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Notre Dame president to fly his anti-abortion colors

Thomas C. Fox | Sep. 17, 2009 NCR Today

University of Notre Dame President Holy Cross Father John I. Jenkins plans to fly his anti-abortion colors by joining in an anti-abortion march in Washington next January.

In a letter to faculty, students and others members of the Notre Dame "family" he said that he will go to the annual March for Life "to witness to the sanctity of life." He invited others from Notre Dame to attend the Jan. 22 protest on the anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision establishing a nationwide right to abortion.

Jenkins faced criticism last spring from Catholic bishops and anti-abortion activists after inviting President Obama to deliver Notre Dame's commencement address and receive an honorary degree.

The following is the letter Jenkins sent out:

> Dear Members of the Notre Dame Family,
> Coming out of the vigorous discussions surrounding President Obama?s visit last spring, I said we would look for ways to engage the Notre Dame community with the issues raised in a prayerful and meaningful way. As our nation continues to struggle with the morality and legality of abortion, embryonic stem cell research, and related issues, we must seek steps to witness to the sanctity of life. I write to you today about some initiatives that we are undertaking.
> Each year on January 22, the anniversary of the Supreme Court?s Roe v. Wade decision, the March for Life is held in Washington D.C. to call on the nation to defend the right to life. I plan to participate in that march. I invite other members of the Notre Dame Family to join me and I hope we can gather for a Mass for Life at that eve nt. We will announce details as that date approaches.
> On campus, I have recently formed the Task Force on Supporting the Choice for Life. It will be co-chaired by Professor Margaret Brinig, the Fritz Duda Family Chair in Law and Associate Dean for the Law School, and by Professor John Cavadini, the Chair of the Department of Theology and the McGrath-Cavadini Director of the Institute for Church Life. My charge to the Task Force is to consider and recommend to me ways in which the University, informed by Catholic teaching, can support the sanctity of life. Possibilities the Task Force has begun to discuss include fostering serious and specific discussion about a reasonable conscience clause; the most effective ways to support pregnant women, especially the most vulnerable; and the best policies for facilitating adoptions. Such initiatives are in addition to the dedication, hard work and leadership shown by so many in the Notre Dame Family, both on the campus and beyond, and the Task Force may also be able to recommend ways we can support some of this work.
> I also call to your attention the heroic and effective work of centers that provide care and support for women with unintended pregnancies. The Women?s Care Center, the nation?s largest Catholic-based pregnancy resource center, on whose Foundation Boa rd I serve, is run by a Notre Dame graduate, Ann Murphy Manion (?77). The center has proven successful in offering professional, non-judgmental concern to women with unintended pregnancies, helping those women through their pregnancy and supporting them after the birth of their child. The Women?s Care Center and similar centers in other cities deserve the support of Notre Dame clubs and individuals.
> Our Commencement last spring generated passionate discussion and also caused some divisions in the

Notre Dame community. Regardless of what you think about that event, I hope that we can overcome divisions to foster constructive dialogue and work together for a cause that is at the heart of Notre Dame?s mission. We will keep you informed of our work, and we ask for your support, assistance and prayers. May Our Lady, Notre Dame, watch over our efforts.

In Notre Dame,

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