

Robert and Sylvia Reflection Transcript | November 1, 2026

ROBERT:
Hello, my name is Robert and this is my wife, Sylvia. If you are ever at the 10:30 Mass, you may have seen or interacted with us. As a minister of hospitality, I'm usually in the back of church welcoming you and handing you a worship aid, or assisting with the donuts downstairs; Sylvia is typically up front making music in some capacity.

We have been part of the Saint Thomas More community since the mid 1990's: it is hard to believe it has been over 30 years since we joined the parish. A lot has changed in 3 decades: The building has expanded, the name out front has changed, and it has been fun to watch the children of the community grow up and the parish evolve over the years.

When Brennan proposed that we talk with all of you, my first reaction was "no way am I getting up in front of the congregation and speaking", but with a little prayer and the promise of extra treats after Mass, we are excited to share our STM story and how we fit into the past 100 years of history here on Summit Avenue.

SYLVIA:
When we were invited to give this talk, we were asked to reflect on a phrase from Psalm 145 - "one generation shall praise your works to another" - and I recollected how I have always been inspired by the stories I've heard from the families who are third or even fourth generation parishioners. Robert and I are both transplants to Minnesota so the opportunity to be active in the churches we grew up in was not there for us.

We found Saint Thomas More (then Saint Luke's) soon after we started dating, and to be honest, it was probably proximity and Mass time that brought us here as much as anything else. It has taken much more than a convenient Mass schedule to keep us here for 30+ years, though. Fr. RJ's exploding fist bumps and Star Wars references might have something to do with it!

From those early days, our lives in the parish evolved alongside our lives outside. We didn't start out as particularly active participants. We had found a place to worship on Sundays that had good music and homilies that struck a chord with us, so we were content to sit in the pew together and share peace with the families we recognized week after week.

After Robert and I were married here in 1999 - with Father Peter officiating - we gradually became more active in ministries and parish life. We were really beginning to understand what makes this community special and have a greater understanding and appreciation for what it means to be a part of a Jesuit parish. In particular, its focus on social justice and finding God in all things. Our values were being shaped just as we were preparing to start our family.



We had two children in the mid-2000s and we baptized both of them here, and enrolled them in STM school when the time came. During those years, involvement in the community looked like whatever we could do that included or supported our kids: Family faith formation, Sunday nursery, children's liturgy, vacation bible school, school advisory committee and volunteering for anything and everything they would let us do in the school classrooms became our focus. When our kids each got to fifth grade and took on acolyte roles at Mass, we finally felt comfortable answering the call to leave the pew.

Robert stepped up as a Eucharistic minister and I joined the choir. Before long, I was also playing the flute on Sundays and piano at Wednesday school Masses, and Robert was doing whatever needs doing as a Minister of Hospitality. We've truly been formed by Saint Thomas More in so many ways. Through our ministries, our sacraments, social connections, and faith formation, our entire family has evolved.

ROBERT:
I want to wrap up by going back to the earlier part of our story, when we were mostly just sitting in the pew. That is really where the ministries of this parish first impacted us. The people who were stepping up to lead and inspire us made the difference and kept us coming back week after week. Our gratitude to this community for nurturing our faith when we were still discovering it cannot be measured.

That is why we are standing up here today, to show our gratitude, and to hopefully be the same kind of leaders who inspired us along the way. We have been in many different places on our faith journey over the past 30 years, and STM has always welcomed us. We're working to pay that forward now with our time, talent, and treasure. We may not be a fourth generation STM family yet, but we're a second-generation family, and we know, as do our adult children, that Saint Thomas More will always be our home, welcoming us and nurturing our journeys. Thank you.

100 YEARS