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Michael Knowles to Ave Maria University Graduates: “Don’t Try to Change the World”

Celebrated writer and speaker Michael Knowles imparts unusual wisdom to Ave Maria University’s graduating class of 2025

AVE MARIA, Fla., May 10, 2025 – Ave Maria University in Florida welcomed celebrated speaker and political commentator Michael Knowles to its Commencement Exercises today. Before delivering a rousing and surprising commencement address to the more than 350 graduates, Knowles received an honorary degree, as did long-time benefactor of the University, George Peter Schwartz. President Mark Middendorf and Founder and Chancellor Thomas S. Monaghan delivered remarks as well.

Knowles opened his address by acknowledging the distinctive nature of the graduates’ accomplishment. “You are among the select group of students graduating from a university that acknowledges and teaches about God, which means that you are among the relatively few graduates this year who can claim a proper university education.”

Knowles explained, referring to Christ and quoting St. John Henry Newman, “A university that neglects the Source and Summit of all knowledge can make no such claim [to being a university].”

In his counter-cultural and counter-intuitive message, Knowles said, “Most every modern commencement address comes down to some version of the same advice: Go out and change the world. But this is a different kind of university, so I am going to offer you different advice: *Do not try to change the world.*”

Knowles then posed the following question to the graduates: “If you are *not* going to change the world, what *should* you do?”

“You are called to act,” he said. “But more than that, you are called to interpret. For confused modern people who deny any objective meaning in history, only action matters. Hence the modern obsession with *activism*.”

Knowles explained that we’re called to see God moving in history, in our lives, and to be in conformity with Him. He said, “Your job is not to change the world, which you could not do even if you tried, but rather to cooperate with God’s grace to do what He wants for you. The

purpose of education is to cultivate your intellect and discipline your will, such that there is no difference between what God wants for you and what you want for yourselves.”

Reflecting on their past four years, Knowles said, “You, Ave Maria graduates, I hope and trust, have an education that will allow you to make sense of the world, even to love the world, not so much for what it offers, but for what it represents. Not for its ephemeral pleasures, but for its meaning.”

“And the world points to that meaning,” Knowles concluded. “See it. Hear it. Feel it. Smell it. Taste it. And then allow that meaning to change *you*.”

Michael Knowles, a graduate of Yale University, is the host of *The Michael Knowles Show*. Knowles appears regularly on television and has authored numerous works featured in the Daily Wire, the *Claremont Review of Books*, the *American Conservative*, the *American Mind*, and Fox News, among other outlets. In early 2020, Knowles teamed up with Senator Ted Cruz to launch *Verdict*, which quickly rose to the top spot on the charts across all podcasts. Later that year, after an appearance on *The Rush Limbaugh Show*, his podcast became syndicated to terrestrial radio. That same year he was named a Lincoln Fellow at the Claremont Institute.

Michigan native George Peter Schwartz is Executive Chairman of Schwartz Investment Counsel, Inc., which he started in 1980. In 2001, with the help of his good friend Tom Monaghan, George started Ave Maria Mutual Funds with the Ave Maria Catholic Values Fund. It has since grown to include seven funds with total assets under management now approaching \$4 billion. George and Judi, his late wife of more than 50 years, had five children. Judi passed away in 2020 and George married Kathy Parks in 2022. They reside in Plymouth, Michigan.

For more information about Ave Maria University’s graduation and baccalaureate Mass, please visit 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 Reverend 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 authentically Catholic men and women faithful to the Magisterium of the Church. For more information about Ave Maria University, please visit www.avemaria.edu.