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# Aborted fetuses fly over Notre Dame

Wednesday April 29, 2009

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Yes, that's right. According to PoliticsDaily's Kaitlynn Reily (see post below) it has come to this: "At around 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, I heard the droning noise of a small plane and looked out my window to see one flying low..."

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#### DML

April 29, 2009 12:00 PM

I would suggest that the pro-life crowd get out and see their Catholic world a little more openly and what it can do when Catholic doctrine gets traction and becomes social policy outside of the US. Having lived in the Philippines, it is very interesting to see the parallel debates going on here and there over reproductive rights. The loss of these rights and the resulting over-population can produce some really shocking sights also, far worse than the banners flown around on those planes.

Also, the ND debate seems to be lacking the viewpoint that represents the majority of Catholics in the US. We have the 'abortion as single issue' side, the 'let's look at social policy as a whole crowd' but we are missing the 'abortion as reproductive rights' side.



#### JAB

April 29, 2009 12:31 PM

Whatever happened to the idea that great universities are open to the expression of competing ideas?



#### Tom

April 29, 2009 1:18 PM

How ironic it is that people continue using the term 'reproductive' rights, as if reproducing dead fetuses is a commendable activity, one that should never be restricted. Couples in China are the ones being denied reproductive rights as they're only allowed to have one child, thus resulting in a surplus of male children and dead female fetuses, yet you don't hear NOW, NARAL, PP or any other militant feminist organizations harping on that.

The issue isn't the free exchange of ideas being perpetuated by so many spin doctors. It's the honorary function of the event centered on a supporter of some very perverse policies. Anyone even vaguely familiar with commencement events knows that interactive dialogue has absolutely nothing to do with it. Fr. Jenkins insults peoples' intelligence by suggesting President Obama is even remotely interested in dialogue.



#### Kirsten

April 29, 2009 1:24 PM

Yup, it's ND Right to Life's fault that Fr. Jenkins made a very bad decision. It's not like we put on pro-life week (including a prominently placed cemetery of the innocents), host a pro-life collegiate conference, send over 200 students to the March for life, and sponsor a number of other discussion events centered around pro-life issues. Some students here, many I dare say, just don't agree with the pro-life position. Not all are Catholic, and many who are are cafeteria Catholics.

In the end, student opinion had no bearing on the invitation, and despite our best efforts, the

invitation won't be rescinded. Believe me, any efforts made by our Right to Life club are much more effective than flying a "shock and awe" banner through the skies. We're into rational debate here, as Kaitlynn Reilly and Katie Pieper (in The Observer) implied.



Lauren

April 29, 2009 2:15 PM

Tom,

China actually shows the tyranny of one choice in response to pregnancy forced by the state, no pro choice person---at the very least this one who is writing this post---supports it. Furthermore, I think you have to acknowledge that with China's dangerously imbalanced gender birth ratio that is the result of a cultural bias against women and for sons...abortion is merely the method of choice to carry out this cultural bias. If it wasn't abortion, it would be infanticide by leaving the child out in the elements, starvation, etc.

"It's the honorary function of the event centered on a supporter of some very perverse policies."

Ohhh you mean like that guy whose Administration sanctioned waterboarding/torture on prisoners and had numerous executions occur while governor of Texas? Though he is not Catholic, to Catholics being pro life is suppose to be from conception to natural death. Just because President Bush called himself pro life doesn't mean he is (not to mention the economic crisis left legacy to President Obama which has lead to an increase in abortions.



Lauren

April 29, 2009 2:17 PM

Sorry the above should read "not to mention the economic crisis legacy left to..."



DML

April 29, 2009 2:38 PM

Lauren, you described the situation in China very well. That same argument is used by the anti-abortion crowd all too often abroad. They never bring up Western Europe, where with easy access to contraception, the incidence of abortion is much lower than in the US. I find it satisfying to take a look at the UNFPA website where you can take in actual data and in doing so, developed a well formed conscience on the matter.



Tom

April 29, 2009 3:03 PM

I have yet to learn that abortions are on the rise, though I hear many speculate that the abortion rate will rise.

Also in Europe alcoholism is considerably lower even though it's not uncommon for parents to allow their children a glass of wine (in moderation of course) after an evening meal. In some European countries the abortion rate is actually higher (UK, Sweden, Germany) in spite of wide availability of artificial contraception. The state of New York has a very high abortion rate in spite of wide contraception availability. Too many in the pro-abortion crowd make the fallacious assertion that wider contraception availability=fewer abortions.

To argue that Chinese abortion policy is intended to suppress women seems illogical on the surface. It wouldn't be good for males either if there weren't enough females to keep them happy. Inheritance rights (in conjunction with the one child policy) are the primary reason for female aborted preborns, though if you wanted to argue this to be sexist then I wouldn't argue.



