

Lou Holtz, Grand Duke of Luxembourg, Baltimore archbishop address Franciscan University Class of 2015

(This article is via Franciscan University of Steubenville)

STEUBENVILLE, OH - Franciscan University of Steubenville sent forth its fourth largest class - 709 graduates - on May 9, during the 67th annual commencement exercises, held in Finnegan Fieldhouse.

Franciscan University President Father Sean O. Sheridan, TOR, congratulated the graduates, saying it was a joy to know them, especially through the administration of the sacraments.

"Our world is in so much need of people like you, people who are willing to live out their faith each and every day, to continue to draw hearts closer to Christ," he said.

Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore received an honorary doctorate in sacred theology at the May 8 Baccalaureate Mass for his commitment to religious liberty and work to fight religious oppression.

Archbishop Lori began his remarks by asking for prayers for Freddie Gray, who died while in police custody last month, for the people of his archdiocese, as well as the restoration of inner-city family life.

He thanked Franciscan University for the degree, stressing the importance of religious liberty. "Religious liberty is not merely the freedom from coercion," he said. "It's not merely the absence of coercion on the part of the state toward religion. Religious freedom is meant to be used for the good, for that which is excellent."

Later in his homily, Archbishop Lori focused on the readings, urging the graduates to be friends of Jesus, saying, "Jesus calls us to be his friends. Now when we hear this, we might think it's casual. After all, we've all made friends in life. ... [But] there is nothing at all casual about Jesus' friendship with you and me."

Archbishop Lori called the graduates to serve others with the same type of sacrificial love Jesus showed, as it is in short supply. He said all must open their hearts through prayer, for "once we know Jesus' love, we will do everything God asks of us willingly, not grudgingly as servants obey their master, but as friends of Jesus who want to

bring his love to others.”

In 2011, then-Bishop Lori was appointed chair of the USCCB’s newly-formed Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty, which has provided guidance for U.S. Catholics in the struggles with the morally illicit features of the Health and Human Services (HHS) Mandate.

His Royal Highness Grand Duke Henri of Luxembourg spoke at the May 9 commencement for master’s graduates. He and his wife, Her Royal Highness Grand Duchess María Teresa, received honorary doctorates in Christian ethics for their conviction in favor of a culture of life.

Lou Holtz, a former college football coach and ESPN studio analyst who was born just four miles from Franciscan University in Follansbee, West Virginia, received an honorary doctorate in communications for his service as a public figure and sports authority unashamed of his Catholic faith. He spoke at the May 9 undergraduate commencement.

Holtz told the graduates that he was able to give lessons from his life because “I’ve been 21; you’ve never been 78.”

A longtime and ardent supporter of Franciscan University’s Christ-centered, virtue-driven approach to intercollegiate athletics, Holtz is the only coach in the history of college football to take six different teams to a bowl game, win five bowl games with different teams, and have four different college teams ranked in the final Top 20 poll.

Holtz told stories of his football career and cracked jokes during his address, sparking much laughter. He said to not make life complicated, and that though there are only seven colors in the rainbow, Michelangelo was able to create beautiful works of art.

Holtz said there are only four things a person needs in life: something to do, someone to love, someone to believe in (Jesus Christ), and something to hope for.

He also said there were only three rules: “do what’s right,” “do everything to the best of your ability,” and “show people you care.”

Attributing his marriage of 54 years to a foundation of trust, Holtz urged graduates to do the right thing so that others will trust them. They should also do everything to the best of their abilities so that “people will know you’re committed.”

“A lot of you are going to be successful,” Holtz said. “You’re going to go make a lot of money and when you die it ends. But hopefully everybody in this graduating class is going to be significant. Being significant is when you help other people be successful, and that lasts many a lifetime after.”

Holtz ended with a piece of advice, saying, “Want to be happy for an hour, eat a steak. Want to be happy for a day, play golf. Want to be happy for week, go on a cruise. ... Want to be happy for a month, buy a new car. Want to be happy for a year,

win the lottery. Want to be happy for a lifetime, put your faith in Jesus Christ.”

This year’s top 10 home states for the Class of 2015 are Ohio, California, Pennsylvania, New York, Virginia, Illinois, Texas, Maryland, West Virginia, and Michigan. The Class of 2015’s top 10 majors are theology, business (with six majors within this department), nursing, catechetics, psychology, education, communication arts, philosophy, English, and biology.

The Class of 2015 also includes the first full graduating members – 39 – of the Center for Leadership, which was established in 2011 to foster virtues, impart knowledge, and cultivate the practical skills essential for effective, lifelong Christian leadership.

Several faculty members formally received promotions during the undergraduate ceremony. They are Dr. John Bergsma, professor, Department of Theology; Dr. Christin Jungers, professor, Department of MA in Clinical Mental Health Counseling; Dr. Paul Symington, professor, Department of Philosophy; Dr. Sarah Wear, professor, Department of Classics; Dr. Derek Doroski, associate professor, Department of Biology; and Dr. Mark Furda, associate professor, Department of MS Education.

Videos and photo galleries of the Baccalaureate Mass and commencement ceremonies can be found at <https://www.franciscan.edu/graduationevents/live/>.

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