

# Don't equate abortion to death penalty

A letter (CR, April 2) contended that President Obama should be allowed to speak at Notre Dame's commencement. The writer mentioned that President Bush was allowed to speak at Notre Dame in 2001 even though he had "presided over" executions in Texas. Behind this argument is the assumption of a moral equivalence between direct abortion and capital punishment.

This assumption is not correct. Direct abortion is intrinsically evil, gravely wrong, anywhere, anytime. Capital punishment is not intrinsically evil. The church has always recognized the state's right to impose capital punishment if it is necessary to protect the lives of innocent people. Unlike direct abortion, which is categorically wrong, the morality of capital punishment will vary with the particular situation and can only be determined through a prudential judgment.

By its very nature, a prudential judgment is not binding. There is room for disagreement. Consequently, you can support capital punishment and still be a Catholic in good standing. This is not true of direct abortion. There is no latitude. There are no countervailing proportionate reasons which would eclipse the murder of millions of human beings. Notre Dame should withdraw its invitation.