

Eunice Kennedy Shriver

Heidi Schlumpf | Aug. 12, 2009 NCR Today

During the "Obama drama" surrounding the University of Notre Dame's commencement last spring, a number of friends remarked to me that they couldn't even remember who their college graduation speaker was.

I can -- even though it was 20 years ago.

The main speaker was civil rights leader Andrew Young, who gave a rousing, inspirational sermon befitting a former preacher. The second speaker was Eunice Kennedy Shriver, who received the [Laetare Medal](#) [1] that year. She was equally inspiring, and I remember feeling lucky to have had two amazing speakers help mark the end of my college career. (I also was excited that Covenant House founder Father Bruce Ritter received an honorary degree, but we all know what [happened](#) [2] to him.)

Young was solidly pro-choice, but I don't remember any protests or airplanes flying overhead with pictures of aborted fetuses. And I'm glad that Eunice Kennedy Shriver didn't decline the Laetare Medal, like [Mary Ann Glendon](#) [3] did this year. It would have only deprived me -- and thousands of other graduates -- of the opportunity to hear her speak.

My, how times have changed.

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Links:

[1] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laetare_Medal

[2] <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/10/13/nyregion/rev-bruce-ritter-72-the-founder-of-covenant-house-for-runaway-children.html>

[3] <http://ncronline.org/news/politics/mary-ann-glendon-turns-down-notre-dame-medal>