



St. Thomas University student celebrates graduation, overcoming challenges as a quadruple amputee



In 2015, the old Santo Tomás de Villanueva campus chapel in Havana shows its condition before it was fully restored over the last several years and reconsecrated in 2024 as Santo Tomás de Villanueva and San Charbel Parish. The Catholic university chapel was abruptly abandoned during the Cuban Revolution and in disuse for some 60 years. (OSV News photo/Tom Tracy)

BY Carolina Borges, Dannielle Garcia
May 8, 2024

MIAMI GARDENS, FLA. (WSVN) - Franklin Mejias Castellanos, 24, achieved a lifelong dream as he walked across the stage at St. Thomas University to receive his college diploma.

"I always had the vision of this day," said Mejias Castellanos.

Originally from Venezuela, Mejias Castellanos lost his limbs at age 12 after a trip to the US.

"I came for vacation with my family, my dad and my sister," he explained. "After a week, I

became very ill with bacterial meningitis. That changed my life completely."

Despite his challenges, he has not only adapted, but excelled. Mejias Castellanos said his life has been "limitless," becoming an Emmy winner, a motivational speaker, an author, and an accomplished athlete with five half marathons under his belt.

"The best thing to do is, when we're going through a lot of things in our life, is to accept our path," he said. "Sometimes we don't want it but if we accept it, we can face it with the best attitude."



Franklin Mejias Castellanos

His journey to obtaining a business degree with honors marks his proudest achievement.

“My main message is keep going,” he shared. “No matter what, wake up, be grateful with God, and just keep going. That’s why I’m always smiling because even though I don’t have any hands or feet I’m grateful because I am alive.”

Mejias Castellanos plans to continue his education and possibly a master’s degree in business. His graduation day is significant not only to him but also for St. Thomas University.

In addition to celebrating its graduates, the institution is also observing a surge in enrollment numbers. The university has reached a record enrollment of 6,445 students, the highest since its founding in 1961. This shows a 50% increase from 4,302 students in 2018 and a 99% rise in undergraduate students.

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