

From the offices of . . .

SHAWN F. SULLIVAN ATTORNEY AT LAW, LTD

(574) 286-7860

SullyatLaw@sbcglobal.net

The Life Center Hosts Demonstration Activities in Opposition to Notre Dame's Laetare Medal for Biden

(South Bend – March 15, 2016) – From full-page color ads in the South Bend Tribune and Notre Dame Observer to a sidewalk demonstration with provocative signs, The Life Center in South Bend was the focal point of activity for the opposition to Notre Dame's awarding of the Laetare Medal to Vice President Joseph Biden. The Laetare Medal is a prestigious award by Notre Dame, given out during the annual graduation ceremony, with the intention of honoring an exemplary Catholic who has made a distinctively Catholic contribution in his or her professional or intellectual life. In an interview with ABC-57, the Director of The Life Center, Shawn Sullivan, summed-up the issue that was motivating the opposition:

As a pro-life advocate, he said he is strongly against Vice President Biden receiving the Laetare Medal. "The hot button issues of the day are abortion, gay marriage, restrictions on religious liberty," Sullivan said. "And unfortunately, Vice President Biden stands for all of those; so [Notre Dame] couldn't have picked a worse person to bring into the fold for a Laetare Medal." (<http://www.abc57.com/clip/12435348/notre-dame-commencement-could-see-protests-for-medal-recipients>)

Sullivan added in another interview yesterday, as the Laetare Medal was being awarded to Biden: "It sends the wrong message to folks that the doctrines of the Catholic Church do not matter and that we can be wishy-washy on the doctrines and still call yourself Catholic," <http://www.abc57.com/story/31977928/protestors-in-attendance-for-notre-dame-graduation>

Several other groups and individuals joined Sullivan and The Life Center including Citizens for a Pro-Life Society (prolifesociety.org), Pro-Life Action League (prolifeaction.org), Alan L. Keyes' Loyal to Liberty (loyaltoliberty.org) and Church Militant TV (churchmilitant.tv). These groups voiced their opposition in the press by running a full page ad in both the South Bend Tribune (in the news section) and the Notre Dame Observer (in the sports section of course). (See attached and the link to the ad). The demonstration on graduation day was also preceded by the making of dozens of signs, as reported by ABC57 (<http://www.abc57.com/clip/12435348/notre-dame-commencement-could-see-protests-for-medal-recipients>), and an online petition, started in March, to support Bishop Rhoades who came out strongly in opposition to Notre Dame's awarding of the Laetare Medal to Biden.

"We are here to support our Bishop," said Sullivan. "If the faithful want their shepherds to lead the flock, they have to support them in such instances." (See attached photo of the demonstrators at the Notre Dame Avenue and Angela Boulevard entrance). "We need to make clear that Father Jenkins and Notre Dame do not speak for the Church nor do they reflect authentic Catholicism." In an interview with Fox 28, Sullivan added the following regarding Notre Dame's leadership: "For Fr. Jenkins, we're at a point now . . . where there's gotta be some kind of reconciliation. Is this a Catholic institution? Because if it's a Catholic institution, you can't be doing the things that

you're doing." (<http://www.fox28.com/story/31978135/2016/05/15/protesters-rally-outside-notre-dame-commencement-over-laetare-medal-controversy-jenkins-addresses-criticisms>)



<http://www.fox28.com/story/31978135/2016/05/15/protesters-rally-outside-notre-dame-commencement-over-laetare-medal-controversy-jenkins-addresses-criticisms>

The South Bend Tribune had this to say regarding the demonstration: Graphic signs depicted aborted fetuses or declared statements such as "Shame on Notre Dame" or "Catholic Faith Attacked From Within." There was also some lightness to the protest, with a woman dressed in a T-Rex costume holding a sign that read, "Laetare Medal Now Cheap: \$6.66."

http://www.southbendtribune.com/news/local/activists-protest-joe-biden-at-notre-dame/article_f8e9e858-1a9d-11e6-b586-cba2321568ac.html

According to that same interview by Fox 28 (above), yesterday's protest was more important than the protests that occurred in 2009 when President Obama was given an honorary juris doctorate. "This is a little bit more serious because now you have a Catholic institution awarding a Catholic award to somebody who defies the teachings of the Catholic Church," says Sullivan.

If Biden's receipt of the Laetare Medal was more serious than when President Obama came to ND in 2009, one might think that there would have been more protestors for Biden's award than there was in 2009. But not necessarily so: "I think in a large way people are worn out from the issue," Sullivan said, discussing the smaller crowd. "The real issue here is that a Catholic institution is awarding someone who disagrees with so many of Catholic social teachings."

(http://www.southbendtribune.com/news/local/activists-protest-joe-biden-at-notre-dame/article_f8e9e858-1a9d-11e6-b586-cba2321568ac.html) And on that overarching issue of Catholic identity, Sullivan says, most of those concerned with Notre Dame's loss of its Catholic identity have given-up on Notre Dame and expect scandalous behavior out of them.

Reiterating Bishop Rhoades's identification of Notre Dame's conduct as scandalous, Kevin Dubree, the Head Sacristan at the Chapel of Divine Mercy (situated at The Life Center) pointed to the history and purpose of the Laetare Medal. According to DuBree, the Laetare Medal was approved-of by the university's founder Father Edward Sorin, C.S.C. and was conceived as an American version of the papal award – the Golden Rose – dating back to the 11th Century. The university adapted this tradition — awarding a gold medal, instead of a rose — to a distinguished American Catholic on Laetare Sunday. The medal has the Latin inscription "Magna est veritas et praevalabit," meaning "Truth is mighty, and it shall prevail."

<http://www.abc57.com/clip/12435348/notre-dame-commencement-could-see-protests-for-medal-recipients>

<http://www.abc57.com/story/31977928/protestors-in-attendance-for-notre-dame-graduation>

<http://www.fox28.com/story/31978135/2016/05/15/protesters-rally-outside-notre-dame-commencement-over-laetare-medal-controversy-jenkins-addresses-criticisms>

http://www.southbendtribune.com/news/local/activists-protest-joe-biden-at-notre-dame/article_f8e9e858-1a9d-11e6-b586-cba2321568ac.html