

## **April 8, 2009 – Notre Dame University**

Bishops throughout our nation are being asked by the Faithful to weigh in on Notre Dame University's invitation to President Obama to give the commencement address. First of all, it must be said that the responsibility for the situation lies with the Bishop within whose jurisdiction the university is located. That Bishop has been in communication with the rest of the Diocesan Bishops in the United States.

What any of the rest of us might say has little effect on what the university does. Sadly enough, the greater power to influence lies with those who contribute money to Notre Dame.

That being said, we need to recall the several places in Sacred Scripture that exhort us to respect those who rule over us. Given the President's position of not protecting the lives of unborn babies, he should not have been invited. However, since he has been, he should be given the respect called for by his office by us who claim to be followers of the Apostles' teachings.

At the same time, that does not mean that he should be given an award such as an honorary degree. That goes against the guidelines, which we Bishops have adopted. There is no reason that would dictate giving the President an award. There is reason for not doing so.

Despite the fact that Notre Dame University has painted itself into a corner, its President could rise to the occasion and have this Catholic institution of higher learning be a powerful witness to the plight of the unborn by withdrawing the honorary degree. Perhaps, the degree was a condition for the President's speaking at the commencement, as was the covering up of the cross at Georgetown University when he spoke there. If so, we are seeing an unprecedented intrusion into the practice of our Faith in this nation, and it is being aided by educational institutions claiming to be Catholic.