

Thomas S. Monaghan

My Giving Pledge

In 1998 when my sale of Domino's Pizza was made public, the *Detroit Free Press* headline read, "I (*Monaghan*) *Plan to Die Broke*". You could say that my giving pledge was made public at that time, but it was something I had contemplated for many years. So, when Bill (Gates) recently contacted me regarding the *Giving Pledge* project, I was more than happy to participate and share my story.

I came into the world penniless and as a Catholic Christian, I know that I cannot take any of it with me, so it has long been my desire to use the material resources that I have been blessed with to help others in the most meaningful ways possible. My faith has always been a central part of my life; not that I have always lived it perfectly, but it has been the consistent guiding force as far back as I can remember. My early experience of the Catholic faith, taught to me by the Felician sisters when I was in the orphanage during my formative years, served as a foundation for what I would believe to be the most important things in life. As I built and expanded Domino's Pizza for 38 years, my desire to spread the faith also grew.

As a young man, I remember doing some deep soul searching and asking myself some questions that had to change the way I lived. I asked myself, does God exist? If He did, then I had better get with it... If He did exist, which I am convinced He does, it meant that the eternal state of my soul was the most important thing in the world. So, my logic tells me that the best thing that I can do for my fellow man is to help share this truth with others. Also, as a Catholic, I would not be living out my faith if I did not use the abundant resources God has given me to help others.

In the 80's, as the material things in my life were "thriving", I had a deep desire to give back to God... He had been so good to me by blessing me with incredible material wealth and success. Domino's Pizza was booming, I owned the Detroit Tigers, classic cars... – it was like a dream come true – yet, as mentioned above, I knew that the most important things in life were not material; I knew that all these things would pass away and that the only thing that really mattered was the state of my soul and for that matter the state of every person's soul. While I had given money away previously, I now began to look for how I could really be effective, really make a difference in what truly mattered; in people's eternal lives.

After selling Domino's, I created a number of priorities that would guide my giving. However, I soon concluded that I needed to focus these priorities even more (as my resources were finite), and I eventually concluded that the most important thing I believed I could do with the resources that I had been blessed with was to help build quality, faithful Catholic education. A number of years before, I had started supporting Catholic education by getting involved with grade schools, and this was great, but building schools was expensive. I realized that to have a more global impact, I would need to focus on Catholic higher education – to train the teachers, the principals, the future Catholic university and seminary professors.

So, from my experience of sitting on numerous college and university boards and the expertise of some well respected Catholic academics, we set out on a journey to establish Ave Maria University and Ave Maria School of Law. Since that time, I have not only committed my personal assets to these institutions, but they have become my life's work, as I am now going around the country raising money for them.

I am very grateful not only for the resources that I have been blessed with, but the opportunity to use these resources to help others in the best way I know how.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom Monaghan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tom Monaghan