Myths & Facts

**Myth:** We could never afford Saint Thomas.
**Fact:** A Saint Thomas education is remarkably affordable and within reach for nearly everyone. No qualified boy is turned away due to financial need. Many families have remarked that if they add the cost of food, clothing, activities and lessons for their son during an average school year at home, Saint Thomas actually comes out to be less expensive. When you factor in the small class sizes and outstanding faculty, private voice and instrumental lessons, quality food, plus sports and travel opportunities given to every boy at Saint Thomas, it’s really an incredible opportunity.

**Myth:** My son likes music, but he doesn’t sing like Saint Thomas boys and wouldn’t be accepted.
**Fact:** We evaluate interested boys on their vocal potential, not on present skill or technique. It takes time for every Saint Thomas chorister to become a Saint Thomas chorister. Younger boys generally have an easier road to admission, as the older a boy is, the more his Saint Thomas classmates have advanced, both musically and academically. However, our small size allows us considerable flexibility. Go ahead! Saint Thomas Choir School might be the perfect fit for your son. We encourage everyone to at least ‘come and see.’

**Myth:** Boarding school is just for people who want to send their children away. I love my son and our family is really close.
**Fact:** Ask any Saint Thomas parent and you’ll get a similar answer: “I never thought I could send my young son to boarding school!” It’s difficult, but we can assure you that Saint Thomas is a warm, caring and happy place where boys thrive. Our full-time faculty live in the building, and the boys develop deep bonds with their teachers as well as their classmates.

Additionally, there are two houseparents who live on the dorm floors and ensure that boys are settled, healthy, calling home regularly, and prepared for each day. The boys often refer to themselves as a band of brothers, and these close relationships endure long after their time at Saint Thomas.
Indeed, the young alumni are invited back for the night before Thanksgiving each year, and it is always heartwarming to see how many return to reconnect with their friends and their “home away from home.”

**Myth:** My son has never been away from home and would be too homesick.

**Fact:** Every boy is homesick at one point or another – in fact, we say that if a boy is never homesick, we’d be worried! But homesickness strikes at the same time for boys as it does for adults: when they’re tired or under the weather, and it passes. Even when boys come for their overnight audition visit, they rarely are ready to leave. Because our students are young, the school calendar includes week-long school breaks for home visits every 6-8 weeks throughout the year, and free time for family visits most weekends.

**Myth:** My local school is great and the musical opportunities we have are excellent. My son wouldn’t get anything at Saint Thomas he doesn’t have now.

**Fact:** That’s wonderful, and we are always pleased to hear about strong music programs and good schools! Saint Thomas Choir School offers a kind of education that’s very different than any local program, so it’s worth considering if it might be right for your family. Boys at Saint Thomas are immersed in a 1,000-year-old tradition of choral singing that only exists in this form in two other places in the world —Westminster Abbey in London and Escolania de Montserrat in Spain.
They learn over 500 pieces of choral music every year, singing 5 services every week in addition to a full concert schedule. Working daily aside professional singers at the highest level instills a kind of focus, dedication, and confidence that few other choral experiences can match.

**Myth:** What if he doesn't want to be a professional musician? What happens after Saint Thomas?

**Fact:** In their 8th grade year at Saint Thomas the faculty work closely with the boys and their parents to help ensure they find a high school that fits their needs. In addition to offering guidance, the staff supports the boys in working on high school applications and preparing for the SSAT test required by most independent boarding and day schools for admission.

While the majority of our graduates attend private boarding schools after Saint Thomas, some decide to go home to private or parochial day schools or their local public schools. Wherever our graduates choose, they are well-prepared for their next educational step.
Our alumni go on to every field imaginable. In our 100-year history, Saint Thomas boys have become bankers and financial analysts, doctors, lawyers, engineers, salesmen, teachers, and yes, even musicians! Above all, Saint Thomas provides a great foundation for life, sending its graduates on to many of the finest high schools and college in the country, and successful careers in their choice of fields.

**Myth:** What happens if my son’s voice changes while he’s at Saint Thomas?

**Fact:** Over the past 50 years, for a variety of reasons, boys’ voices have been changing ever earlier. Most boys at Saint Thomas experience their voice change in 7th or 8th grade. The music faculty work with a boy closely during this time, helping him sing with a healthy technique as a treble as long as he is able.

When he is no longer a treble, he serves as an acolyte for services. Acolytes continue their vocal and instrumental lessons and sing together as a chamber ensemble. On a case-by-case basis, boys whose voices are changing do join the professional men of the choir, and sing with the gentlemen altos, tenors and basses. Acolytes in 8th grade, especially, enjoy time to focus on their studies and high school preparation.

**Myth:** I’m not sure my son will fit in culturally.

**Fact:** Each boy brings new places, different experiences, and individual knowledge with him that enriches the whole school. Living and learning together helps Saint Thomas boys develop crucial social skills: building close relationships with others from a wide variety of backgrounds; learning acceptance, understanding, and empathy for others; and fostering a true sense of community.

Our students represent many different socio-economic backgrounds, religious expressions, ethnicities, nationalities, races, cultures, geographical locations, family structures, and languages spoken at home – not to mention hobbies, interests, and personalities! We are proud of our diversity at Saint Thomas, as well as our commitment to social justice and the uniqueness of each student and his place in our school life.

The Saint Thomas Choir School is a unique and special place, and we are always happy to share it with others. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions through our inquiry form or by emailing the Director of Admissions at admissions@choirschool.org.