



## Notre Dame Faces Groundswell of Outrage

By Kathleen Gilbert  
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Notre Dame Professor McInerny said: Notre Dame has forfeited its right to call itself a Catholic university.

NOTRE DAME, Indiana (LifeSiteNews.com) - Within hours of the announcement that Notre Dame has invited President Obama to issue the school's commencement address and receive an honorary law degree, thousands of Catholics shook cyberspace - and Notre Dame's telephone switchboard - with outrage and demands to rescind the invitation.

Soon after the simultaneous statements by the White House and Notre Dame were released Friday afternoon, the voicemail boxes of University administrators were reportedly full with complaints against Notre Dame president Fr. John Jenkin's decision to honor the leader many refer to as "the abortion president."

Leading the charge is the Cardinal Newman Society (CNS), which launched a website immediately following the announcement, offering a petition to combat the school's plans (<http://www.notredamescandal.com/>). CNS reported Monday afternoon that the petition topped 33,500 signers in 72 hours, averaging 270 signatures an hour, and that the society has received almost 25,000 emails decrying the scandal.

"It is an outrage and a scandal that 'Our Lady's University,' one of the premier Catholic universities in the United States, would bestow such an honor on President Obama given his clear support for policies and laws that directly contradict fundamental Catholic teachings on life and marriage," the petition reads. CNS president Patrick J. Reilly also faxed a letter to Notre Dame's Bishop John D'Arcy of Fort Wayne-South Bend requesting intervention.

CatholicVote.com has joined the Society's effort with an email campaign to promote the petition.

"For a prominent Catholic institution to give President Obama the benefit of their platform is shocking and disappointing," said CatholicVote.com president Brian Burch. A commencement speaker, he said, is held out as "someone students ought to emulate and admire. There's a clear contradiction between his policies and that which a Catholic institution is presumably bound to promote."

CNS also reports that Project Sycamore, an organization dedicated to protecting Notre Dame's Catholic identity, is organizing alumni to protest the honor.

Ralph McInerney, a prominent Catholic writer and philosophy professor at Notre Dame since 1955, said in an article on The Catholic Thing that, "By inviting Barack Obama to be the 2009 commencement speaker, Notre Dame has forfeited its right to call itself a Catholic university."

"Not to put too fine a point on it, this is a deliberate thumbing of the collective nose at the Roman Catholic Church to which Notre Dame purports to be faithful," he wrote. "Faithful? Tell it to Julian the Apostate."

"For one whose fifty-four year career as a member of the Notre Dame faculty is coming to an end this June," wrote McInerney, "it is a bitter thing to reflect on the 2009 commencement speaker. ... One has groaned at previous selections, but the invitation to Barack Obama is far from being the usual effort of the university to get into warm contact with the power figures of the day. It is an unequivocal abandonment of any pretense at being a Catholic university.

"Lip service may be paid to the teaching on abortion, but it is no impediment to upward mobility, to the truly vulgar lust to be welcomed into secular society, whether on the part of individuals or institutions," he continued.

A National Reporter Online symposium article gathered the words of several high-profile Catholics, including two Notre Dame professors, weighing in on the news. (<http://article.nationalreview.com/?q=OTBINmY2NzM4ODdkNDY0NzR...==>)

Ethicist and moral theologian Pia de Solenni suggested that the invitation "could be an excellent opportunity for Notre Dame gently and publicly to remind the nation of the university's Catholic identity and the incompatibility of the president's hostile actions with this identity.

"At the same time, the university could extend an invitation to dialogue in hopes that the president could come to respect these beliefs even if he does not agree with them," wrote Solenni, who emphasized that "it would have to be eminently clear to all on the part of the university that a tension exists between its professed values and the president's actions."

CNS president Patrick J. Reilly, however, was pessimistic about the possible effects of the invitation. "This is not an academic event; it is an honors ceremony," he wrote. "There will be no questions or dialogue, nothing learned. ...We have been betrayed."

"The invitation to deliver a commencement address, especially when coupled with the award of an honorary degree, is not a neutral act," wrote Catholic author George Weigel. "It's an act by which a Catholic institution of higher learning says, 'This is a life worth emulating according to our understanding of the true, the good, and the beautiful.'" Weigel added it was "frankly beyond my imagining how Notre Dame can say that" of the broadly pro-abortion president.

Pro-life leaders quickly joined the chorus of condemnation.

"American Life League joins the Cardinal Newman Society and all Catholics of good will in condemning Notre Dame University's defamation of Our Lady through its unconscionable invitation to the leading symbol, hero and darling of the culture of death," stated American Life League President Judie Brown, who called the invitation "disgusting pandering to the culture of death" and urged constituents to cease funding the University if it persisted.

"Father Jenkins cannot expect pro-life Catholics to stand back and allow the most pro-abortion president in U.S. history to make a mockery of Notre Dame's Catholic identity," said Pro-Life League National Director Joe Scheidler, himself a graduate of Notre Dame.

Fr. Jenkins insisted over the weekend, after the protests began, that the invitation would remain.