

Gregg L. Cunningham, Executive Director

May 2009

Dear Pro-Life Friend,

From MercatorNet.com, May 4, 2009:

I teach on the campus [of Notre Dame] and no one can fail to notice the rumbling discontent. An anti-abortion group, The Center for Bio-Ethical Reform, is driving 'Reproductive Choice Trucks' around campus with large images of aborted fetuses .... As I write this, an airplane is flying overhead trailing an aerial billboard of ... [an aborted] fetus.

The Notre Dame/Obama scandal began when, according to the Associated Press ("Obama Notre Dame invite stirs Catholic debate," March 28, 2009) Democrat U.S. Senator Robert Casey canceled, "without explanation," his acceptance of the Notre Dame commencement invitation, which was then extended to Pres. Obama. Mr. Casey is the "pro-life" Obama supporter who said: "I believe in this guy like I've never believed in a candidate in my life...." (WashingtonPost.com, Michael Gerson, "Obama's Abortion Extremism," April 2, 2009).

The ChicagoTribune.com published an essay by a Notre Dame alumnus who teaches journalism at another Catholic college, Loyola University, Chicago ("Notre Dame, don't get wobbly"). This professor disregards Mr. Obama's pro-abortion fanaticism on the grounds that the president has "... serious moral commitments to things like national service, health care for all and a sense of the common good...." He, therefore, concludes that Notre Dame ought to look the other way on the trifling matter of abortion. This argument reflects the most hypocritical double standard imaginable.

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Stephen Barr says in *First Things* ("Notre Dame's Faustian Bargain," March 24, 2009): "Abortion is a defining issue of our time, in the way that slavery was in the mid-nineteenth century and segregation and racial discrimination were in the mid-twentieth century." In this same connection, several writers have also commented on an open letter to Fr. Jenkins from Dr. Janet Smith, a professor at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit, which echoes Mr. Barr's point on bigotry as a disqualifier:

I know that if someone like George Wallace had been elected president of the United States, no matter how much good he had done – no matter how many causes 'near and dear to Notre Dame's heart' he had elevated, Notre Dame would not have invited him to be the commencement speaker nor given him an honorary degree. The world would not have believed that Notre Dame remained 'firm and unwavering' in its opposition to racism. It would not have thought that Notre Dame was hoping to spark a national dialogue on racism. It would have thought Notre Dame had lost its mind and faith.

The problem with celebrating the achievements of those who supported the abuse of African Americans isn't that reasonable people will believe we are celebrating the abuse of African Americans. The problem is that they may think we believe that abusing African Americans doesn't matter very much. The *Los Angeles*

*Times*, March 29, 2009, carried a story headlined “Holiday provokes war between the Souths: A drive to honor the Confederacy strikes many as anachronistic.” The article quotes Charles McMichael, commander-in-chief of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, who uses this “more good than evil” argument to justify the use of “Confederate heritage holidays” to honor the history of the South: “There are some good things that you can learn, and we think there are more good than bad.” As regards the “bad,” the article adds: “But for many Americans, the Confederacy evokes the atrocities of slavery.”

The difficulty with this line of argument is that a substantial majority of Americans reject any comparison of slavery/segregation with abortion. The horror of enslavement and segregation is real to them because educators and journalists and entertainers and politicians have made it real. The horror of abortion is unreal to them because those same educators and journalists and entertainers and politicians have covered it up. The *Los Angeles Times* featured a story on March 26, 2009 headlined “Thanks for opening my eyes.” The principal focus of the article is an interview with an Iowa school teacher named Jane Elliot. In the 1960s, Ms. Elliot made racism real to her students by inventing a now famous exercise in which she discriminated *against* those who had blue eyes and *in favor* of those who had brown eyes.

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The experiment began the day after the assassination of Martin Luther King and the rules were harsh: “Blue-eyed children must use a cup to drink from the fountain. Blue-eyed children must leave late to lunch and to recess. Blue-eyed children were not to speak to brown-eyed children. Blue-eyed children were [treated as] troublemakers and slow learners.” This sort of intense conditioning was reinforced by a flood of newspaper, magazine and television images which depict black people sympathetically and their oppressors disapprovingly. How could these students *not* grow up believing, thank heaven, that black people are human beings who are fully entitled to rights of personhood?

Conversely, how could those same students not grow up believing, sadly, that preborn children are subhuman beings who are entitled to no rights of personhood until very late in pregnancy, if then? They have been told that abortion is a constitutional right. Students are always (and rightly) shown images depicting the horrors of racism but never images depicting the horrors of abortion. They have been told that abortion is a simple outpatient surgical procedure. They have been told that abortion involves the removal of a blob of tissue during the stage of pregnancy at which 90% of abortions are performed. Had they been lied to about racism as convincingly as they have been lied to about abortion, we might still be a country in which Barack Obama could become a community organizer but not likely an undergrad at Columbia, and never a law student at Harvard. The U.S. Senate? The Presidency? Unthinkable. When it comes to shaping the attitudes of tens of millions of future voters, what goes on in classrooms matters a lot.

When we show students outside the classroom what their teachers are covering up inside the classroom, we are vilified beyond imagining. The *South Bend Tribune* (May 3, 2009) called CBR potentially “disruptive” and “violent,” by name. A commentator on PoliticsDaily.com (“Plane pulling giant fetus flies over Notre Dame,” April 29, 2009) called us “American Taliban.” Angry students, faculty, alumni, parents, and locals have all weighed in with emails and news interviews. One person called us “haters” and another accused us of using “terroristic propaganda.” Someone else called us “stormtroopers” and “nut case whackos.” We are being called “ridiculous,” “bit\*hes,” “disgusting,” “embarrassing,” “disrespectful,” “horrible,” “awful,” “outrageous,” “terrible,” “ignorant,” and much worse. The very loony-leftist Wonkette.com ran a piece featuring my email exchange with a young woman upset that we were ruining her graduation (“Abortion Haters Go Nuts, Really Nuts, At Notre Dame,” April 30, 2009) which was followed with hundreds of nearly demonic, threatening posts. All this for holding up a picture of an aborted baby.

