



Department of Communication

Archdiocese of San Antonio

Response to Inquiry

Re: Governor Michael Huckabee's appearance at St. Mary's University Statement from Archbishop José H. Gomez

February 19, 2008

My recent statement regarding the appearance of a political candidate at a Catholic institution was about essential issues of Catholic teaching, not politics. My purpose is to clearly state what the Catholic Church teaches in regards to the objectives of a Catholic university. Neither I, nor the Archdiocese of San Antonio, endorses or promotes candidates for political office at any level.

In his apostolic exhortation, *Ex Corde Ecclesia*, Pope John Paul II stated, "The objective of a Catholic university is to assure in an institutional manner a Christian presence in the university world confronting the great problems of society and culture." One essential characteristic of a Catholic university is "Fidelity to the Christian message as it comes to us through the Church." The document supports the autonomy of the Catholic university while working in communion with the local and universal Catholic Church.

I have been advised by his campaign that Governor Michael Huckabee will be appearing this week at St. Mary's University. In response to inquiries, I am issuing this statement concerning his appearance. Governor Huckabee's positions on the pro-life issues, in particular abortion and embryonic stem-cell research, are not in opposition to the teaching of the Catholic Church.

I believe that it is important to understand the unique place these pro-life issues hold in Catholic moral teaching. In the U.S. bishops' document, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, it was stated, "The direct and intentional destruction of innocent human life from the moment of conception until natural death is always wrong and is not just one issue among many. It must always be opposed."

None of the current candidates running for president has a perfect platform in relationship to Catholic moral teaching on the wide spectrum of public issues. The war in Iraq and capital punishment are significant issues and must be considered seriously. However, Catholic moral teaching judges them as not carrying the same moral gravity as abortion which the Church calls "an unspeakable crime" and a non-negotiable issue.

As archbishop, I have a particular responsibility to promote Catholic universities, and especially promote and help them to preserve and strengthen their Catholic identity. The Church must not engage in partisan politics or interfere in the political process. However, it must never shrink from its responsibility to speak publicly for a culture of life and all Catholic values in order to help properly form the conscience of Catholic citizens and those people seeking to serve the common good.