



Thomas S. Monaghan Biography

Although best known as the founder of Domino's Pizza and former owner of the Detroit Tigers baseball franchise, Thomas S. Monaghan is currently devoting his attention full time to non-profit endeavors, specifically focused on underwriting Catholic higher education. This support primarily flows through the Ave Maria Foundation, which he founded in 1983 and for which he serves as chairman of the board.

In 1998, Monaghan provided the impetus for a major initiative in Catholic higher education with the founding of Ave Maria Institute in Ypsilanti, Michigan (which later became Ave Maria College), a Catholic liberal arts institution designed to prepare students for leadership in academics, professional occupations, and service to the greater community.

Ave Maria College was the predecessor to Ave Maria University, which was founded in 2003 and which operated in interim facilities in Naples, FL until its permanent facilities were completed in the 2007. The university's permanent campus is located in Ave Maria, Florida, which is just northeast of Naples. Monaghan serves as the university's chancellor.

In addition to supporting the university, the Ave Maria Foundation provided the initial funding for Ave Maria School of Law, which was founded in Ann Arbor, Michigan, but relocated to Naples, Florida in 2009 (for which Monaghan serves as chairman of the board of governors). The Foundation also helped establish the Thomas More Law Center, a public-interest law firm that provides legal counsel to organizations and individuals whose religious and other freedoms are threatened. In 1987, Monaghan founded Legatus (Latin for "ambassador"), an international organization of Catholic CEO's and presidents committed to studying, living and spreading their faith through their professional and personal lives.

Tom was born in Ann Arbor in 1937. His father died four years later, ushering in a childhood spent largely in an orphanage and a succession of foster homes. After graduating from Ann Arbor's St.

Thomas High School in 1955, and enrolling at Ferris State University in Big Rapids, MI, Monaghan enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps in 1956. Honorably discharged three years later, he returned to Ann Arbor, where he enrolled at the University of Michigan.

While still a student, Monaghan founded Domino's Pizza. He and his brother, James, borrowed \$900 to buy a small pizza store called DomiNick's in Ypsilanti. He later bought his brother's share of the business, and opened additional stores in Ann Arbor and Mt. Pleasant, Michigan. By 1998, Domino's had 6,250 stores, and ranked as the world's largest pizza delivery chain, pioneering a number of industry innovations inspired by Monaghan.

The story behind Domino's Pizza (including the many obstacles and setbacks Monaghan overcame and the path he took to success) was compiled for the first time in his 1986 autobiography, *Pizza Tiger*, published by Random House. He sold Domino's Pizza in 1998 to Bain Capital, Inc., leaving behind its day-to-day operations, which he had overseen for 38 years.

Monaghan has received honorary degrees from thirteen universities around the country, and in March of 2000, he was named an Honorary Fellow of Magdalene College within Britain's University of Cambridge.

Monaghan and his wife, Marjorie Zybach, whom he met while delivering pizza, were married in 1962 and have four daughters: Margaret, Susan, Mary and Barbara. In 2023, his wife, Marjorie died at the age 83 from Leukemia. They were married for 60 years. As of 2025, they have 10 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.