

CARDINAL DOLAN WILL BE MISSED

[Bill Donohue](#)

It is an understatement to say that the Catholic League will miss Cardinal Timothy Dolan—he is a very special man. He always fought for justice, and his amiable character won the applause of Catholics and non-Catholics alike. He was certainly very kind to me.

We met for the first time on April 15, 2009, when he was installed as the new Archbishop of New York. I was waiting on the steps of St. Patrick's Cathedral as he exited, and after he spotted me, he came over to greet me. I told him something he repeated many times—to me and others: “You are my Irish terrier and I am your pit bull.”

Though we did not meet until he came to New York, I had a working relationship with Dolan when he was Archbishop of Milwaukee. I mentioned this in my news release of February 23, 2009, the day the news broke that he was selected to run the New York archdiocese.

“In the fall of 2007, the Catholic League launched a boycott and PR campaign against the Miller Brewing Company for its sponsorship of a vile anti-Catholic gay event, the Folsom Street Fair, in San Francisco. After six weeks of pounding Miller, we got what we wanted: an apology for four anti-Catholic incidents and a pledge not to sponsor the event again.”

We would not have succeeded without the support of Archbishop Dolan. Miller officials complained to him about my campaign against them, but to no avail: he said he was on our side.

Similarly, in 2023, after I registered my objections with Rob Manfred, the Commissioner of Baseball, for allowing the Los Angeles Dodgers to honor an anti-Catholic gay group on “Pride

Night," he called Dolan to protest my public stance. Dolan told him to call me. "I'm sure Bill will be glad to talk to you." Manfred never called.

Soon after Dolan became Archbishop of New York, he took me to a Broadway play. Later in 2009, he invited the entire board of directors of the Catholic League to have dinner in his residence. His support for our mission was unyielding.

One reason why Dolan was always in our corner was his commitment to the rights of accused priests. It is well known that he has been busy trying to afford just compensation to those who have suffered at the hands of offending priests—almost all the abuse took place decades ago—but less well known is his defense of priests who have been unfairly maligned.

The most famous victims' group, SNAP, has been largely discredited, and with good reason: the lies they have told about priests are legion. The Catholic League has exposed them many times, and Cardinal Dolan has also been justly critical of their antics. Too bad other bishops haven't been as active, both in tending to the needs of those who have been truly victimized, and in opposing those who have sought to exploit this issue for monetary and ideological profit.

Cardinal Dolan was quickly embraced by his brother bishops. In 2010, he was elected president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. He led with distinction, taking on the unfair measures of Obamacare that sought to penalize Catholic non-profits, such as the Little Sisters of the Poor.

It is a tribute to his non-partisanship that he was asked to close both the Democratic and the Republican national conventions. But his fairness never stood in the way of being outspoken about contemporary issues. He was not tied to the politics of the left or the right.

The Catholic League has come to the defense of many priests,

bishops and cardinals, but no one has been consistently more grateful than Cardinal Dolan. Always honest, he does not hold back in expressing his appreciation.

I prize the many radio and TV interviews I did with him. Whenever I had a new book published, he invited me to speak with him. There were other occasions, too, such as his greeting of the homeless on Ash Wednesday outside St. Francis of Assisi, near Penn Station—they are given breakfast—that are memorable. I especially recall him giving me a Coors stein (our favorite beer is Coors Light) a few years ago.

In 2023, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Catholic League at the New York Athletic Club. Cardinal Dolan was the keynote speaker, and he did not disappoint. What stood out the most was not so much his formal comments—it was his discussions with those in attendance. He worked the room, meeting virtually everyone, winning them over with his characteristic jovial demeanor.

Running the New York archdiocese is a daunting task, but it is one that suits the new archbishop. Archbishop Ronald Hicks is young and vibrant, and will be able to put his considerable administrative experience to good use. We look forward to working with him.

It did not take long for Cardinal Dolan to win over the hearts of New Yorkers, and it our sincere hope that Archbishop Hicks will do the same.