

Bishop says he won't go to Catholic college's graduation

ERIE, Pa. - Erie Bishop Donald W. Trautman said March 31 he will not attend May graduation ceremonies at Mercyhurst College because of the school's decision to allow Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Hillary Clinton of New York to hold a campaign rally on campus April 1.

Clinton supports keeping abortion legal. The bishop's statement came the day after the Erie college announced the rally.

"I am disappointed in Mercyhurst College for not reflecting the pro-life stance of the Catholic Church regarding abortion," Bishop Trautman said. "As tangible expression of my disappointment, I have notified Dr. Thomas Gamble, president of Mercyhurst College, that I will not be present for Mercyhurst's graduation."

Bishop Trautman usually attends the graduation ceremonies for undergraduates, scheduled for May 18 this year.

In response Dr. Gamble said in a statement that the school community respected the bishop's decision but was "saddened by it" and "will deeply miss his presence at graduation" at the college, run by the Sisters of Mercy.

"Our mission counsels us to educate our students in an environment where faith and reason flourish together, and toward that end provide opportunities for our students to be well informed politically and religiously," he said in a statement.

The Erie Times-News daily newspaper reported that 2,500 people attended the rally in the Mercyhurst Athletic Center, which came three weeks before Pennsylvania's

April 22 primary. According to the paper, Clinton delivered a 45-minute speech on the economy, health care, education, the Iraq War and other issues.

According to an Associated Press story, school officials invited all the presidential candidates to address students as an educational opportunity for students; the story said Clinton was the first to accept the invitation.

Bishop Trautman said he was open to meeting with Gamble “in the future to ascertain how the Catholic identity of Mercyhurst can be better clarified.”

“We look forward to engaging in conversations about the most authentic way for Mercyhurst to meet both its religious and its educational obligations,” Dr. Gamble added in his statement.