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CATHOLICISM

The President of the United States, one Barack Obama, is scheduled to make a major address at Notre Dame, none other than the premiere Roman Catholic university of higher education in the entire world.

The honor goes even further. This august institution will confer an honorary doctorate degree upon Mr. Obama, an honor very selectively given by Notre Dame.

Good for Notre Dame, you might say, since this renowned university would have the notoriety and prestige to attract and gain the acceptance of the most powerful man in the world. But there is only one problem, well really four or more.

President Barack Obama is pro-abortion (er, pro-choice), pro gay marriage, aggressively favors embryonic stem cell research and euthanasia among many other social positions which the Catholic Church finds as anathema. In short, absolutely morally wrong. So many find it ironic, even outright hypocritical that Notre Dame, and the Catholic hierarchy which runs the university would invite Obama to speak and be willing to confer its prestigious degree upon this man. Many are urging Fr. John Jenkins, President of the university, to reverse these decisions. He has indicated he will not. Why, gentlemen of the cloth, would you invite Mr. Obama to Notre Dame under these circumstances?

Cardinal Francis George, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) called the May 17 commencement arrangement an “extreme embarrassment,” urging faithful Catholics everywhere to continue writing to Notre Dame protesting the actions of Fr. Jenkins and the Board of Directors. The Cardinal went on to say:

“The problem is in that you have a Catholic university, the flagship Catholic university, do something that brought extreme embarrassment to many, many people who are Catholic. So whatever else is clear, it is clear that Notre Dame didn’t understand what it means to be Catholic when they issued this invitation, and didn’t anticipate the kind of uproar that would be consequent to the decision, at least not to the extent that it has happened.”

Then there is Arch Bishop John J. Myers of Newark, New Jersey who expressed his opposition this way:

“When we extend honors to people who do not share our respect and reverence for life in all stages, and give them a prominent stage in our parishes, schools and other institutions, we unfortunately create the perception that we endorse their public positions on these issues. We cannot justify such actions, and the bishops have stated so clearly and strongly. If the President of Notre Dame truly wishes to show that his institution is rooted in Catholic teaching and tradition, and committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, he must underscore this message at commencement plainly and clearly, and invite everyone to embrace an immutable and all-inclusive reverence for life.”

And then comes Bishop Edward Slattery of Tulsa, Oklahoma and Bishop Kevin Rhoades of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania who produced this joint statement:

“For President Obama to be honored by Notre Dame is more than a disappointment. It is a scandal, especially to young adults. His being honored by Notre Dame will make it easier for a woman who contemplates abortion to actually submit herself to this cruel and deadly procedure.”

And more:

“Catholic institutions of higher learning must always be places where the Catholic values we hold so dearly will always be supported and promoted, not where the culture of death is allowed to be honored or valued.”

The Bishops have started an online petition of protest hosted by the Cardinal Newman Society which now has well more than 227,000 signatures of individuals who passionately disagree with the decision of Notre Dame. It is wrong, don't you think? Whether you are Catholic or not, the decision to honor Barack Obama is controversial, confusing and hypocritical. Honor a man or perhaps better a woman who believes as Catholics do, in life, PRO-LIFE. In the sanctity of marriage between a man and a woman, in the equally great sanctity of the womb and embryo where life begins. That would send the right message to Catholics, other Christians and the world. Honoring Obama does exactly the opposite!