

## Bishops voice support for D'Arcy on Notre Dame row

John L. Allen Jr. | Jun. 22, 2009 NCR Today

The U.S. bishops today released a statement of support for Bishop John D'Arcy of Fort Wayne-South Bend, the diocese where the University of Notre Dame is located, for his handling of the recent controversy surrounding the university and President Barack Obama.

D'Arcy made a presentation to the spring meeting of the U.S. bishops last week in San Antonio during a closed-door session. Notre Dame's decision to invite Obama to deliver its annual commencement address on May 17, and to award the president an honorary doctorate, sparked wide criticism because of Obama's pro-choice stance.

"The bishops of the United States express our appreciation and support for our brother bishop, the Most Reverend John D'Arcy," the statement read. "We affirm his pastoral concern for Notre Dame University, his solicitude for its Catholic identity, and his loving care for all those the Lord has given him to sanctify, to teach and to shepherd."

D'Arcy boycotted the commencement ceremony at Notre Dame, saying that decisions by Obama on federal funding for overseas abortion services and on embryonic stem cell research mean support for "the direct destruction of innocent human life."

Speaking on background, several bishops told *NCR* during the San Antonio meeting that a sense of solidarity with D'Arcy, coupled with impressions he had not been adequately consulted by the university, helped explain why almost no American bishop publicly spoke in favor of Obama's appearance. At last count, more than 80 had come out against it.

D'Arcy, who is almost 78 and thus well past the normal retirement age of 75, is widely respected among his brother bishops, and is seen as someone who has often defended Notre Dame and its leadership on other issues over the years.

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**Source URL (retrieved on 01/29/2015 - 10:19):** <http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/bishops-voice-support-darcy-notre-dame-row>