

Alumni don't want Desmond Tutu to speak at Gonzaga

by [Tracy Simmons](#)

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c. 2012 Religion News Service SPOKANE, Wash. (RNS) Archbishop Desmond Tutu is slated to deliver the commencement address next month to Gonzaga University's graduating class. A group of alumni, however, are saying he isn't welcome and are urging administrators to withdraw the invitation.

Patrick Kirby, a 1993 Gonzaga graduate, said Tutu is pro-abortion rights, has made offensive statements toward Jews and supports contraception and the ordination of gay clergy and shouldn't be honored by a Catholic institution.

The university plans to give Tutu an honorary Doctor of Laws degree at commencement. Kirby, a local attorney, said Tutu's visit violates the U.S. bishop's 2004 policy, "Catholics in Political Life." The policy states that Catholic institutions should not honor those "who act in defiance of our fundamental moral principles."

Kirby and his wife, Maureen, who is a Gonzaga alumna, launched an online petition lobbying for the university to choose a different commencement speaker. Nearly 700 people worldwide have signed the petition, which was delivered to Gonzaga President Thayne McCulloh on Friday (April 13).

"I don't have any realistic expectations that they'll do that (cancel Tutu's invitation). The goal for me is to bring attention to it and hopefully remind administrators at Gonzaga about their Catholic identity and how far they've wandered away from it," Kirby said.

He said Catholic institutions all across the U.S. are choosing popularity over morality by honoring and hiring people who do not represent Catholic values, which he said sends an unclear message to students.

Gonzaga administrators are not commenting on the petition. In a February press release, however, McCulloh said Tutu was "a living exemplar of Gonzaga's historic commitment to the ideals of equality and a free society as a Catholic, Jesuit and humanistic University."