

DEAD RIGHT AND DEAD WRONG:

Notre Dame and Bishop John D’Arcy

Part I of IV

If I were the Bishop of the diocese within which the University of Notre Dame lives and moves and has its being, I would have done exactly what John D’Arcy, current bishop of that diocese, did when it was announced that President Obama is to deliver the Spring 2009 commencement address at Notre Dame: turn down my standing invitation to attend the commencement. My reasons for doing so would include two of his reasons for doing so. Quoting a 2004 statement of the U.S. bishops, Bishop D’Arcy says, “The Catholic community and Catholic institutions should not honor those who act in defiance of our fundamental moral principles. They should not be given awards, honors or platforms which would suggest support for their actions.” At another point in the explanation of his non-attendance, he writes, “My decision is not an attack on anyone, but is in defense of the truth about human life.”

What else could a Catholic bishop morally do when an institution—which operates within his episcopal jurisdiction, calls itself Catholic, and is universally perceived as Catholic throughout the world—announces that it is going to employ its Catholic and secular cachet to honor a person who supports laws that make abortion— i.e., murder, as grave an evil as there is in Catholic moral theology—legally acceptable and available? Bishop D’Arcy’s witness to the truth of the Gospel here is truthful, clear, necessary, and nonviolent. What is the beef?

Are not the majority of those who are opposed to what Bishop D’Arcy has done the very same people who would have been elated and supportive of him had he refused to attend previous Notre Dame commencements at which the university honored those who—beyond reasonable doubt—had engaged in the grave evil of legalized murder of people outside the womb? Of course they are! Is not this whole fracas just sour grapes because this society’s legalized murders, *extra-utero*, have the U.S. Catholic Bishops’ almost total, public, moral and political support, while the legalized murders *in utero* get only the U.S. Catholic Bishop’s public moral and political condemnation? Maybe that’s the beef here! The Bishop of South Bend-Fort Wayne and the U.S. National Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), as their public policy and practice attest, are moral rigorists regarding legalized murder *in utero*, but moral laxists regarding legalized murder *extra-utero*. Beyond this, maybe the beef also is that this public policy and practice of this Bishop, and of the U.S. Catholic Bishops as an organization, clearly serve the interests of one political group and undermine the interests of the other—and those whose political agenda it serves are precisely those most responsible for *extra-utero* mass murder.

The beef with John D’Arcy is not with him as a person—he is a most decent human being—but with his permitting himself to become a symbol, a mouthpiece, and a puppet for the USCCB’s illogical, immoral, long-running, and blatant rigorism-laxism dance on behalf of the powerful and wealthy. Note the historical fantasy, and the spiritual, moral, theological, and factual absurdity, which Bishop D’Arcy employs to validate his present decision and to exculpate himself and his U.S. episcopal colleagues, past and present, for their support of

legalized mega-murder *extra-utero*: “[President Obama] has brought the American government, **for the first time in history, into supporting direct destruction of innocent human life.**”

Such nonsense is music to the ears of the majordomos of the U.S. military-industrial complex, as well as a song-and-dance that savage corporate capitalists find as enticing, absorbing, and personally peace-bestowing as any song and dance Salome ever performed to please Herod. There is nothing that power and wealth, or that the military and its weapons suppliers will refuse to give to keep this episcopal song and dance going. All the singers and dancers need do is ask, and they will receive! But sing and dance the U.S. Bishops must. And sing and dance they must, to a tune and to a cadence that salves consciences and suggests religious approval to those who on a large scale legally destroy the innocent, *extra-utero*.

“The measure of any Catholic institution is not only what it stands for, but also what it will not stand for.” With these powerful and truthful words Bishop D’Arcy concludes his valid moral case against Notre Dame. But do the same words not apply in the same way to the U.S. Catholic episcopacy (the USCCB) as a Catholic institution? Do they not apply to Catholic institutions and their official agents honoring those who legally kill innocent people on a large or small scale *extra-utero* and not just *in utero*?

That is the beef. If the Bishop and his episcopal peers had consistently stood up for what Jesus taught by word and deed about violence, and for what he and they were explicitly commissioned by Jesus to teach as successors to the Apostles (*Teach them to obey all that I have commanded you*. Mt 28:20) about violence, and had acted publicly and consistently from day one of their episcopacies in accordance with this stand, no one could have the slightest criticism of Bishop D’Arcy’s course of action in response to President Obama being honored at Notre Dame. But this is not what Bishop D’Arcy, or the NCCB, have chosen to stand up for as bishops. Instead, they have chosen to stand by something called “Natural Law Catholic Just Violence Theory”—something that Jesus never taught and that owes nothing to anything He ever said or did. On top of this, neither Bishop D’Arcy nor his episcopal colleagues has taught this moral theory fully to those in their spiritual care. They have permitted Catholic military chaplains not to teach it at all to Catholics in the military, and they have not applied it logically or coherently to known facts, nor with consistency or even-handedness to all *extra-utero* homicides.

This is why what is happening now is happening. Bishop John D’Arcy, the NCCB, and Notre Dame have all refused to stand with Jesus and His teaching of Nonviolent Love of friends and all enemies, *in utero* and *extra-utero*. Therefore each will “stand for” what Jesus would self-evidently never stand for from His Apostles and disciples. Simultaneously, the Bishop, the USCCB, and Notre Dame have each played the ostrich in relation to reality and rationality in their respective applications of this so-designated Catholic Just War Theory and Catholic Moral Theory. The present spiritually dis-graceful, anti-witness, anti-evangelical situation they all inhabit is the direct consequence of not following Jesus as He said to follow Him, and for standing for any reading and application of the Gospel and/or Catholic Natural Law Just War and Moral Theory that supports whosoever’s ox is being gored or whosoever’s cash cow is being threatened.

I conclude with the following photograph of President George W. Bush, taken years after it was known publicly that not one of the standards of Natural Law Catholic Just War Theory, *ad bellum* and *in bello*, had been met or was being met and that therefore the killing of hundreds of thousands of human beings in Iraq was objectively murder—an always intrinsically grave evil which, in Catholic moral theology, is never morally permissible, under any set of circumstances, or for any reason.



CARDINAL MCCARRICK OF DC JOVIALY HELPING
GEORGE BUSH DOWN SOME STEPS.

EMMANUEL CHARLES MCCARTHY

PART II TO FOLLOW