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Dr Mary Lyons,
President,
University of San Diego

Dear President Lyons,

I acknowledge receipt of your letter dated October 27th. This letter concerned the agreed visit of an internationally renowned, respected and cherished academic theologian, Professor Tina Beattie, who teaches at the RSCJ-linked Roehampton University in London, England. Professor Beattie is a past President of the Catholic Theological Association of Great Britain, only the second woman elected to this office in that organization's history.

I am sad to say that I was very surprised, shocked and deeply disappointed to receive this letter and even moreso the accompanying letter sent to Prof. Beattie. To be perfectly honest, I cannot imagine how anyone might react otherwise. They were emailed to me on Saturday evening as I was attending a Catholic charity fund-raising event, hosted by a local parish. I was especially surprised because at no stage had you communicated with me in relation to the letter's subject-matter. The letter to Prof. Beattie was equally sad and surprising to receive not only because of the manner and substance of how it addresses a distinguished Catholic scholar, but also because of the fact that, despite the shocking and libelous campaign by some to try to prevent Professor Beattie's visit, I had recently received assurances from members of the university senior administration that this visit was not in danger, and that the particular donor whose name would headline one of the particular lectures that Professor Beattie was due to give was not minded to succumb to the pressure from these extremists groups against the talk. Therefore, she had no objection to the talk (about Women in Christian Art) going ahead. Professor Beattie has already made significant and wide-reaching sacrifices in order to come and grace USD with her presence and wisdom. Her home university likewise. As you are aware, not one single talk that Prof. Beattie was scheduled to give was even directly related to the flash-point topics that those protesters have focused upon to smear her name.

We would all agree that USD has a duty of care in relation to the reputation, career and well-being of Professor Beattie and indeed toward the reputation and future of the CCTC and all who are associated with it. It is regrettable, therefore, that the letters to both Professor Beattie and myself appear to contain various factual inaccuracies and apparently ambivalent and/or misleading statements. It may prove to be the case that some of these may pertain to misperceptions and the advice you may or may not have received prior to making such a decision. Each one of these items necessitates a considerable amount of further discussion. But, for now, given the urgency of the situation, I will touch upon some of the most important additional factors that must be taken into consideration here.

As you know, my own particular areas of research specialization include the relationship between theologians and the official ecclesiastical authorities and the nature and scope of magisterium, as well as contemporary ecclesiology and moral theology in general. I would, therefore, gladly have helped you avoid coming to any mistaken or erroneous conclusions if you had sought to speak with me before reaching this decision and sending the letter via email to Professor Beattie on Sunday morning, UK time.

As Director of the Center for Catholic Thought and Culture, which concerns much of the content of your letter, and as the person who had extended the invitation to Professor Beattie in 2011 (with the full knowledge of USD's senior administration), I also find this lack of consultation particularly surprising and saddening, given my position as a senior Professor and administrator at USD. We have worked tirelessly to build up the CCTC since the summer of 2010 and we have enjoyed an enormous amount of success in our efforts to make the Center a vibrant and welcoming agent for dialogue and engagement with the Catholic tradition across campus and beyond. Based on the feedback we receive, we

are especially proud of just how much the CCTC has significantly grown in reputation, organization, effectiveness, outreach and impact during these years. In that time, we have significantly expanded the focus of the Center across the many rich intellectual, social and cultural traditions of Catholicism and received an enormous amount of positive gratitude for our efforts in doing so. It would be most helpful to receive a full list of all those you did consult about this and who offered advice.

Had such consultation taken place, I could easily have explained precisely how the campaigners against Professor Beattie were grossly misrepresenting her writing and viewpoints and taking them entirely out of context and distorting both them and her intentions (as I had already pointed out to other USD administrators). I could have further detailed some of the intricate nuances of the theologian-magisterium relationships in our times. The consensus of the Catholic theological community as to why it is not appropriate for sweeping and summary judgments about the writings and perspectives of academic theologians to be made without regard for full and exhaustive engagement with such, nor without regard for justice and due process, could have been outlined. Canon law makes explicitly clear that *all* the faithful are called to make sense of and bear witness to the gracious self-communication of God that is the basis and daily reality of the Catholic faith. I could have shared with you, as I shared with other USD administrators, that the fuss over Prof. Tina Beattie's cancelled talk in England's Clifton diocese had died down very quickly and that, very soon afterwards, not only was she invited to a cordial dinner by the Bishop of that Diocese, but that she also addressed as an invited plenary speaker a large gathering of theologians at a Pontifical university in Rome, itself. The audience included numerous professors at the various pontifical universities (both in Rome and worldwide) and not a few consultants to departments of the Roman curia were present. People might legitimately ask, if Rome (where Prof. Beattie spoke just earlier this very month), then why not USD?

