

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 11, 2009

Media contacts:

Amber Dawe, TC Public Relations, 312-422-1333, amber@tcpr.net

John Daly, ND Response, (502) 693-5112, jdaly1@nd.edu

Pro-Life Notre Dame Students Refuse to Attend Graduation in Protest of Obama Visit, Opt for Prayer in University's Grotto

(Chicago, Ill.) – Notre Dame University seniors who have decided not to attend their commencement ceremony in protest of the university's decision to grant President Barack Obama an honorary law degree will instead hold a meditation in the university's grotto at 2 p.m. on May 17, to coincide with the official commencement.

ND Response, the student-led coalition that is planning the meditation, says Notre Dame should not be honoring a political figure who supports abortion and stem cell research.

[View a video of student reactions (www.youtube.com/watch?v=1KUBdrrbF6o) to the university's decision.]

"It's not a political issue; this is an issue of human dignity, and it's a Catholic issue," said Greer Hannan, a Notre Dame graduating senior. "As a Catholic university, we need to stand up for it."

The meditation, which will be led by Rev. Frank Pavone, national director of Priests for Life, is part of a two-day rally that has been officially sanctioned by the university.

The evening of May 16, bishop of the Fort Wayne-South Bend diocese, Rev. John D'Arcy, will lead a candlelight prayer vigil for graduating seniors and their families to pray for an end to abortion and embryo research.

On May 17, Commencement Day, in addition to the meditation ceremony, a large rally will be held on the South Quad of the university, the campus' main quad, between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. Speakers at the rally will include Elizabeth Naquin Border, Notre Dame graduate and former chairman of the board for the Women's Care Centers in South Bend; Rev. Joseph Raphael, Notre Dame graduate and principal of St. Augustine's High School in New Orleans; William Solomon, director of the university's Center for Ethics and Culture; and Chris Godfrey, a Notre Dame law school graduate and former offensive guard for the Super Bowl XXI champion New York Giants.

ND Response is an *ad hoc* coalition of Notre Dame-sponsored student groups that has been organized to lead student reactions to the university's decision to award an honorary law degree to President Barack Obama. These groups include Notre Dame Right to Life, Jus Vitae (Notre Dame Law School Right to Life), Notre Dame Knights of Columbus Council 1477, the Irish Rover independent student newspaper, Notre Dame College Republicans, The University of Notre Dame Anscombe Society, The Identity Project of Notre Dame, Notre Dame Knights of the Immaculata, Notre Dame Children of Mary, the Orestes Brownson Council, and the Notre Dame Law St. Thomas More Society. More information about ND Response and the demonstration can be found on the coalition's Web site, www.NDResponse.com.

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Available for interview:

-John Daly, ND Response-

-Several graduating seniors-

-Speakers from the rally-

Please contact Amber Dawe at 312.422.1333 or amber@tcpr.net to arrange an interview.