Then a “Catholic” mother (and huge Obama fan) wrote to complain that we had no right to ruin the law school graduation of her child. Here is my partial reply:

Thank you for taking the time to write and express your concerns about our abortion photos at Notre Dame.

I notice that you say you were "raised in the Catholic faith." You don't say that you are a Catholic. If you were a Catholic, you might not believe that a picture of an aborted baby will ruin your son's graduation. You might believe that it could inspire your son and his classmates to actually use their expensive educations to fight this terrible atrocity. How will covering up abortion provide that impetus? And if Mr. Obama is such a noble person and abortion is such a trivial matter, why would you be so troubled that we are showing the Class of 2009 the babies Mr. Obama is killing?

What we are doing actually has relatively little to do with Notre Dame. Fr. Jenkins has offered up this great Catholic institution for Mr. Obama to use to make a political statement. That political statement isn't that Catholics should embrace Mr. Obama's "Culture of Death" ethic. It is that Catholics may oppose abortion so long as they don't oppose it too seriously. Fr. Jenkins' invitation doesn't signal that abortion is virtuous. It signals that abortion doesn't matter very much. That message empowers Mr. Obama. It better enables him to attract careless Catholic political support which he can use to pack the courts with jurists who favor baby-killing. It better enables him to corrupt our healthcare system by mandating universal abortion insurance coverage. It better enables him to strip Catholic doctors and pharmacists and nurses of their right to refuse to prescribe, dispense and administer abortifacient drugs and devices.

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When we inject abortion photos into any event from which we believe Obama should be excluded, Catholic schools which invite him and White House staffers who schedule him will be given pause to more carefully consider the costs and benefits of extending and accepting these scandalous invitations. We want the White House to fear the political embarrassment they are suffering right now at Notre Dame. Our strategy seems to be working. Fox News reported on April 30, 2009 that Mr. Obama has decided to delay the Freedom of Choice Act he promised to sign into law as his first legislative priority as president. He was quoted as saying: "The most important thing we can do is to tamp down some of the anger surrounding the issue [of abortion] ...." The "anger" to which he refers is the resistance we are mounting to his presence at Notre Dame. We want him to know there are places we aren't going to allow him to go without forcing him to pay a terrible political price. He is trying to avoid a fight over abortion right now because he doesn't want to expend political capital he needs to ruin our economy, destroy our healthcare system and diminish our ability to meet our energy needs. We are going to force that fight, and make it as costly as possible, whether Catholic colleges like it or not.

We are also sending a message to Catholic college presidents that if they defy the bishops and honor serial killers, they will be inviting our Cirque du Choice to their campus. That strategy seems to be working as well. Syracuse.com's Post-Standard newspaper reported in April that "In a recent interview, Le Moyne College President Fred P. Pestello expressed relief that the Syracuse Catholic college is not dealing with the issue [of a pro-abortion commencement speaker] which he called 'difficult.'" Difficult indeed. And we intend to make it as "difficult" as we lawfully can.

In June of 1940, as France negotiated its surrender to the Nazis, England resolved to fight on. The French, however, refused England's demands that it scuttle their Navy or turn its ships over to the Allies to prevent Hitler from using them to attack England and America. France and England were close allies but upon orders from Winston Churchill, the Royal Navy responded by turning its guns on the French fleet at Oran, sinking the most important French surface combatants. That shocking attack wasn't an act of war against France. It was an act of war against Germany. The analogy to Notre Dame is imperfect, as are all analogies, because Mr. Obama is likely to be responsible for the deaths of many more innocent people than Hitler ever was. But we don't intend to allow political priests to turn Catholic colleges over to Mr. Obama so he can use them to enhance his power to kill babies. We aren't fighting Catholic colleges when we fight Mr. Obama any more than P.M. Churchill was fighting the French when he ensured that French naval assets could not be used to kill innocent people in Great Britain and America. We love Catholic colleges. We love their students. But we intend to save babies from the pro-life movement whenever and wherever our pro-life friends empower our adversaries through appeasement and capitulation.

We understand that you aren't going to agree with any of this because you embrace the delusional notion that we can find "common ground" with Mr. Obama on abortion. Americans who were serious about ending slavery didn't seek "common ground" with slave owners by embracing the "slavery reduction strategies" being floated in the mid-1800's. They opposed the Missouri Compromise and supported abolition. They voted for Abraham Lincoln instead of Stephen A. Douglas. You don't fight slavery by supporting candidates who think it ought to be legal and you don't fight abortion by honoring a president who supports infanticide. You have every right to use the flagship university of American Catholicism to honor Mr. Obama and we have every right to make that event as miserable, and therefore, unlikely to be repeated, as the law permits. Please don't take it personally.

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Thanks for helping us make it clear to the White House and Notre Dame that we are not going to put up with pro-abortion politicians using Catholic colleges to enhance their power to kill babies.

Lord bless,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gregg Cunningham', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Gregg Cunningham  
Executive Director

P.S. On April 30, 2009, a twenty-five-year-old woman from Biloxi, MS, wrote us to say: "I never stopped to think about it [abortion] from that point of view. I actually started crying while looking at the pictures." She added: "I am glad there are sites like this one that show the truth no matter how horrible it is. Thank you for opening my eyes!!!!" Thank you for helping us also open the eyes of students at Notre Dame!