

On 1 November 2012 11:09, <T.Beattie@roehampton.ac.uk> wrote:

Please may I begin with two apologies. First, I apologise if you receive multiple copies of this message. I am working under pressure and have tried to check names before I send this, but inevitably some of you appear on several of my distribution lists and I know how irritating it is to be deluged by group e-mails. I hope you'll appreciate the urgency of the situation, and why I need to get this into the public domain as quickly as possible, before the bloggers start to do their nasty work. For the same reason, please ignore this if I have included your name in error and it has nothing to do with you. Second, I apologise that this e-mail involves some repetition for those of you who were included in an earlier e-mail that I sent to a few academic colleagues. I did not circulate that e-mail widely because I was attempting a damage limitation exercise in the hopes that a crisis could be averted. However, that has not been possible and so I am circulating this to a number of e-mail lists as well as to personal colleagues and friends.

Late last year, Professor Gerard Mannion, Director of the Frances G. Harpst Center for Catholic Thought and Culture at the University of San Diego, invited me to spend several weeks there as a Visiting Fellow. He and I liaised closely to put together a programme of public lectures and seminars, and I was also invited to talk at a prayer breakfast and to give the prestigious annual Emilia Switgall lecture. Last week, I received notification that my talk at the prayer breakfast had been cancelled 'for pastoral reasons'. (Here is [the text of my talk](#), which I had already written, in case anybody is interested. It is absolutely orthodox in everything it says). On Sunday morning (28th October) I received [a letter by e-mail from Dr Mary Lyons, President of the USD](#), saying that she was rescinding the invitation because I 'dissent publicly' from the Church's moral teaching. I appealed to her to reconsider, and offered to work with her to find a positive outcome to this situation for all concerned. However, I received a short response on the evening of 30th October British time, saying that her decision was final. I had of course booked my tickets and made arrangements to cover all my teaching etc. I was due to travel on 6th November, returning on 8th December. My husband had been invited to accompany me, and we were both being provided with accommodation. (He was paying his own expenses). The USD has guaranteed that they will fully reimburse me. I understand that Emilia Switgall was happy with me as a choice of speaker.

I do not know the exact reasons for the cancellation of my visit, but I have been the target of a blog campaign in recent weeks, which began with a concerted endeavour to have a lecture by me at Clifton Cathedral in Bristol cancelled. This was because I had signed a letter to *The Times*, along with twenty six others, saying that Catholics could, "using fully informed consciences, ... support the legal extension of civil marriage to same-sex couples." Signatories included six priests and several other theologians, all of whom are highly respected. This is [the most up-to-date copy of a statement](#) I wrote, which includes the full text of the letter, names of the signatories, and subsequent correspondence. The Bishop of Clifton, Bishop Declan Lang, resisted pressure to cancel the lecture but the protestors contacted the CDF, who intervened

to say that the lecture should not go ahead. My cancelled talk in the Cathedral was on Mary and *Lumen Gentium* as part of a series on Vatican II, and had nothing to do with any controversial or disputed issue. My proposed public lectures and seminars in San Diego were all similarly written with a broad audience in mind, and with a desire not to create problems for my hosts by provoking controversy in the currently febrile atmosphere of American Catholic politics. The Clifton Cathedral lecture is being published along with others in the series, which also includes a lecture by Cardinal Danneels. I know that my role in the diocese is valued and that I have the trust of Bishop Declan. He has reiterated his support for me this week, acknowledging that, while he does not agree with all my theological positions, he respects my right to say what I think in my 'search along the pathway of truth'. He also strongly dissociates himself from the bloggers who are using his name to justify their campaign against me.

