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**Ave Maria University Class of 2025 Challenged to be “Be Messengers of Mary’s Message” at Baccalaureate Mass**  
*Fr. David Vidal offers threefold guide as graduates go forward*

**AVE MARIA, Fla., May 9, 2024** – Ave Maria University launched its Commencement weekend today with a baccalaureate Mass at the Ave Maria Parish church. Faculty and graduates processed with full regalia and were joined by family, staff, and members of the board. The main celebrant and homilist was Fr. David Vidal, pastor of Ave Maria Catholic Church, joined by deacons and concelebrating priests.

In his homily, Fr. Vidal offered three thoughts for the graduating class of 2025. First, he reminded them that their lives are eternal, and that they should face every moment within the context of eternity. “Live in the moment. But remember that you are worth more than a moment. ... God created you for eternal life. Do not settle for less,” Fr. Vidal said.

Fr. Vidal then encouraged the graduates to “seek Christ your salvation.” He recalled Saint Paul’s letter to the Hebrews, saying, “We are in a race. A race implies movement, decisions, one step after another. A race also implies urgency — the need for running and a desire to win.”

He shared that as we run our race, we need to know our true goal and our true prize: Jesus Christ. “Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. Find him in the holy Eucharist. In every Mass, when the consecrated host is elevated, look at him not just with your physical eyes, but with the eyes of your spirit, mind, and heart.”

Fr. Vidal shared his final thought: “Remember your *alma mater*.” He continued, “In a race, you should not only know where you are going, but you must also remember where you come from. Remember the place of your spiritual and intellectual foundation.”

“Remember that you were formed in the University of Mary,” Fr. Vidal said. “With Mary, you have learned to ponder in your hearts Jesus Christ. You have learned to ponder whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, gracious, any excellence, and anything worthy of praise. Remember your *alma mater* and never abandon the school of Mary.”

“Be messengers of Mary’s Message—*fiat*, let it be done,” Fr. Vidal said to the graduates.

Fr. Vidal concluded, “Dear members of the graduating class of 2025, enjoy this moment, knowing you were born for eternity. Continue to run your race, keeping your eyes fixed on Jesus. Do not forget your *alma mater* and be ready to offer your Yes.”

Before the final blessing, President Mark Middendorf invited Mother Olga of the Sacred Heart, founder and mother servant of the Daughters of Mary of Nazareth, to speak to the graduates. She encouraged the graduates to think of their lives like a canoe with two oars, and each oar presenting one of the words Gratitude and Hope. Gratitude for all of the gifts they have received at their time at AMU. And, even in a time of uncertainty, to have hope as they go out into the world. “The Lord who has led you this far will not abandon you,” Mother Olga said.

For more information about Ave Maria University’s graduation and baccalaureate Mass, please visit [avemaria.edu/commencement](http://avemaria.edu/commencement).

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### **About Ave Maria University**

Ave Maria University is a Catholic institution of higher learning located in Ave Maria, Florida. Ave Maria University was established in 2003 as a Catholic university, according to the guidelines of the Code of Canon Law by the Most Rev. Frank J. Dewane, Bishop of the Diocese of Venice in Florida. The recognition of Ave Maria University as a Catholic university is granted upon the University’s commitment to continue to be guided by the teachings of the Catholic Church and faithfulness to the apostolic constitution *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. Ave Maria University is committed to helping its students develop the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in life and grow in their appreciation of truth. The goal of AMU is simple: to build the foundation of a truly Catholic university that forms future generations of truly Catholic men and women faithful to the Magisterium of the Church. For more information about Ave Maria University, please visit [www.avemaria.edu](http://www.avemaria.edu).