Event Retrospective: Abide in the Vine: An Alumni Retreat with Fr. Fessio

Event Recap

October 21, 2026

What a joy it was to welcome alumni from across more than a decade of Ave Maria University history for an intimate retreat centered on the theme “Abide in the Vine.” From graduates of our earliest days at Ave Maria College in Michigan to those who completed their studies in Florida, the gathering brought together a beautiful cross-section of our university family. Alumni from the Classes of 2005 through 2018, representing all three campuses—Michigan, the Vineyards, and Ave Maria University Florida campus reunited in a spirit of prayer, friendship, and gratitude. Their time together was a powerful reminder that while our campus locations and seasons of life may change, the bonds formed at AMU endure. The friendships begun during college are lifelong, and the community and common mission we share continues to unite us long after graduation.

Throughout the retreat, alumni reflected on their university experiences and the transformative intellectual and spiritual formation they received during their years on campus. Though their paths have taken them in different directions, each carries forward the mission of AMU: to seek truth, grow in holiness, and live authentically in Christ. These conversations revealed how that formation continues to bear fruit in the world through their marriages, families, professional lives, and service to others. Alumni are not simply remembering the mission of AMU; they are living it every day. Their witness is a testament to the lasting impact of an AMU education that integrates faith and reason, forms men and women in the intellectual and moral virtues, and prepares them to live as faithful witnesses to Christ and His Church in the world.

Father Joseph Fessio, S.J., hosted the retreat, offering wisdom and inspiration that spoke directly to the hearts of the alumni community. His reflections on Scripture reminded participants that the Word of God is not a collection of distant teachings, but a living message that speaks to our deepest concerns and challenges today. Through prayer, conversation, and time together, Father encouraged alumni to recognize God's presence and providence in every season of life. The retreat offered space to renew their spiritual lives, deepen their friendships, and consider how they are called to bear fruit in the places God has planted them.

The spirit of “Abide in the Vine” extended beyond the retreat's theme. It reflected the very heart of the AMU alumni community: remaining rooted in Christ, connected to one another, and faithful to the mission we share. Though separated by distance and the responsibilities of daily life, our alumni remain part of a community that continues to support, encourage, and inspire them. The friendships formed at AMU are not limited to the college years; they are relationships to be

nurtured for a lifetime.

As our alumni return to their homes, workplaces, and communities, they carry with them more than cherished memories. They carry a shared mission and a lasting connection to the university that helped shape them. We are grateful for the opportunity to gather across generations and campuses, and we look forward to continuing to strengthen the friendships and faith that unite the AMU family. Wherever life leads our alumni, they remain part of our community, bringing the light of Christ and the mission of Ave Maria University into the world.

Read online for photos and videos:

https://alumni.avemaria.edu/news/event-retrospective-abide-in-the-vine--an-alumni-retreat-with-fr--fessio-1792202467-0