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Coalition Criticizes Colleges Honoring Pro-Abortion Speakers

by DANA WIND Register Correspondent

WORCESTER, Mass. -- Prolife and Catholic watchdog groups troubled by 12 Catholic colleges honoring pro-abortion commencement speakers have met silence when trying to appeal to college presidents and bishops regarding their concerns.

At the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Mass., an alumnus and former board of trustees chairman received no response to three letters he sent to the college detailing his opposition to its selection of Chris Matthews -- alumnus, author and host of MSNBC's "Hardball with Chris Matthews" - to speak and receive an honorary degree at commencement May 23.

Matthews, a 1964 graduate of the college, has repeated his proabortion stance both on his television show and in his 2001 book. Now Let Me Tell You What I Really

Alumnus Charles Millard, who served on the board of trustees for 27 years and sent all eight of his children to Jesnit-run Holy Cross, first voiced concerns to the trustees in March about Matthews' public pro-abortion views. His three letters included copies of the "College Position on Abortion" and the Jesuit publication "Standing for the Unborn."

In an interview from his home in Florida, Millard said he isn't trying to stop Matthews from speaking but does object to honoring him with a

"The distinction is that the college is giving a public honor to someone who is in support of abortion." he said.

In Millard's final letter to the trustees, he proposed a solution --the addition of this disclaimer to the degree:

"We honor our loyal son today. As we do, we disassociate the college from his pro-choice position on abortion and pray for a change of heart in line with the Church teaching on abortion, so eloquently set forth in the recent Society of Jesus document, 'Standing for the Unborn."



(Images com)

Breaking News

Responding to pressure, Paul Harvey pulled out of Quincy University's ceremony at press time for this page.

After all of Millard's letters went unanswered, on April 10 he "very reluctantly" took his concems public.

Holy Cross spokeswoman Kathy McNamara would not comment on why no one at the school responded to the former chairman or on whether the school acknowledged Matthews as pro-abortion. Phone calls to Matthews' offices were not returned.

McNamara did confirm that Matthews would still receive the honorary degree.

In a statement issued by college Father Michael President McFarland, S.J., called Millard's characterization of Matthews "inaccurate."

"Chris has not questioned the Catholic Church's fundamental teaching on the morality of abortion," Father McFarland said in the statement. "Where he would differ from some Catholics is on the role of government and how effective government can be in controlling abortion in a society like ours. This is a matter of practical judgment that is arguable within the framework of Catholic thought."

However, Matthews' statements on "Hardball" and quotes from his book seem to clearly define his position on abortion as one that is very much outside Catholic teaching.

In a 2002 interview with Al Gore, Matthews stated, "I'm prochoice." That February, in another interview he told a guest, "I'm for abortion rights." In his book wrote, "Clinton Matthews promised to make abortion safe,

president who will make and keep such a promise."

Father Richard John Neuhaus, editor of First Things and president of the Religion and Public Life Institute, said he was "deeply puzzled by the statement of Father McFarland that Mr. Chris Matthews' public position on abortion is 'allowable in Catholic thought. The authoritative teaching of the Catholic Church ... is that just government unequivocally requires the legal protection of the

He continued, saying Matthews "should not be honored as an exemplary Catholic layman by an institution that intends to be credibly Catholic."

Others Concerned

Millard was not the only person to contact the school with concerns. Also weighing in at Holy Cross and several other Catholic campuses honoring pro-abortion speakers was a coalition of organizations headed by the Cardinal Newman Society, an organization that seeks to restore Catholic identity in Catholic colleges, and the American Life League.

In each instance, said Cardinal Newman Society president Patrick Reilly, the group contacted the school presidents and local bishops and cardinals with the message that "fawning over public dissenters on a fundamental teaching of the Church sends a terrible message to your Catholic students and other Catholics."

American Life League president legal and rare. Still needed is a Judie Brown said her organization

selection of the Sanchez sisters at Mount St. Mary's College outside Los Angeles, Reps. Loretta and Linda Sanchez, both California Democrats, hold the distinction of being the first sisters ever to serve in Congress at the same time, and both are very pro-abortion.

Loretta Sanchez received a 100% rating from NARAL Pro-Choice America (formerly the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League) in 2002 and voted against a partialbirth abortion ban.

She also sponsored an amendment to the Department of Defense Authorization Act to force overseas military hospitals to offer abortions.

First-term congresswoman Linda Sanchez, who previously worked for the National Organization for Women, holds similar views.

"I am very concerned about women's reproductive health and a woman's right to choose," she said in a February interview with Women's E-News, "Over time, we have seen a subtle but pernicious erosion of Roe v. Wade."

Brown said American Life League received no response to

was especially concerned about the letters it sent to Mount St. Mary's president Jacqueline Powers Doud and Cardinal Roger Mahony asking them, to cancel the sisters' appearance.

National Hispanics for Life and Monrovians Against Planned Parenthood are also protesting the Mount St. Mary's speaker selection. Mount St. Mary's and the congressional offices of Linda and Loretta Sanchez did not return phone calls.

At Jesuit LeMoyne College in New York, spokesman Joe Della Posta said Kerry Kennedy Cuomo - who has campaigned for both her husband, Andrew, and her father-in-law, former New York gov. Mario Cuomo, on their abortion-rights platforms - was chosen partly for her "close personal friendship" with the college president but primarily for her work in human rights.

Saying that abortion rights "wasn't really a big part of her campaigning," Della Posta said the college has received few objections from alumni, parents or students.

> Dana Wind is based in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Questionable Speakers

▶St. Peter's College in Jersey City, N.J. - New Jersey Superior Court Judge Reginald Stanton, who has advocated abortion rights and in 1986 ordered a Catholic hospital to withhold nutrition and thus starve a patient to death in accordance with her wishes.

▶ Boston College Law School -Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer, who has defended and upheld the Roe v. Wade decision.

College Misericordia in Dallas, Pa. — Cokie and Sleven Roberts, who have upheld the right to abortion in their joint-syndicated column many times.

► Niagara University in New York — former Massachusetts Gov. Paul Cellucci, a public advocate of

abortion rights and homosexual rights.

▶ College of St. Joseph in Rutland, VI. - Vermont Gov. James Douglas, who campaigned with a proabortion position and has publicly endorsed abortion rights.

▶ Quincy University in New York - radio broadcaster Paul Harvey, a public advocate of abortion rights.

Marist College in Poughkeepsie, N.Y. - New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer, a public advocate of abortion rights.

► Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, Mich. - civil-rights activist Roger Wilkins, a public advocate of abortion rights.

▶ University of Scranton, Pa. --Chris Matthews.

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