



UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C.
President

April 5, 2016

Tim Bradley and Hailey Vrdolyak, Class of 2016

Dear Tim, Hailey and Co-signers:

Thank you for your email of April 1st and for the attached letter. You wrote, I believe, to all the C.S.C. Fellows and, as chair of the Board of Fellows, I am responding on behalf of the Board.

You requested a meeting with the C.S.C. Fellows, but that will not be possible. The Board of Fellows was designed to maintain equal participation between lay and clerical members, and the statutes of the University speak of "strict adherence" to that principle. It would therefore not be appropriate to convene the C.S.C. Fellows and exclude the lay Fellows.

Perhaps even more pertinent to your request, however, is the fact that it was not the Fellows who made the decision to award the Laetare Medal and they are not in a position to explain it. The procedure for awarding the Laetare Medal is that a committee makes a recommendation to me as President, and I have the responsibility of selecting someone, either from their list or anyone else. Although I consulted widely, and consulted the Fellows and many others about this year's medalists, it was in the end my decision.

You have put your concerns in a letter, and I have read the letter and will consider your arguments. In coming days, I will take steps to clarify my decision not only for you, but for the entire campus community and the wider public. You speak of the "scandal" you believe has been caused by this decision and, as you may know, the Catholic tradition recognizes that one way to avoid the risk of scandal is to offer a clear and consistent explanation of the action in question. I will continue to try to offer an explanation that addresses the misperceptions and misrepresentations which have regrettably become part of this story, some of which are reflected in your letter.

I am sorry that you are disappointed in the Laetare Medalists. I hope that you will be able nonetheless to celebrate others who will be honored at our 2016 Commencement, including Cardinal Wuerl, who has served the Church faithfully over six decades as a priest, bishop and cardinal; General Martin Dempsey, a Catholic and distinguished military leader who rose to become the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and Diane Nash, a Catholic lay woman who has been a leading voice for civil rights since the Freedom Rides of the 1960's. Most of all, I hope we can all celebrate the most important honorees of our Commencement Exercises, the Class of 2016.

Thank you for sharing your concerns. May God bless you all.

In Notre Dame,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C.", written over a printed name and title.

Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C.
President