Fort Smith Catholic Schools

Christ the King * Immaculate Conception * Trinity Catholic School

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Anonymous $7.5 Million Gift Establishes Permanent Endowment to Support Fort Smith Catholic Schools

Fort Smith, Arkansas — January 21, 2026 — A transformative anonymous gift of **$7.5 million** has been committed to establish a permanent endowment dedicated to supporting **Catholic education** in the Fort Smith area. The announcement is being made in conjunction with **Catholic Schools Week (January 25–31, 2026)**, a nationwide celebration highlighting the value and impact of Catholic education.

The endowment represents a long-term investment in the sustainability, accessibility, and mission delivery of local Catholic schools serving the Fort Smith community.

The endowment has been structured as an independent charitable fund, directly tied to the anonymous benefactor and separate from individual schools and the Diocese. This structure was intentionally designed to provide long-term stability, fiduciary oversight, and consistent annual support while preserving donor intent.

The endowment will be administered by First National Bank of Fort Smith (F1RSTNB), through its Trust and Wealth Management department's Private Foundation Services, which will provide professional fiduciary administration, investment management, and reporting oversight.

A statement from the founder of the anonymous funding foundation reflects the purpose and values behind the gift:

"To provide for the Catholic schools of this area and to promote quality education based on student responsibility and morality."

A representative of the anonymous funder added:

"This endowment is about long-term stewardship and responsibility. By establishing an independent structure with professional fiduciary oversight, the funder intends to create a stable and reliable source of support that strengthens Catholic education in Fort Smith for generations to come."

Schools Served

Catholic schools currently serving students in the Fort Smith area include:

- **Christ the King Catholic School** (age 18 months through grade 5)
- **Immaculate Conception Catholic School** (age 18 months through grade 5)
- **Trinity Catholic School** (grades 6 through 8)

These schools will participate in a collaborative planning process to identify shared needs and priorities aligned with the purpose of the endowment.

Purpose, Priorities, and Initial Program Emphasis

Annual distributions from the endowment will be guided by a formal spending policy and are expected to support priority needs across Fort Smith Catholic schools. Initial funding priorities, listed in order of preference, include:

1. **Need-based tuition assistance (when applicable)**, ensuring access to Catholic education for families regardless of financial circumstance
2. **STREM programming** (science, technology, robotics, engineering, and mathematics)
3. **General needs of the schools**, as identified through an annual collaborative planning process

While these priorities establish a clear framework for funding decisions, **the initial programmatic emphasis will focus on enhancing STREM programming across the schools**. This emphasis is intended to expand educational opportunities beyond current curricula, strengthen hands-on and applied learning, and further position students for future academic success.

The endowment is designed to generate sustainable annual support, funded by investment earnings rather than principal drawdown, allowing the corpus to remain intact over time.

Governance and Stewardship

While the endowment is independent of the schools and Diocese, school leadership will participate in an annual collaborative planning process to identify priorities and submit funding requests. This approach ensures alignment with school-level needs while maintaining strong fiduciary discipline and donor-directed governance.

Administration through F1RSTNB's Private Foundation Services ensures adherence to best practices in endowment and foundation management, including prudent investment oversight, compliance, transparency, and long-term sustainability.

A Long-Term Commitment to Catholic Education

The anonymous donor emphasized that the gift reflects a deep commitment to Catholic education in the Fort Smith community and confidence in its enduring impact.

This endowment is intended to serve as a permanent and dependable source of support, strengthening Catholic schools not only for today's students, but for generations to come.

Additional details regarding implementation, annual distributions, and future reporting will be shared as the endowment enters its operational phase.

For questions, contact any of the Fort Smith Catholic Schools principals.
Christ the King - Myndi Keyton - mkeyton@ctkparishfs.com
Immaculate Conception - Father John Antony - fr
Trinity Catholic School - Zach Edwards - zedwards@thinktrinity.org