



Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C.  
Office of the President  
400 Main Building  
Notre Dame University  
South Bend, Indiana 46556

May 1, 2009

Dear Father Jenkins:

I wish to add my voice to the chorus of protest against the leadership of Notre Dame University and your decision to confer an honorary doctorate of law degree upon President Barack Obama. I believe that the decision is misguided and damaging both to the University and to Catholic Church at large.

The honorary doctorate should be reserved for persons whose lives and accomplishments reflect those exemplary qualities and values we wish to cultivate in the lives of our students.

Sadly, President Barack Obama's consistent assault upon the civil rights of the unborn reflects the very antithesis of our Catholic social and moral teaching on the sacredness of life from conception until natural death.

I believe that your decision obdurately defies the U.S. Bishops' public position that "Catholic institutions should not honor those who act in defiance of our fundamental principles. They should not be given awards, honors, or platforms which would suggest support for their actions."

I am particularly disappointed in your leadership, Father Jenkins. By allowing the University to confer this degree, you have failed to exercise your prophetic voice and teach the American people that the *only* change we can count on is "founded on truth, built on justice, and animated by love"—love for the least, the last, and the lowliest in our midst.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Rev. George Leo Thomas  
Bishop of Helena