



FSU
FREE SPEECH UNION

THE FREE SPEECH UNION
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FREESPEECHUNION.ORG

Professor Shearer West
Vice-Chancellor and President
Nottingham University
University Park
Nottingham
NG7 2RD

2nd September 2021

Dear Professor West,

I am writing to you in my capacity as General Secretary of the Free Speech Union, a non-partisan, mass membership public interest body that stands up for the speech rights of its members and campaigns for free speech more widely.

Father David Palmer, who has been appointed as Nottingham's Catholic chaplain, is a member of the FSU and has contacted us in relation to the University's decision not to recognise his appointment as Catholic Chaplain. We are writing to urge you to reconsider this.

Given that Nottingham has had a Catholic Chaplain for 90 years, and there are a number of Catholic students and staff at the University, it is disturbing that you have refused to recognise his appointment. We understand this is due to views he has expressed on social media about abortion and euthanasia – he's against them – even though those views are orthodox within the Catholic church.

As I'm sure you are aware, the Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful for a public institution to discriminate against someone on the basis of their religious or philosophical beliefs, and the fact that Fr. David's appointment has been obstructed in this way, but not the appointment of the University's Jewish chaplain, three Muslim chaplains, or the eight other Christian chaplains, suggests that he is the victim of unlawful discrimination.

In addition, we are concerned that by refusing to recognise Fr. David's appointment because of his Catholic beliefs you are creating a hostile environment for Catholic students and staff at the University and not fulfilling your duty to foster good relations between the Catholic members of your community and other groups with protected characteristics. This, too, is a breach of the Equality Act.

To discriminate against Fr. David in this way – and, by extension, other Catholics at your University – is particularly alarming in light of the persecution that Catholics have suffered in Britain down the centuries.

Could I therefore ask for your assurance that Fr. David's appointment will be recognised by the University and he will be accorded all the same privileges as your 12 other chaplains? If you don't provide this assurance,

we will support Fr. David's efforts to remedy this injustice, up to and including taking the University to court.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Toby Young'.

Toby Young
General Secretary
The Free Speech Union
toby@freespeechunion.org