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STATEMENT BY REV. MATTHEW F. MALONE, S.J.
PRESIDENT & EDITOR IN CHIEF

NEW YORK - On September 15, 2017, Theological College, the national seminary under the auspices of The Catholic University of America, announced their decision to rescind an invitation to Fr. James Martin, S.J., longtime editor at large of America magazine, to address the faculty and students during their upcoming Alumni Days celebration. According to a statement issued by Catholic University, the seminary’s decision to rescind the invitation was contrary to “the specific counsel received from the university and its leadership.” Theological College’s decision followed the recent cancellation of Father Martin’s scheduled appearance at the annual investiture dinner for The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem and of a lecture he was to deliver for CAFOD, the Catholic international development charity.

Father Martin had been invited to deliver remarks on Jesus and Ignatian spirituality in each of these forums. Yet the sponsors of the events felt compelled to rescind their invitations in light of the public controversy surrounding Father Martin’s recent book, Building a Bridge: How the Catholic Church and the L.G.B.T. Community Can Enter into a Relationship of Respect, Compassion, and Sensitivity. After being reviewed by the censor librorum, the book received the required imprimi potest from Father Martin’s Jesuit superior, the Very Reverend John J. Cecero, S.J. Building a Bridge has received public endorsements from Cardinal Joseph Tobin of Newark, N.J.; Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe, N.M.; San Diego Bishop Robert McElroy; Bishop John Stowe of Lexington, KY; and Cardinal Kevin Farrell, prefect of the Vatican’s Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life. As Father Martin’s Jesuit superiors note in a statement released today, Building a Bridge “is an important publication for our church and the people of God.”

Most readers and commentators have welcomed the book, while some have raised questions about its thesis. In most instances, the criticism has been intelligent and charitable. Some elements in the American church, however, have taken it upon themselves to organize a campaign, not only against the contents of the book, but against Father Martin himself. In recent weeks, Father Martin has been subjected to repeated, calumnious attacks in social media and in print, involving invective that is as appalling as it is toxic. It is one thing to engage in spirited debate. It is another thing to seek to stymy such debate through fear, misinformation, or blunt censorship. The campaign against Father Martin, waged by a small but influential faction in the U.S. Church, is unwarranted, uncharitable, and un-Christian.

Father Martin is a longtime member of America’s editorial staff. He is a faithful Christian. Some may disagree with his views, but you will not meet a man more devoted to Christ and his church.

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