

From Notre Dame campus

Heidi Schlumpf | May. 17, 2009 NCR Today

Hello from Notre Dame. I'm inside the Joyce Center for the graduation ceremony and President Obama's speech.

The protest begins about 25 miles outside South Bend, Ind., on the Indiana toll road. "Notre Dame: Obama is pro abortion choice. How dare you honor him" says the billboard, accompanied by an in utero baby sucking its thumb. There's one westbound on Interstate 80/90 between Chicago and South Bend, and another eastbound near Elkhart. The billboards were funded by the Chicago-based [Pro-Life Action League](#) [1] and [Citizens for a Pro-Life Society](#) [2], which together created the web site [NotreDameProtest](#) [3] to coordinate their opposition to President Obama's commencement speech at the University of Notre Dame today.

The interstate also contained more than a few vehicles with "Abortion stops a beating heart" and other prolife bumper stickers. One minivan had shoepolished "Honk 4 life" on its windows. Just off the exit for U.S. 31, protesters had started lining up by 10 a.m. holding preprinted signs saying, "Shame on Notre Dame" or "Obama = Abortion."

"We want about 25 steps between graphic signs," instructed a yellow-shirted "Staff." The graphic signs featured the bloody aborted fetus that are part of what the Pro-Life Action League calls the "Face the Truth" tour. And there are dozens of them, about every 25 steps for almost a half-mile down Michigan Street and another half-mile down Angela Boulevard toward the campus. News organizations estimated there were about 200 protesters by noon and that at least five had been arrested.

But once you cross onto campus, the protest seems light years away. Smiling robed graduates pose with beaming parents for the obligatory photo in front of the library's "Touchdown Jesus" mosaic. Except for the long lines to go through metal detectors, it seems like a typical commencement weekend. A march and prayer service planned for the South Quad and grotto are at the opposite end of campus from the Joyce Center, where the commencement festivities will begin in about an hour from the time I am writing this.

The sun is shining off the golden dome, though it's cool and breezy. There's a saying that God always blesses ND with good weather for graduation. But it's likely both sides in this controversy are claiming the weather victory for themselves.

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Links:

[1] <http://prolifeaction.org/>

[2] <http://prolifesociety.com/pages/start/home.aspx>

[3] <http://notredameprotest.com/>