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## Oklahomans For Life - ALERT

May 9th, 2009

*Pictured at right are Tony and Phyllis Lauinger and their family on campus at Notre Dame in 1995. The seven older children have graduated from Notre Dame, and the youngest will graduate May 17.*

### God, Country, Notre Dame

*(This column by Tony Lauinger appeared in the April issue of National Right to Life News.)*

Carved in the stone of Notre Dame's Basilica of the Sacred Heart is an inscription: "God, Country, Notre Dame." Simple, edifying, profound, those words, and what they represent, have inspired Notre Dame students for almost two centuries. Generations of alumni have lived by these words. More than a few have died for them.



The order is not random; it's no accident that "God" is first. God has always come first at Notre Dame. At least, until March 20, 2009; that was the day Notre Dame suffered an institutional identity crisis, the day Notre Dame stopped giving precedence to the eternal, the day the Fighting Irish quit fighting for what is right.

March 20, 2009, was the day the Creator, the Author of Life, was replaced as Notre Dame's top priority by our nation's leading destroyer of life: President Barack Obama, it was announced that day, will speak at Commencement, and, to add insult to injury, be granted an honorary Doctor of Laws degree by the University of Notre Dame.

There is special irony that it is a Doctor of Laws degree with which President Obama is to be honored, for it is in the precise area of law that he has most directly repudiated the bedrock values of Notre Dame. As Cardinal Daniel DiNardo of Houston explained, "Particularly troubling is the Honorary Law Degree, since it recognizes that the person is a 'Teacher,' in this case, of the Law." Is it for the pro-abortion laws that he has championed, or the pro-life laws that he has opposed, that Notre Dame is honoring Mr. Obama?

The media downplay what so offends pro-life Americans. It's not simply

President Obama's "views" about abortion; it's that Barack Obama has declared war on the unborn child, a scorched-earth, take-no-prisoners war in which he is aggressively, zealously, relentlessly attempting to wipe out three and a half decades of hard-fought pro-life gains while his policies simultaneously annihilate countless human beings at home and abroad.

Not only abortion on demand, but also embryo-destructive stem-cell research. As Bishop John D'Arcy of South Bend has said of Obama, "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."

The President's vacuous, self-serving claim about "science" is absurd on its face. Does the name Josef Mengele ring a bell? Tuskegee? Steve Chapman of the Chicago Tribune observes, "Science can tell us how to build a nuclear weapon. But science can't tell us whether we should use it."

While John Paul II preached the Gospel of Life, Barack Obama advances the Culture of Death. While the bishops direct Catholic institutions not to honor pro-abortion politicians, Notre Dame bestows its highest honors on the abortion industry's number one champion who, in 75 days, has done more grievous harm to the cause of life than Bill Clinton did in eight years. And Mr. Obama is consistent, the same at home as at the office. In Johnstown, Pennsylvania, last year he famously said: "I've got two daughters ... if they make a mistake, I don't want them punished with a baby."

The invitation to Mr. Obama makes a mockery of Notre Dame's Catholic character. His 2012 re-election campaign already underway, he is cynically exploiting and manipulating Notre Dame for his own political purposes: seeking legitimacy with Catholics, co-opting the Catholic vote, undermining respect for the teaching authority of the bishops regarding the primacy of the pro-life issue, inoculating himself against the charge--the fact--that he is a radical pro-abortion extremist.

University spokesmen have excused the invitation by mentioning that presidents from both political parties have spoken at Notre Dame. Either they just don't get it, or they are creating a straw man to divert attention from the reason for the outrage. (Surely, university officials are able to think critically, to judge, to evaluate. Surely they understand the difference between matters of prudential judgment, on the one hand, and intrinsic evils--the chief of which is abortion. What we're getting from Notre Dame are amateurish excuses, red herrings, evasions, non-sequiturs, and moral incoherence.) The outrage is not because Mr. Obama is a Democrat. It's because he is doing more to promote the destruction of innocent human lives than anyone else on the face of the earth.

One assistant vice president has been widely quoted as saying the criticism the university has received "is nothing beyond what we expected." One has to hope he was misquoted, for if what he said is true, it is a devastating indictment of those responsible for the decision. For it means they went into this with their eyes wide open, realizing full well the damage it would cause to the Church, to the university, to the respect of the faithful for the sanctity of innocent human life. It means they knew the decision would rip asunder the confidence and

trust of the Catholic community in the people and the institutions they look to for faithfulness, leadership, and guidance in matters of moral truth.

My wife Phyllis and I entrusted our eight children to Notre Dame. Ten degrees earned, 35 school years spent there, our youngest due to graduate May 17 ... what a bitter ending this tragedy constitutes to our long and deep relationship with Our Lady's University.

Notre Dame's President, Father John Jenkins, was ill served by those with whom he conferred about this invitation. He would benefit greatly by hearing from those of you who believe it was a mistake. The phone number for his office is 574-631-3903. His e-mail address is [president@nd.edu](mailto:president@nd.edu). The Notre Dame switchboard number is 574-631-5000. Father Jenkins could still reverse this decision and withdraw the invitation.

There's still time for Notre Dame to send back to the White House the 30 pieces of silver.

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