

Briefly noted

News in the [April 21, 2009](#) issue

President Obama's scheduled May 17 commencement speech at the University of Notre Dame has sparked protests by some Catholics. The local Catholic bishop, John D'Arcy, said he will boycott the event because some Obama policies contradict church teaching. The Obama administration has upset Catholic leaders by opening federal funding to international family planning groups and embryonic stem cell research, among other actions. The Cardinal Newman Society, a watchdog for Catholic orthodoxy on college campuses, has launched an online petition to stop Obama from speaking at Notre Dame and has gathered tens of thousands of signatures. University president John I. Jenkins, calling Obama "an inspiring leader," said he has no plans to rescind the invitation.

A San Francisco woman's quest to overturn a ban on noncelibate gay and lesbian clergy in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has been denied on a technicality by a regional church court. Lisa Larges, 45, declared a conscientious objection to denominational standards that require celibacy for gay and lesbian clergy. On March 25 the Permanent Judicial Commission of the Synod of the Pacific ruled that the San Francisco Presbytery erred when it voted prematurely to certify Larges as ready to be examined for ministry, with a "departure" or conscientious objection. Meanwhile, the PCUSA's 173 local presbyteries were voting on whether to scrap the ban on partnered gay clergy, as recommended by the church's General Assembly last year. As of late March the measure was losing, according to the pro-gay Covenant Network of Presbyterians. A simple majority of 87 presbyteries is needed to reject the proposed change.