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## The founder of Domino's Pizza wants to be beacon for Catholic higher education



Thomas Monaghan, founder of Domino's Pizza, spoke to Colm Flynn on EWTN News In-Depth on June 23, 2023. | Photo credit: EWTN



By **Francesca Pollio Fenton**

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Thomas Monaghan, the founder of Domino's Pizza, sat down with EWTN News InDepth on June 23 to share how he went from living in an orphanage to becoming one of the wealthiest men in the world. He now devotes his time and money to helping young people receive a well-formed Catholic education.

Monaghan was 4 years old when his father passed away on Christmas Eve. Unable to cope with the death of her husband, his mother placed her two sons into St. Joseph's Home for Boys, an orphanage in Jackson, Michigan.

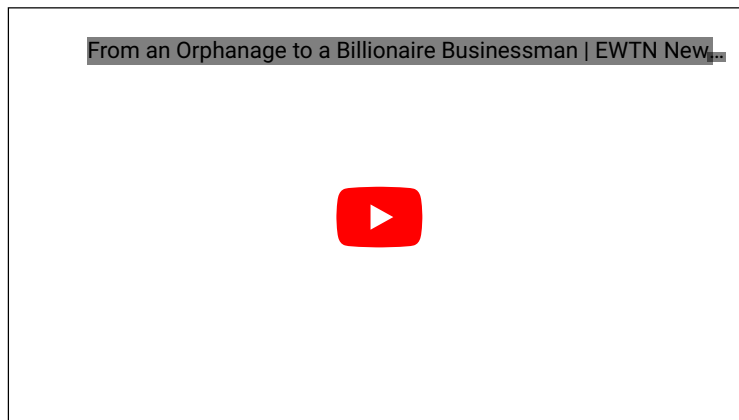
"The orphanage was basically like a prison," Monaghan told Colm Flynn in an interview with EWTN News In-Depth on June 23. "It was 50 boys, Polish nuns, very strict, very holy."

One of Monaghan's daily tasks during his time in the orphanage was to clean the small chapel. This mundane task ended up bringing him closer to the Blessed Sacrament.

"I felt I was in a special place and I, of course, knew that Jesus was in the tabernacle up there," he said.

Despite the hardships the young boy faced in the orphanage, he managed to focus on what he would achieve once he was out of the orphanage. Monaghan shared that he was always "looking ahead."

"I was going to do all the things I'm capable of doing and want to do and should do when I'm 18 years old and on my own," he told Flynn.



After leaving the orphanage Monaghan joined the United States Marine Corps. Once he finished his time with the Marines, he was looking for a job and a purpose in life. That is when his brother gave him the idea to borrow a couple of hundred dollars to buy a pizzeria that was for sale in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The pizzeria was called 'Domi-Nick's.'

"It was a hole in the wall," he said. "It was 500 dollars down, but became the largest pizza chain in the world."

Monaghan went on to change the name from 'Domi-Nick's' to 'Domino's' and opened two other locations in Michigan. Over the next two decades, he redesigned the pizza box so that it would keep the pizza hotter for longer. He decided to focus on takeaway and delivery, instead of dining in, and he designed the conveyor belt pizza oven to cook the pizzas faster.

However, the marketing strategy that would change the course of his life was his guarantee to customers that they would receive a hot pizza in 30 minutes or get their money back.



Thomas Monaghan, founder of Domino's Pizza, speaks with Mother Angelica at EWTN. Photo credit: EWTN

“Finally, after 20 years, I got everything worked out,” Monaghan told Flynn, “I started in 1960. This was 1980 and we took off like a rocket. We were the fastest-growing restaurant chain in the history of the world. In 1985 we opened 954 stores. More than anybody ever did in one year.”

“In 1980 we had about 300 stores, in about 1986 or seven we had about 5,000,” Monaghan added.

As the business grew exponentially, Monaghan shared that he began to lose sight of what was truly important and was distracted by material possessions.

“I wasn’t as ready for it as I thought I was,” he admitted. “I was going to Mass every day, practicing my faith, reading a lot of spiritual books, and I thought ‘I can handle it, I can handle it,’ but I got into the toys; I justified the yachts, the airplanes.”

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Monaghan was once quoted saying, “My life had become a high-speed train going down the tracks, but was about to become a train wreck.”

It wasn’t until he read a book from C.S. Lewis that Monaghan realized he was only chasing material goods in order to prove to others that he was successful in life.

“C.S. Lewis said that the reason that you aim so high and want so much, it’s not what you want, it’s what you want is more than other people, sell more pieces than anybody else, have more money than anyone, and I thought, ‘that’s not what I want to be,’” he shared.

In 1988, Monaghan sold Domino’s Pizza for a reported one billion dollars. With that money, he went on to build a church and Ave Maria

The founder of Domino's Pizza wants to be beacon for Catholic higher education | Catholic News Agency University. In addition to the church and university, he built an entire town called Ave Maria, where young Catholics could study, live their faith with their families, and grow in community.

"I want to be a beacon for Catholic higher education. Show that orthodoxy sells," he said.

Today, there are about 33,000 people living in the town of Ave Maria. The area has its own neighborhoods, restaurants, bars, parks, and the church, which is at the center of the town. The university has over 1,200 students who study a range of subjects from economics and business to biochemistry and physics.

Monaghan hopes that every student comes out "being a well-formed Catholic" and wants "to teach courses that the Church needs the most."

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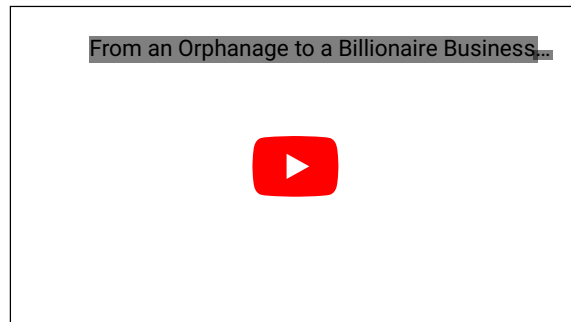
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“When I get to the pearly gates — God’s been very good to me — I want to be able to say, ‘I used what you gave me well,’” he said.

Since the filming of the interview, Monaghan’s wife of more than 60 years, Marjorie Monaghan, died. She passed away at home surrounded by loved ones on July 3. The couple has four daughters, ten grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren.

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The entire interview on EWTN News In-Depth can be viewed below.



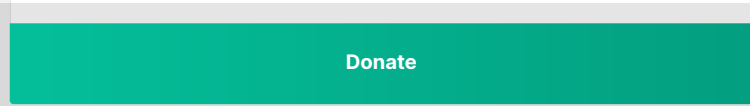
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