

ARCHBISHOP DOLAN TO LEAD BISHOPS

At the recent meeting of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), New York Archbishop Timothy Dolan was elected to lead the bishops' conference as president for the next three years.

We called this a splendid choice. Archbishop Dolan possesses all the right skills to lead the USCCB: he is brilliant, courageous and diplomatic. We said he is sure to get the job done and will not disappoint practicing Catholics who are loyal to the Magisterium. In the short time he has been in New York, he has won the support of New Yorkers—now Catholics across the nation are bound to love him as well.

But as one might expect, Archbishop Dolan's election came with its fair share of critics. National Public Radio was worried that Dolan is "overtly conservative," and Tim Rutten of the *Los Angeles Times* fretted about his "confrontational approach." Dissident Catholics were upset as well: New Ways Ministry said the vote "sends an ominous message"; Call to Action also saw the election as "ominous"; Sr. Maureen Fiedler said "we now have our very own Catholic version of the 'Tea Party' movement"; DignityUSA concluded that Dolan's election means the hierarchy is "out of step" with Catholics. Similarly, the Human Rights Campaign, a gay secular group, said the vote meant the hierarchy is "out of step." Not to be outdone, the website of the *Tucson Citizen* accused Dolan of evincing an "arrogant" attitude in winning (it is true that he was caught smiling).

SNAP, the professional victims' group, opined that Dolan's "winning personality obscures his terrible track record on abuse." Marian Ronan of Religion Dispatches said his election was "not a good sign," and her colleague, Sarah Posner, concluded—and this is really ominous—that "the bishops are targeting families with loved ones who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender." The Internet site Lez Get Real called Dolan "the Vatican's spin-doctor," and the website of *Time* had a headline that read, "More Bad News for Obama 2012: Catholics Elect Dolan." Edgeboston.com picked up the AP piece,

but chose to give it a new headline: "Catholic Bishops' Vote to Mean Harder Church Stance Against Gay Families." And atheist Susan Jacoby sweated over the fact that Dolan would be treated by the media "as if he is the voice of all American Catholics." She needs to get used to it.

Although it was tempting to conclude that some in the asylum have escaped, it more likely meant that these are not good times for those who have sought—in many cases their entire adult life—to turn the Catholic Church, and America more generally, upside down and inside out. They gave it their best shot, but they lost. Maybe the time has come for them to retire.