

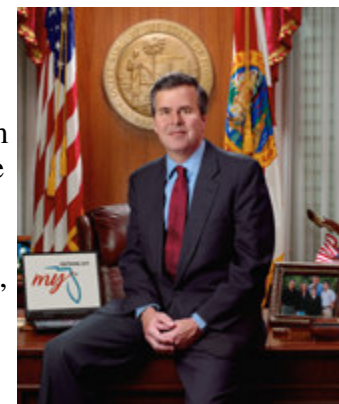
**Address by the Honorable Jeb Bush, Governor of the State of Florida**

2/17/2006

Remarks from the Ave Maria University Groundbreaking Ceremony

Thank you all. Thank you so much. It is a joy to be part of something that is really really special and the Monaghan family, I congratulate the kids for having a pretty good granddad. What a special day for your family! There's another great Floridian, because, Tom, you're now a Floridian. Other than the first governor of the state, I'm one of the first Floridians by choice. The first governor of this state came from Spain. The last one came from Texas. We both speak Spanish though, which separates us, and we represent more than half of the people that live in this state. Most people are like Tom, who's a Floridian by choice, and like their governor.

But there's another great Floridian that I wanted to recognize here, who happens to be a great American as well, just as you are, Tom. That's Jack Donahue, who is one of the special men around. (Applause.) Mr. Donahue, if you ever get a Christmas card from him, you have to sit down about an hour to figure out who the next great grandchildren are, what the new crop is, because Mr. Donahue is probably about eighty-two, something like that? Eighty-three. And he's got more grandkids and great grandkids than age, which is a pretty spectacular thing. He is a very great Southwest Floridian. And I consider him a friend and a mentor, and it's a joy to see you here.



We are really excited about Ave Maria University. Today we break ground on the university and celebrate what will be a spectacular town as well. I appreciate the change of timing. On November 1, I wasn't wearing a suit, not many people were then. After our hurricane we got into our hurricane mode. And we don't get out of it until we are confident that people can get back on their feet. And as I have come back to Immokalee and seen how quickly people respond here, I'm really proud of how quickly people respond here. I'm really proud of southwest Florida and Collier County and how well organized you all are. The county commissioners deserve a round of applause for having one of the best emergency operation centers and teams in the country, because it makes a difference.

In a growing state like Florida, in a state where more and more of the young people are gaining the power of knowledge and of aspiring to go to community colleges and to our universities, a new university in our state is an exciting thing. But Ave Maria is more than just a campus of higher learning. It is a community built on faith. It is a place where students will learn important values, sometimes lost in our ever-increasingly secular society; values that are timeless, like integrity, charity, humility, compassion, and a respect for life. It is a place where young people can expand their minds and nurture their souls. Ave Maria is a place of hope, where some dreams will be fulfilled and others

born. A Catholic education provides young people with both a foundation of knowledge and the moral compass to succeed, be happy, and serve God throughout their lives.

We are living in wondrous times. The world is changing at warp speed, and now more than ever before I think these timeless values are important to tether us down to take advantage of the incredible opportunities that God has given us and that life will give particularly to the next generation of Floridians. An untethered world that is moving at warp speed creates perils, creates challenges that perhaps will overwhelm young people irrespective of the quality of their education. And so Ave Maria University not only will inspire young people that will be going to and graduating from that great school. My guess is it will also inspire other universities around this state and in our country to strive also to educate about these timeless values so that we can be successful as a nation. The graduates of this university will be the leaders of tomorrow, the men and women who will shape our policies and our culture for the next century.

Today we are also celebrating a new town of Ave Maria, Florida, and I had forgotten that I had something to do perhaps with creating the need to build a consensus in this part of the county. For those who got a little upset with Secretary Seibert, Secretary Cohen's predecessor, threatened a moratorium for building in this part of the county until there was a clear consensus about how to proceed. That consensus did happen. And the first tangible evidence of that consensus approach that the county commissioned over time has embraced and that the community has embraced and that the landowners have embraced, the best tangible example will be Ave Maria, Florida. The town preserves the natural and rural heritage of this beautiful part of our state. And isn't it wonderful to live in paradise on an incredible day like this in an incredible part of the best state of all the fifty states? Tom, I have the best job in the world, because I get to shamelessly promote your new state. It is the most beautiful place in the world. And this town will pay tribute to the state that it exists in by having a commitment to the heritage that sometimes we lose sight of in our state.

At the heart of the town is the Oratory, Ave Maria, a church that will also be an inspiring work of art and architecture. Don't worry, given our climate, Tom, I don't think that warehouse is going to stop the copper from turning green and probably black by the time you get it out of the warehouse, it will already be and I think is, it looks beautiful, it will be, it's a greenish black. Looks pretty good. (Laughter.)

The Town Center connecting the Church with the city and the university is symbolic of the community, one where spirituality and serving almighty God is the centerpiece of our day-to-day life. I applaud the determination of many people who embraced the vision and made it a reality. I thank Tom Monaghan for his incredible generosity. You are truly a great American, sir, and we appreciate everything that you have done to make this possible.

I thank the Ave Maria Foundation for choosing Collier County. It's a tremendous good judgment, I might add, to do that. As the home of the first Catholic university built in four decades, we are really proud to have you here. Lamar, thank you so much and the Barron Collier Companies for donating the land for the school and for the town of Ave Maria. And I appreciate all of the local and state officials that are here that worked in a consensus way to make this a reality.

May God bless this great university!

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