



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on May 13, 2013

Cardinal O'Malley to Boycott Irish PM at Boston College Commencement

The top cleric in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston has announced he will not attend graduation ceremonies next week at Jesuit-run Boston College, where the commencement speaker will be Ireland's Prime Minister Enda Kenny (shown). The prime minister is supporting legislation in Ireland to legalize abortion in cases where the pregnancy is determined to be a threat to a woman's life, including cases where the woman is threatening suicide.



In a [statement](#) released Friday, Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley said the commencement address and honorary Doctor of Laws degree to be awarded Kenny at the May 20 ceremonies at Alumni Stadium go against the policy of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops that Catholic institutions should not honor government officials or politicians who promote abortion with their laws and policies.

"Since the university has not withdrawn the invitation and because the Taoiseach [prime minister] has not seen fit to decline, I shall not attend the graduation," O'Malley said in his statement. "It is my ardent hope that Boston College will work to redress the confusion, disappointment and harm caused by not adhering to the Bishops' directives."

By tradition, the Boston archbishop delivers the benediction at the Boston College commencement each spring. Not this time, said the cardinal, noting that Kenny has been "aggressively promoting abortion legislation" in Ireland, despite opposition from church leaders there. The Catholic Church opposes abortion as "a crime against humanity," he said.

"Although I shall not be present to impart the final benediction," the cardinal added, "I assure the graduates that they are in my prayers on this important day in their lives, and I pray that their studies will prepare them to be heralds of the Church's Social Gospel and 'men and women for others,' especially for the most vulnerable in our midst."

O'Malley said he was "sure that the invitation was made in good faith, long before it came to the attention of the leadership of Boston College that Kenny is aggressively promoting abortion legislation. A [statement](#) issued by the college appeared to defend the prime minister's position, however, quoting a previous statement by Kenny that the legislation will retain the "general ban" on abortion, but will allow doctors to "intervene where a woman's life is at risk." Opponents of the legislation say a woman or her doctor would be able to get around that "general ban" by claiming that continuing the pregnancy would drive the woman to suicide.

"It is a tragic moment for Irish society when we regard the deliberate destruction of a completely innocent person as an acceptable response to the threat of the preventable death of another person," the Irish bishops said in a statement released earlier this month.

The Boston College statement, issued by spokesman Jack Dunn, said the invitation was extended "in light of the historically close relationship Boston College has enjoyed with Ireland." It does not



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constitute a rift between the school and the church on the issue of abortion, Dunn said. "As a Catholic institution, Boston College supports the Church's commitment to the life of the unborn," he said.

"We respect Cardinal O'Malley and regret that he will not be in attendance," Dunn said. "However, we look forward to our commencement and to Prime Minister Kenny's remarks."

The choice of commencement speakers at Catholic colleges and universities has been a source of continuing controversy, the most notable being the 2009 commencement address by President Barack Obama at the University of Notre Dame. Catholic bishops and Notre Dame alumni from around the country expressed opposition to the university's decision to invite and give an honorary degree to Obama, who has supported legalized abortion throughout his career in politics. Scores of demonstrators, protesting peacefully at the campus, were arrested for criminal trespass. Bishop John D'Arcy of the Fort Wayne-South Bend diocese in Indiana did not attend the Notre Dame commencement for the first time in 25 years because of what he called Obama's "long-stated unwillingness to hold human life as sacred." Last year Anna Maria College in western Massachusetts withdrew an invitation to Victoria Kennedy to be the commencement speaker after Bishop of Worcester Robert McManus objected. Kennedy, who supports abortion "rights" and same-sex "marriage," was the speaker at last year's Boston College Law School commencement.

Marty Walz, president and CEO of the Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts, [called](#) the Irish prime minister "an appropriate commencement speaker," adding: "It is disappointing that a measure to provide health care to a woman whose life is in danger would draw protest in Massachusetts." That drew further protest from C.J. Doyle, executive director of the Catholic Action League of Massachusetts.

"Everything we ever wanted to know about Enda Kenny and his unpersuasive claims that he plans no major changes in Ireland's abortion laws has now been explained to us by Marty Walz," said Doyle, a Boston College alumnus. "As for Boston College, the only thing more threadbare than its Catholic identity is its institutional credibility."



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