

SCOTT C. SMITH



May 16, 2011

Dr. Timothy T. O'Donnell
Christendom College
134 Christendom Drive
Front Royal, VA 22630

Re: Adele C. Smith

Dear Dr. O'Donnell:

I hope your year at Christendom was a good one. I wish that I could say the same. On March 11 of this year my daughter Adele, who just finished her junior year at Christendom, told my wife and me that she had been raped in her sophomore year by a student at Christendom. [REDACTED] My daughter was a virgin. My son Peter Smith graduated from Christendom in 2009. [REDACTED]

The rape occurred in the Shenandoah Park, off campus. My son Peter lives in Front Royal.

Adele's grades plummeted that first semester of her sophomore year. She sought psychological help from Dr. Patrick Divietri. She has nightmares about the incident. She developed Crohn's disease, a disease exacerbated by severe stress. Adele has no "bad girl" reputation on campus. Her subsequent behavior is entirely consistent with that of someone who has been traumatized and assaulted. She implored Peter to continue to live in Front Royal and to visit the campus often because she felt so unsafe.

We contacted a lawyer, met at his office, and telephoned Mr. Jesse Dorman, the Dean of Students. It took nearly a week of telephone messages before we were able to arrange to speak to Mr. Dorman, and then only after Adele signed a release form (that I had drafted) and emailed her to sign. The telephone conference was disquieting. We clearly received the impression that Mr. Dorman wasn't going to do anything.

On Friday, April 1, my wife and I travelled to Front Royal from Rochester, New York to

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meet with Mr. Dorman and to talk with Adele. Our meeting, from the standpoint of parents who have tried to raise their children in keeping with the traditions and teachings of the Church, was very unsatisfactory. Mr. Dorman showed no apparent interest in pursuing any sort of investigation and we have not heard from Mr. Dorman.

In our meeting on April 1 with Mr. Dorman, we urged that for my daughter's emotional and physical safety, [REDACTED] immediately expelled from campus. He refused to do so. In our conversation, I urged Mr. Dorman not to view the attack on my daughter through the lens of the burden of proof of the criminal law—where the law requires proof beyond a reasonable doubt. The criminal law can act in that fashion, but it is unthinkable for an institution that professes to act *in loco parentis* to adopt that attitude to the complaint of a young woman entrusted to the care of that institution. Mr. Dorman led us to believe that in the absence of physical evidence and/or witnesses (unless Mr. [REDACTED] were to be so foolishly naïve as to admit his acts) that nothing at all would happen. Moreover, Mr. Dorman indicated that he, as Dean of Students, would be in effect sole judge and jury, sole evaluator of the evidence.

Dr. O'Donnell, I was present for your commencement address to my son's graduating class. Forgettable as most commencement addresses are, I remember yours clearly. You spoke to the parents of the graduating students gathered there of the profound sense of responsibility you felt of acting *in loco parentis* for our children and your gratitude that we, as their parents, had entrusted our children to you. Your own daughter, as I recall, graduated that day. I remember watching the unspoken exchange between you and your daughter as you handed her a diploma. Is it any surprise that I wonder today whether—if this had happened to you—your daughter's attacker would be treated the way my daughter's attacker has been treated?

So now my daughter must endure the presence of her attacker on the campus. Each day that goes by, she is reminded that nothing will happen to him. Each day she is persuaded that the college has no intention of supporting her.

It should be the role of a Catholic College, particularly a college that claims to be truly Catholic, to protect its students in the role of *in loco parentis*. But here Christendom has done the opposite. It has sent the implicit message to women at Christendom that the such attacks "within the Christendom family" will be tolerated, that the attacker will receive no punishment, that women who are attacked will have to endure the fear of retaliation, both on a physical level, and on the level of damage to their reputations.

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Indeed, if a college were truly Catholic, it would have some sense of duty to the student who violated my daughter. Rape is a sociopathic act. If [REDACTED] is going to change, he needs help. But failing to punish him in any of the truly mild ways that a college ought to act—such as suspension or expulsion—merely confirms him in his sociopathic attitude.

Ultimately, each day, my wife and I are faced with an alarming thought: *The man that raped our daughter is still at Christendom.* The thought that you, as Christendom's president, will be handing a diploma to [REDACTED] is appalling to us. But it is abundantly clear to us, because of the trajectory of the policies (or lack thereof) that unless something extraordinary happen, this will be the result.

Since meeting with Mr. Jesse Dorman on April 1, we haven't heard from Mr. Dorman, but we have, indirectly, heard from [REDACTED]. On May 15, 2011, [REDACTED] sat at Dr. Marshner's dinner table and brought his rape accusation up as a conversation topic, boasting that he had evaded any charge. Both Peter and Adele are good friends with the Marshner family. Celia Marshner called and asked Peter about the situation. I submit to you that Christendom's silence and inaction implicitly support [REDACTED]'s attacks on my daughter's reputation, which go unabated.

The larger issue, of course, is the unwritten message that the administration is sending to young men at Christendom. The message is clear: men can take physical advantage of women, without consequence. This is a very dangerous message to send to young men, and it is being sent to young men at colleges all over the country, but distressingly the very same message is being sent, unwittingly, by Christendom's administration.

We can hardly deny that we live in a world where the place of women is becoming more precarious, an effect of the sexual revolution predicted by Pope Paul VI in *Humanae Vitae*. I do not hold Christendom responsible for the sexual revolution which has devastated our society. However, I must confess I never expected that Christendom would join in this trend. Without seriously addressing my daughter's complaint against [REDACTED], Christendom undeniably sends a message to its male students that sexual assault against a female Christendom student will be unpunished. In our case, it is abundantly clear that the odds of [REDACTED] receiving anything greater than a reprimand are very small. Yet if the college were true to its claim to act *in loco parentis*, [REDACTED] would be expelled at once. At least then, my daughter could begin to heal.

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My daughter has suffered on multiple levels because of this. Adele is an innocent girl and it crushed her to tell us of this because she thought it was her fault. Physically she could never have fought off [REDACTED] as he is nearly twice her size.

Adele deserves to be safe and to spend her senior year at Christendom in peace. [REDACTED] has tried to sully her reputation and now she must cope with that. He needs to leave Christendom.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this letter.

Very truly yours,

Scott C. Smith
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