Kate

April 29, 2009 3:04 PM

At this point in time, I think that President Obama should simply decline the invitation and honorary degree from Notre Dame. Since he spoke so much during the campaign about bringing people together, he should decline simply to get out of the way of what is essentially an internal Catholic Church dispute. Realistically, Obama has made up his mind on abortion and the Church has made up its mind as well. There is NO dialogue, just people shouting at and over each other at this point. It seems to me that most people, Catholic and non-Catholic alike know what the Church teaches about abortion. The fact is there is little national consensus on how to resolve this issue, so it's in our political leaders' interest to nurse the controversy along without actually doing anything about it. People on all sides of the abortion issue have rational reasons for their views and don't seem likely to change their mind on the issue. So the idea of any real discussion or dialogue on this matter with the President is non-existent. The US Catholic bishops ran a full-court press on the issue of abortion alone this last presidential election, and clearly their words, teachings, and even threatened sanctions against Catholic candidates and voters did not stop President Obama from being elected. People have stopped listening, on both sides of this question. And, these days, they are too busy shouting to actually accomplish anything or shed any real light on this issue and move it forward in a way that respects the humanity we each have, and pass on to our children. I think that Church officials and those who exercise their power of speech and of the pen (all too often a poison one in discussions like this one) need to actually listen to why there has been such a catastrophic disconnect between their morally cherished, logical theological, and to a lesser extent, scientific perspective on why abortion is wrong and should be made illegal from so many thinking, reasonable, rational people who feel differently, including a significant number of self-identified Catholics. It is significant that there are a number of people who are willing to aver that abortion is the taking of a (potential) human life, but still support its legality. Continuing to shout Church teaching and acting as if just repeating the Church's view that abortion is wrong long and loud enough will change minds, particularly of people like President Obama, just isn't working.



Cindy

April 29, 2009 4:01 PM

Kate - I don't disagree with you about Obama... I think he should consider declining, except that at this point it leaves the school in a terrible situation regarding a commencement speaker. Perhaps Ambassador Glendon would reappear as commencement speaker if Obama were not there?

But I disagree with you completely that there is no dialogue.

While Obama may not embrace the Catholic stance of abortion as an intrinsic evil as well as the Catholic stance on contraception, he is very much talking about and working toward a society where the instance of abortion should be reduced dramatically.

Within the black population abortion rates are the highest -- and these are the women who are chronically the poorest, the most undereducated and most underemployed and who suffer most from the lack of health care availability. Shoring up these elements of our country, while secular and not religious in any way, might actually reduce the number of abortions performed.

Some people want to have a dialogue that includes this possibility. Some people are willing to discuss this as a step toward the same purpose of valuing life from conception to natural death.

But I do agree that Obama as well as Notre Dame would be well served if he were to simply withdraw as the speaker... and let the Catholics fight ourselves to bloody pulps. Why would anyone else WANT to get involved?



## RJohnson64

April 29, 2009 7:40 PM

"While Obama may not embrace the Catholic stance of abortion as an intrinsic evil as well as the Catholic stance on contraception, he is very much talking about and working toward a society where the instance of abortion should be reduced dramatically."

Of course, that is not good enough for most conservative pro-lifers. You see, Obama's approach, while it might reduce abortions, would cost money. Also, it would deflate the issue as a GOP rallying call. These are two things that the leadership of the pro-life movement in this nation cannot allow to happen.

The success of the GOP depends on abortions increasing under Obama's administration. Anything that might reduce abortions, including PROVEN programs such as comprehensive sex-ed, increased spending to expand pre- and post-natal care programs for impoverished women, and spending to improve the economic situation for those on the lower end of the economic scale, must not be allowed to happen.

Pro-life leaders in this nation know this, and resist any and all attempts at reducing abortions. They push for a ban on abortions when the Democrats are in power, but when the GOP is in control they are content to do meaningless nibbling at the edges of the issue, lest they destroy the goose that lays golden votes every other year.

For the GOP to win elections, babies must die at a greater rate. It's how they activate their base.



## Kate

April 29, 2009 8:36 PM

Cindy,

I happen to agree with you. It's too bad however that the extremists on both sides can't look at the points you and RJohnson make. They are the folks who make dialogue difficult, if not impossible. That's too bad for all concerned, born and unborn.



## Jadrian

April 29, 2009 10:56 PM

This is as much a "Catholic blog" as Dreher's is "conservative". Where can properly labeled blogs on this site?



## Jadrian

April 29, 2009 10:57 PM

(be found)



### Gerard Nadal

April 29, 2009 11:42 PM

RJohnson,

Good Evening. Hope you're well.

