as my own.

Chris attended St. John's Catholic Prep High School. During high school he says he attended discernment events like Quo Vadis, served regularly at his parish, got a spiritual director, learned the amazing practice of personal mental prayer, and ate up information about the priesthood. He prayed every night, reflecting with the Lord on His will for his life. Chris stated, "I had come up with many reasons not to be a priest, but He slowly helped me work through those barriers".

Chris emphasized that Catholic education aided his discernment, but that it only worked as a supplemental tool for his parents, who were his primary educators. "Catholic education is a tool to help parents in their mission, not a replacement. My parents viewed it that way, so Catholic education was massive for me."

Attention STMA Alumni! We want to hear from you! Share your latest news, achievements, and life updates with us for a chance to be featured in our next Alumni Spotlight. Whether you've embarked on a new career, traveled the world, started a family, or reached a personal milestone, we're eager to celebrate your journey and successes. Please send your stories and any accompanying photos to Veronica Kosch at koschv@stmamd.org.