



OFFICE OF MEDIA RELATIONS

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Statement from University of San Diego President Mary E. Lyons, Ph.D. regarding decision to rescind invitation to Dr. Tina Beattie

I recently made the decision to rescind an invitation to Dr. Tina Beattie, a Catholic theologian from the United Kingdom, scheduled to begin this month as a Visiting Fellow at the University's Frances G. Harpst Center for Catholic Thought and Culture. Last week I was made aware that, in August and subsequent to the Center's earlier invitation, she took an action which prompted my decision. It is that action and my decision which I want to clarify.

First, Dr. Beattie's extensive record of scholarship has been well known, addressing issues that many would presume to be controversial, e.g. abortion and sexual orientation. I want to emphasize that it was not her teaching or scholarship that prompted me to rescind this invitation. I respect her right, as an academic and a Catholic theologian, to engage in whatever work she deems necessary and important. Indeed, my own record of support for academic freedom is well known at this institution and the previous ones which I have administered.

Second, in executing the responsibilities of my office, I must exercise prudential judgment in making decisions that are thoughtfully considered but difficult, nonetheless. While I seek consultation in these matters, my decisions have been made without regard to pressure groups or donor influence. I believe my support of our students' "drag" show last Spring is evidence of this.

Third, while the entire University is responsible for respecting the Catholic character of our university, I bear a particular responsibility for this, especially when such respect is in question. And herein is the heart of this matter:

On August 13th, 2012, Dr. Beattie became the signatory of a widely distributed, public letter urging Catholics to dissent from official Church teaching. It is significant that she signed the letter as a "theologian." This action is materially different from the exercise of scholarship and teaching appropriate to the role of an academic and whose freedom to do so I consistently defend. The Frances G. Harpst Center of Catholic Thought and Culture (CCTC), for which I was the primary

architect several years ago, exists to provide opportunities for its participants to learn about and encounter the Catholic intellectual tradition in its many dimensions, including its doctrinal, moral, spiritual, social, aesthetic contributions. I personally solicited benefactors who understood and support this mission. One might assume that those Catholic theologians to whom we offer a public platform and an honorary fellowship, particularly when offered through the CCTC, would give evidence by their own public positions of support for both the mission of the Center and the Catholic character of our university. It is my considered judgment that Dr. Beattie's decision to exercise her office as a Catholic theologian and sign a public document dissenting from the Church's official teaching is what led me to rescind the invitation.