I disagree with you that pro-life leaders want abortion as a GOP rallying call. We are genuinely interested in saving life and earnestly desire bipartisan support for the life issues, as we believe that they are fundamentally human and not political in nature. We're all a little fed up with being treated as the GOP's useful idiots.

God Bless.



### DeaconScott

April 30, 2009 8:04 AM

One of the necessary preconditions for dialogue is the ability to engage in rational discourse; another is the willingness to do so.

The fact that the President is being responded-to as though he were first and foremost an activist for abortion indicates the absence of the first precondition; the fact that the tacticians have, yet again, resorted to the most pornographic of "arguments" demonstrates the absence of the second.

So yes, there will be no dialogue. Even if there could have been such (unlikely, yes, given the venue), there cannot be. But both the University and the President must honor their commitment to one another. To do otherwise is to concede victory, in the academy as well as the church and the world, to the lunatics, who must not be allowed to win.



### rick

April 30, 2009 8:44 AM

Since when is Murder political, what kind of a country worries more about the treatment of people trying to kill us than it does about it's own citizens.It's the same country that won't allow the slaughter of horses but financially supports the slaughter of children, and protects a minnow when the water it swims in is needed to support human life. What kinda of a country allows it's own founding fathers and their beliefs and faith to be dismissed as harmful, dangerous and in conflict with the government they created.

There is absolutely no way you can be Catholic,and take communion with out committing a grave sin if you support the murder of innocent babies. The Bible says life begins at conception, no court in the world can change the truth.



### Kate

April 30, 2009 3:27 PM

And with Rick's comments, we are back to battling over truth, a truth, however valid and moral, that is NOT recognized in the public (political) square. If this truth were so self-evident, abortion would not be legal and we would not be having this discussion because there would

be agreement. There isn't, and there's the rub. There is no political body with any will to truly resolve this issue, like it or not. Murder is a political issue; it is criminalized by our legislatures, tried in courts before juries and punished in our prisons, all agents of the state. And, yes, sometimes that system takes no action when another life is taken, finding a particular act to be "in self-defense" or "accidental" or what have you, or takes it upon itself to take the life of a murderer.

Let me make it very clear. I oppose abortion. I have actually had a doctor not understand why I was not willing to put my first child at risk in having an amniocentesis to make sure that he did not have Down's syndrome. (He had a 195:1 chance according to the blood test results; the cutoff risk for miscarriage due to amniocentesis is 200:1). I told her I loved my child and did not care if he had Down's or not. I also asked my obstetrician why all of a sudden my baby was now a fetus when nothing had really changed. She told me she was creating professional distance until these questions were resolved. Turns out my son didn't have Down's. That whole experience was an opportunity to live what I'd been taught and believed, and to share that with the medical professionals involved. My second child, however, is disabled (at least from our neurotypical perspective), with autism. Managing his care, therapies, and activities of daily life keep our family's hands full. That's fine. Both of my children are the best witnesses for life I know, just by living their lives every day. As a mom who's been enlisted by my son's autism as an ally to those in the disability rights community, I can tell you that there are many loud and proud spokespeople in those groups who point out that there's been a 90% decrease in the prevalence of Down's syndrome because people are pressured and scared into abortion. Children like my son with autism were murdered because they were burdens to the Nazi state during Hitler's time. People in these communities want all children to have the right to live and accepted for who they are, not thrown away because they're not the perfect, ideal child that's supposed to be the result of a "perfect" pregnancy and birth "experience." Some of these folks in the disability rights community want the focus on autism for example to be on supports for people living with it, not trying to find a cause or cure, because so many of them see that resulting in just another prenatal test that will result in reducing autism's prevalence because of abortion, like Down's has been. Believe me, I see the slippery slope too. But realistically, all the shouting and refusal to actually listen to those who disagree with us does absolutely NOTHING to change the law, people's minds, or stop abortions. There has to be another way.

With absolutist reasoning like Rick's and so many others who oppose abortion, it's clearly understandable why it's the only issue that matters. That's true of the Catholic Church's view as well. However, abortion, either for or against, is only one of many competing priorities for the President. His view in favor of it makes it possible for him to focus on other pressing matters as he views them. By being a one-note chorus, the Church will find itself relegated to the fringes of any decision making in this presidency. Like it or not, rail against it or not, this is the reality of things. As for the relative importance of the other issues raised by Rick (torture, interrogation techniques, horses, endangered species, water conservation) vis a vis the right to life, that's the trick. Issues are so compartmentalized that actions that seem at odds with each other happen all the times. It's relativism in action and practice.



**DeaconScott**

April 30, 2009 6:14 PM

Rick -

You said: "The Bible says life begins at conception, no court in the world can change the truth."

Please supply chapter-and-verse citations to support first half of this statement. Due to the magnitude of the issue, please be sure to include at least a couple of pericopes from the Gospels, three or four others from the rest of the NT, and at least a few from the OT.

