



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Roccasecca Project Awards Honor University of St. Thomas Faculty, Staff, Students who embody patron saint, St. Thomas Aquinas**

St. Paul, Minnesota, May 3, 2024 – The Roccasecca Project mission is to engage in the life of their beloved Alma Mater, The University of St. Thomas, through faith, intellect and fraternity.

In this spirit, the Roccasecca Project created two awards in 2024, one for a current student, and one for a current faculty or staff member employed at the University of St. Thomas. This award honors those who embody the values as described by the Roccasecca Project which are drawn from inspiration of our patrons including St. Thomas Aquinas.

For Faculty and Staff this includes: Moral Exemplar, Integration of Faith and Reason, and Guidance in the Pursuit of Truth. For students this includes, Embracing the Cardinal Virtues, Living out Catholic Social Teaching, Community Engagement, Stewardship, and Evangelization.

Both winners received a \$4,000 award. The student award is reserved for tuition payments at the University of St. Thomas and the faculty/staff award is considered a cash gift.

Ryan Keller, currently studying Economics and Catholic Studies at the University of St. Thomas, is recognized for his commitment to living out the principles of the Catholic faith on campus. Inspired by his mission of evangelization, Ryan has worked to foster a deeper relationship with God among his peers through organizations like St. Paul’s Outreach and Campus Ministry, and through personal outreach in prayer and mentorship. His dedication to embracing the virtues espoused by St. Thomas Aquinas serves as a beacon of inspiration for the university community.

Dr. Stephen Heaney, Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of St. Thomas, embodies the values of courage, humility, and a commitment to the pursuit of truth in his work. He serves as a courageous and humble lay Catholic intellectual, using his talents for the benefit of the Church, the university, and society as a whole. His involvement with the Bioethics Commission for the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis and his role on the board of the Curatio Catholic Healthcare Apostolate exemplify this commitment.

Dr. Heaney’s willingness to engage with students outside of class further emphasizes his dedication to fostering a deeper understanding of the intersection between faith and reason. Dr. Heaney serves as an important mentor to students, offering guidance and support in their pursuit of truth.

“We are proud to honor Ryan Keller and Dr. Stephen Heaney for their exemplary contributions on campus.” said Father Spencer Howe, Co-Founder and Vice Chair of the Roccasecca Project. “Their dedication to fostering a deeper understanding of the Catholic faith and its integration into academic and community life embodies the mission of the Roccasecca Project.”



The recipients were formally recognized on Thursday evening, May 2 after the Roccasecca Project Spring Speaker Event, in Schoenecker Hall at the University of St. Thomas.

**About the Roccasecca Project:**

Named for the rocky birthplace of St. Thomas Aquinas, The Roccasecca Project is a Catholic, independent, non-profit organization consisting of alumni, parents, students and friends of the University of St. Thomas (UST) in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Our mission is to directly engage in the life and future of our Alma Mater, UST. We seek to celebrate, foster, and cultivate Catholic identity and culture through prayer and the sacraments, intellectual formation and fraternal gatherings.

For more information about the Roccasecca Project Awards, please contact Kari Younes, President, Roccasecca Project, at [karimariyounes@gmail.com](mailto:karimariyounes@gmail.com).

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