The Vice Chancellor of the University of Roehampton, Professor Paul O'Prey, wrote Dr Lyons a lengthy and courteous letter in support of me and defending the principle of academic freedom, but that seemed not to affect her decision, nor did the many letters and e-mails of support that were sent to her by senior academic colleagues in Britain and America. Dr Lyons did not contact Professor O'Prey, my Bishop or myself before cancelling the visit. I therefore do not know what her sources of information were, other than the blogs about me. Had she contacted any of us, we would have been able to explain that the situation is more nuanced and positive than the bloggers are suggesting. (I suspect the most influential blog was that of [the Cardinal Newman Society](#), which is ironic since I am in high demand as a speaker by the Newman Association and its various local groups in this country).

The cancellation of my visit is not the most important issue in all this. The real issues are academic freedom, the vocation of lay theologians in relation to the official magisterium, and the power of a hostile minority of bloggers (some of whom are ordained deacons and priests) to command the attention and support of the CDF. The latter is the most sinister development of all, and it is a cause for scandal which brings the Church into disrepute. However, it also shows how deep this crisis has become. As an employee of a state-funded university with the full support of my Vice Chancellor and with my academic freedom protected under British law, I enjoy a position of security which is not true of my theological colleagues in many American and continental European universities. I want to use that position responsibly to address issues that have now become absolutely critical for lay theologians and for the wider Catholic community. In view of the serious allegations being made against me on the internet, I am issuing [a statement of my theological position](#) with regard to the specific claims that are being made. I have written this reluctantly since I believe it is better to ignore the bloggers, and all my ideas and arguments are freely available through my publications and through links on my website. However, I feel I must set out my position publicly in a brief and accessible statement.

If you would like to contact Dr Lyons to express your concern, her assistant is Elaine Atencio: atencio@sandiego.edu. I also urge people to express support for Professor Mannion (gesmannion@gmail.com). He has been put in a very difficult situation, and I regret that I have unintentionally and unwittingly played a role in that. He is a highly respected theologian and a personal friend. Please also feel free to forward this to anybody you might want to share it with. I would ask that all correspondence and communication maintains the highest possible levels of courtesy and generosity towards those we are addressing. While this story will inevitably provide more material for those who publicly humiliate themselves and others on the Catholic blogosphere, it is also an opportunity to raise the tone of the debate and to claim a space of theological intelligence, Christian charity and personal dignity, in order to demonstrate that sensitive issues can be discussed and disagreements can be acknowledged without abuse and insult. I intend to put some of this material on my own blog. For those among you who are Catholics, let's take as our guiding ethos the spirit of Vatican II which is so magnificently expressed in [Pope John XXIII's opening address to the Council](#) – '*Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*' – and in [Cardinal Martini's posthumously published interview](#), which is a lament for the Church he had served and loved all his life. Finally, please pray for all involved in this – the institutions and the individuals – that we might emerge from this crisis with strengthened faith, deeper understanding, and in such a spirit of reconciliation that those who are watching might still be able to say "See how they love one another". (Tertullian)

Once again, my apologies that this e-mail repeats information that I have previously sent to a small number of you, and my profound thanks to those of you who have in the last few days written so eloquently, courteously and supportively to President Mary Lyons urging her to reconsider.

With best wishes,

Tina Beattie

P.S. By way of a relevant aside, you will see from my signature below that the name of our research centre has recently changed from The Digby Stuart Research Centre for Catholic Studies to the Digby Stuart Research Centre for Religion, Society and Human Flourishing. This change has nothing to do with the recent controversies around my public position. The management committee of the Centre (all Catholic academics, including two priests) has been discussing it for some time and agreed on the change several months ago. The decision was made in recognition of the need to reflect more accurately the widening scope of research and public outreach activities that the Centre represents as its influence expands – for example, in the highly successful conference we organised at the University of Roehampton in September on 'Women, Authority and Leadership in Christianity and Islam'. We retain our close links with Digby Stuart College and with the Society of the Sacred Heart (RSCJ), and the term 'human flourishing' acknowledges the extent to which our activities are informed by Catholic social teaching.

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<http://www.roehampton.ac.uk/staff/TinaBeattie/> (Roehampton website)

<http://tina-beattie.blogspot.co.uk/> (My personal blog. I'll be updating this later this morning with a posting about the cancellation of my visit).