



Issues: Supporting Notre Dame, its President, and Catholic Educational Excellence



Notre Dame and its President F. John Jenkins have come under attack recently for inviting President Barack Obama to speak at Notre Dame's Commencement ceremony on May 17th. These attacks were initiated in March by conservative Catholic groups and political commentators and are now being supported by some Catholic bishops.

[Catholic Democrats](#) believes that these attacks are a continuation of the divisive, and sometimes hateful, rhetoric of the Right that was witnessed during the presidential campaign. Today, these attacks are being directed at one of the nation's most venerable Catholic institutions, its president, and in a larger sense the legacy of Catholic educational excellence. At issue here is the central question of what constitutes Catholic identity.

The Catholic Democrats supports Fr. John Jenkins and the University of Notre Dame in their decision to invite President Barack Obama to deliver the university's 2009 Commencement address. We further support all Catholic educational institutions as they thoughtfully

engage students – and indeed all Catholics – to think critically about matters of faith and public policy and to bring both faith and reason to bear on the moral issues of our time.

We encourage Catholics to join us by signing our [statement of support](#) and asking for the support of their family, friends and personal networks by forwarding it to as many people as possible.

We believe that this issue is important not only because of the substance of this controversy but also because of the nature and tone of the debate which is fostering hatred and exacting an undisclosed cost on our Church and our country. Fr. John F. Kavanaugh, S.J., of St. Louis University may have said it best when he wrote about this controversy in a recent article in [America Magazine](#): "We Catholics are in danger of becoming known not by how we love but by how we hate."

Below are some resources for you on this issue, things you can do to support Notre Dame and Catholic Education, and ways to help create a culture of dialogue that reflects the values of our faith.

WHAT YOU CAN DO



Sign the [statement of support](#). We will be sending it not only to Fr. Jenkins, but also to the head of every Catholic college in the nation. You'll not only be supporting Notre Dame, but Catholic educational excellence as well as helping create a climate within our Church and the public square that represents the values of our faith.



CATHOLIC DEMOCRATS



Spread the word. Please forward our emails, or the link below to the statement of support, to as many Catholic friends, family members and personal networks as possible. Ask them to sign it and to forward it on to as many people as they can, as you have done. You may want to forward an email we sent to you with a personal note from you or just include the link below to the statement of support in your email.

<http://www.catholicdemocrats.org/notredameobamapetition.php>

Spread the word. Please post the link to your Facebook page or to your Twitter account, if you have one. You can easily do this by clicking on the "SHARE" button on the [statement of support](#) page. The button looks like this: 

Repost the Catholic Democrats banner ad, now running on the National Catholic Reporter Web site (see below), **on other web sites.** If you are interested in helping us bear the financial cost of this, and for a copy of the file, please contact us at media@CatholicDemocrats.org.



Write an op-ed for your local or major metropolitan paper. Feel free to contact us at media@catholicdemocrats.org if you would like [assistance in writing your piece](#) and on suggestions for submitting it.

Write a letter to the editor supporting Notre Dame's decision if you see an article or op-ed on this controversy. Note: check your newspaper's Web site or call them for the word limit. It is usually 250 words.

Write your bishop. Express your concern for the increasingly divisive climate within our Church along political lines and in the public square. Ask him to support a climate that will help "Catholics be known by how we love and [not] by how we hate."



CATHOLIC DEMOCRATS

Join Catholic Democrats. Are you a Catholic who believes in promoting Catholic Social Teaching to address the moral challenges that face the nation? Join Catholic Democrats – we are growing every day and making a difference for the *common good*!



Pray. Prayer should always be at the center of our lives. We feel good when we do, but most of us struggle to make time for being with God in this way. While you are here, why not take a moment and say the [Prayer for America](#) in service to God and one another?



STATEMENTS BY FR. JENKINS AND NOTRE DAME

- [Fr. Jenkins' statement on 2009 Commencement speaker](#)
- [Closing Statement on Academic Freedom and Catholic Character](#)
Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C., April 5, 2006

CATHOLIC DEMOCRATS CAMPAIGN TO SUPPORT NOTRE DAME

- [Statement of Support: For Notre Dame and Its President, And For Catholic Educational Excellence](#)
- [Catholic Democrats Email - April 3, 2009](#)
- [National Catholic Reporter banner advertisement](#)



Note: this is rotating ad with several other banner ads and you may have to refresh your browser window a few times before it rotates into view.

- Press Release: [Catholic Democrats Deplores Ambassador Glendon's Undiplomatic Withdrawal from Notre Dame Commencement: Decision Not in Step with Majority of Catholics Who Support the President's Social Justice Policies](#)
April 28, 2009
- Also, see the Catholic Democrats, [Catholics for Obama](#) Web site from the presidential campaign.

FAITH AND POLITICS HEADLINES AND OPINION

- [Notre Dame alums receive anti-abortion mailings](#)
Associated Press, April 29, 2009



- [Vatican newspaper: No radical changes in Obama's first 100 days](#)
John Thavis, *Catholic News Service*, April 29, 2008
- [Authentic Common Ground on Abortion: THIS CATHOLIC'S VIEW](#)
Thomas J. Reese, *The Washington Post*, April 28, 2009
- [Mary Ann Glendon bows out of Notre Dame commencement](#)
David Gibson, *dotCommonweal Blog*, April 27, 2009
- [Outrages: 'We Catholics are in danger of becoming known not by how we love but by how we hate.'](#)
John F. Kavanaugh, *America Magazine*, April, 13, 2009
- [Obama and Notre Dame](#)
John L. Allen Jr., *National Catholic Reporter*, April 09, 2009
- [The Vatican and Notre Dame](#)
John Thavis, *Catholic News Service*, April 3, 2009
- [Should Obama pull out of U. Notre Dame graduation?](#)
Cathy Grossman, *USA Today*, Apr 01, 2009
- [A Critical Moment: Barack Obama, Notre Dame and the future of the U.S. church](#)
John R. Quinn, *America Magazine*, March 30, 2009
- [Notre Dame's common ground](#)
Douglas W. Kmiec, *Chicago Tribune*, March 29, 2009
- [Notre Dame Right to Invite Obama: THIS CATHOLIC'S VIEW](#)
Thomas J. Reese, *The Washington Post*, March 24, 2009

POSITIONS OF USCCB AND CATHOLIC BISHOPS

- [Cardinal Rigali Praises House Re-introduction of "Pregnant Women Support Act," Urges Co-sponsorship](#)
USCCB Press Release, April 23, 2009
- [Selected citations from USCCB's Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship](#)
- [Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship](#)