

Protesting bishop won't attend Notre Dame graduation

Bishop John D'Arcy | Mar. 24, 2009



Bishop John M. D'Arcy

Today, Notre Dame university said that [despite criticism it has received, President Obama will speak at commencement](#) [1] this May. The following statement was issued by Bishop John M. D'Arcy and it appeared March 24th on the Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana website.

On Friday, March 21, Father John Jenkins, CSC, phoned to inform me that President Obama had accepted his invitation to speak to the graduating class at Notre Dame and receive an honorary degree. We spoke shortly before the announcement was made public at the White House press briefing. It was the first time that I had been informed that Notre Dame had issued this invitation.

President Obama has recently reaffirmed, and has now placed in public policy, his long-stated unwillingness to hold human life as sacred. While claiming to separate politics from science, he has in fact separated science from ethics and has brought the American government, for the first time in history, into supporting direct destruction of innocent human life.

This will be the 25th Notre Dame graduation during my time as bishop. After much prayer, I have decided not to attend the graduation. I wish no disrespect to our president, I pray for him and wish him well. I have always revered the Office of the Presidency. But a bishop must teach the Catholic faith ?in season and out of season,? and he teaches not only by his words ? but by his actions.

My decision is not an attack on anyone, but is in defense of the truth about human life.

I have in mind also the statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops in 2004. ?The Catholic community and Catholic institutions should not honor those who act in defiance of our fundamental moral principles. They should not be given awards, honors or platforms which would suggest support for their actions.? Indeed, the measure of any Catholic institution is not only what it stands for, but also what it will not stand for.

I have spoken with Professor Mary Ann Glendon, who is to receive the Laetare Medal. I have known her for many years and hold her in high esteem. We are both teachers, but in different ways. I have encouraged her to accept this award and take the opportunity such an award gives her to teach.

Even as I continue to ponder in prayer these events, which many have found shocking, so must Notre Dame.

Indeed, as a Catholic University, Notre Dame must ask itself, if by this decision it has chosen prestige over truth.

Tomorrow, we celebrate as Catholics the moment when our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, became a child in the womb of his most holy mother. Let us ask Our Lady to intercede for the university named in her honor, that it may recommit itself to the primacy of truth over prestige.

John M. D'Arcy is bishop of the diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana

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[1] <http://ncronline.org/news/politics/despite-criticism-notre-dame-firm-obama-will-speak>