If you cannot do so, I expect you to withdraw this statement.



## Your Name

May 1, 2009 9:04 AM

The use of graphic images of aborted babies is not as effective as CBR and others think yet I would not invalidate their shock tactic approach. After all, how do you wake people up if you don't blow the trumpet in their ear? Our battle as pro-lifers is against indifference as much as it is against lack of understanding about abortion. That battle may include the use of graphic images but it also includes the ability to reason and the power of argument. We put our minds to work for the cause of life. This is where the real battles are won, as we engage in conversation, as we discipline these people we call a nation.



## John

May 8, 2009 12:45 PM

These people need to ask themselves why they think these pictures are offensive. It is something Obama supports as a right, so why should they be offended to look at it? That is the question these pictures are trying to pose. It is non-violent civil discourse, and the only response the media portrays is calling them extremists, as if that were an argument.

Pictures make social change, often for the better, since they often show the truth better than words, which often hide it. This is why there are textbooks with pictures of holocaust victims and slaves who were whipped by their masters. People do not like those pictures either, but they make certain evils very clear to us so we don't repeat those tragedies. With that in mind, this is a perfectly appropriate response to Obama's presence there. If something is so evil and violent that we don't like even looking at it, why would we honor a president who has championed that thing as a right to protect?



## Your Name

May 8, 2009 3:36 PM

Kate, abolitionists were successful focusing on the single issue of slavery. There's no reason why the pro-life movement and the Catholic Church can't be just as successful fighting the single issue of abortion.



## Roge

May 13, 2009 10:17 AM

On a beautiful mother's day in Niles MI. I invited family over, had the kids outside, and we BBQ'd the day away. Enjoying our Sunday, I noticed a plane flying low about to go right over our house. I alerted my 3 year old, 6 year old, and 9 year old girls to check out the plane flying over head. Considering that my 3 year old gets excited seeing airplanes, I saw it as a good idea to call it to her attention.

As the plane cleared the trees, I noticed the sign it was pulling and was completely and utterly disgusted. And I was obviously offended all to hell that my kids were forced to see that crap. And it is what it is....CRAP.

CBR totally erased the point they were trying to prove by subjecting my children to that type of filth. Instead of "open dialog" that they thought they were promoting...I instead had to explain

to my 9 year old that no matter what. People who want you to believe the way that you do, will try to frighten you, offend you, and trick you into believing what they believe.

If that's the point that you all are supporting. Then fine.

If if you think, that a parent...who's kids were just subjected to that type of heinous advertising about an issue that may be important to you...but not to a child....will suddenly change them over to "your side". Then you are blindly WRONG. And more than that....STUPID.

You're all idiots to think "trumpeting" in someones ear is the only way to prove your point. It's just the opposite.

This issue is beyond abortion now. When you drag my kids into it...you make it bad for your cause. Period.



Gerard

May 15, 2009 10:55 PM

I object to the unthinking practice of circumcision, and to ritual genital mutilation of any kind. I've begun to think that perhaps I ought to display large photographic images of penises being sliced near local places of worship. After all, religious belief and tradition are among the major sustaining forces behind the practices. (The proffered medical justifications are at best equivocal.) Perhaps I could hire a plane to tote banners, too.

I must ask those who approve of "shocking" fetal images being put on public view: on what grounds could you object to my displaying circumcised penises and other genitalia, damaged and disfigured by "surgeries" that are nearly always performed without consent? My objections are no less principled than yours, but my means of expressing my opposition have--at least so far--shown more restraint and sensitivity to the community than yours have.



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David Gibson is an award-winning religion writer who specializes in writing about the Catholic Church,

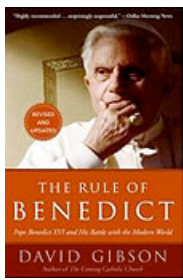
which he joined as a convert at the age of 30. He is the author *The Rule of Benedict: Pope Benedict XVI and His Battle with the Modern World*. He also wrote *The Coming Catholic Church: How the Faithful are Shaping a New American Catholicism*. He has written about Catholicism for leading newspapers and magazines, including the *New York Times*, *Newsweek*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *New York* magazine, *Boston* magazine, *Fortune*, *Commonweal*, and *America*. Gibson worked in Rome for Vatican Radio for several years and traveled frequently with Pope John Paul II. He later covered religion for *The Star-Ledger* of New Jersey. He has co-written several recent documentaries on Christianity for CNN. For further information check out his website at [dgibson.com](http://dgibson.com).

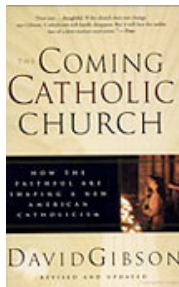
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