I would have happily given advice on how to respond constructively to the vitriolic protesters against Prof. Beattie's visit – just as I had already been offering advice to other members of the administration on this. This also relates to the University's mission in relation to inclusion and diversity and the CCTC's positive efforts to enhance this (in and through the rich resources of Catholic *Social Thought and Practice*). This is something which the letters of October 27 might appear to put in jeopardy through the perceived narrowing of the CCTC's mission and focus contained therein. Such follows upon conflicting, ambiguous and contrary messages that appeared to attempt to narrow the CCTC's mission in very differing ways throughout the previous academic year.

But now, given both letters, it appears that, for the first time to my knowledge, there is an attempt to project the mission of the CCTC as if it were an organ of University Ministry or even the official church teaching authorities. Such is certainly how many would interpret the statements pertaining to the CCTC mission contained in the letters. The nature and scope of activities the CCTC can engage with are drastically reduced and confined by the letter's implications. Such is in direct contradiction of the assurances I was given by yourself, the Provost and all USD administrators that I spoke to before accepting the post of CCTC director. It equally contradicts assurances I have sought and received since.

It would also seem contrary to status of the CCTC as an academic unit of USD. Academic debate and research, with the freedom such requires, are obviously fundamental to fulfilling such a role. So it is all the more sad, then, that I was not consulted about this decision and the Oct. 27 letters, for I would also have been able to help identify the multiple ways in which such a decision and the manner in which it was communicated by the letter to Prof. Beattie also carry potentially grave and detrimental implications for academic freedom both at USD and beyond. To indicate but one point of urgent relevance here, perhaps an historical parallel may help. The Report commissioned by the American Association of University Professors (pub. 1989) into the case involving Professor Charles Curran and the Catholic University of America listed as two of its conclusions the following:

“In penalizing Professor Curran for reasons *that had their basis in publications by him protected under the university's stated policy on academic freedom* and the 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, the administration and the board of trustees violated Professor Curran's academic

freedom. The administration, and particularly the board of trustees, failed in the case of Professor Curran to exercise their responsibility to protect the university's autonomy and the academic freedom of the faculty”.

The AAUP Report came some time after the legal judgment against Professor Curran and in spite of the fact that the judgment chose to focus on the identity of CUA as a Pontifical university and that Prof. Curran previously held a *missio canonica* there. That is to say, the Report nonetheless affirms these conclusions (despite that contested and grossly unjust judgment against Prof. Curran). Given this fact and also given the status of USD as very different type of Catholic university to the Pontifical CUA, alongside Professor Beattie's position as a lay theologian employed in the British State Sector (which includes Catholic universities), the duty of responsibility incumbent upon USD trustees and administrators with regard to academic freedom is all the more clear. The CUA remains on the AAUP censure list to this day. It would be a grave injustice were Professor Beattie to suffer in any way because of the misrepresentation and uninformed critique of her writings by these ill-intentioned protesters who sadly understand the Catholic faith so very little and who appear to practice it even less well. To not only prevent somebody such as Professor Beattie from speaking on campus because of this misleading and unchristian campaign against her, but also to attempt to justify this decision in the manner explained in the Oct. 27 letters, risks posing further limitations on all academics at USD. Such also places potential risks for academics at other Catholic universities across the United States and beyond. It risks setting a series of dangerous precedents. Those working in the theological sub-disciplines and religious studies are placed especially at risk.

In addition to the serious harm this will inflict upon Prof. Beattie's reputation, this decision will cause potentially irreparable damage to the academic reputation and theological standing of the CCTC, USD's department of THRS (which is presently conducting a search and will in the near future be searching for an external chair), alongside that of USD in general.

We live in times which are challenging for all Catholics but especially for those who are also academic theologians. I know they can also be difficult for university presidents and senior administrators. And I know that the pressure from without may have been great. But, for the sake of USD and its reputation and future flourishing, I therefore respectfully request that, with urgency, you choose to reconsider in the light of the above and any other new information brought to your attention. You may then, from a position of informed strength, withdraw the letter, contact Professor Beattie and her University Vice-chancellor, Professor Paul O'Prey to indicate any misunderstandings and I further ask that you allow a committee to be formed, under the auspices of the CCTC's direction to investigate all such matters listed above without delay.

I have no doubt that Professor Beattie's local Bishop and her Vice-Chancellor (the UK equivalent of a University President) will defend her in the strongest terms. I know the RSCJ sisters in the UK have enormous affection and respect for Tina, as indeed does the theological community worldwide. This is a tirelessly self-giving servant of the Catholic Church. I know we can find a more constructive way out of this sorry situation. I am aware you may have received advice that was not conducive to resolving this to the best outcome for all concerned, especially Prof. Beattie, USD and the future of the CCTC. But I believe there is little doubt that this alternative course of action, now proposed, may be the only way in which we might help stave off many detrimental consequences for USD in general as a result of this sorry episode. I copy this letter both to Professor Beattie, herself, to members of the CCTC Advisory Council, and also, to save time, to those other members of USD administration directly concerned here. It is my hope that we come to a much more positive resolution of these matters very quickly - and I sincerely believe that we can.

Yours sincerely,

Gerard Mannion, DPhil.

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