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Los Angeles Times documents archbishop's new, popular approach

Joe Ferullo | Feb. 18, 2013 NCR Today

Given the news of the last couple of weeks coming out of the West Coast, there was something truly remarkable on the front page of the *Los Angeles Times*: a positive assessment of a Catholic leader.

The *Times* took a close look [1] at Los Angeles Archbishop Jose Gomez and found much to like when compared to the style of his predecessor, Cardinal Roger Mahony.

The cardinal, of course, has been under a steady barrage of scrutiny for his role in covering up sex abuse by priests in his archdiocese and was recently rebuked [2] by Gomez himself.

But beyond even that bold move, Gomez has worked to set his own course in the nation's largest archdiocese. As the *Times* notes, Pope John Paul II nicknamed Mahony "Hollywood" for his very public persona and larger-than-life leadership style. Gomez works more quietly. Yes, he has pushed a more conservative agenda since becoming archbishop, but he has not led any kind of doctrinal purge as many church progressives feared.

And as much as Mahony was a compelling and sincere advocate for immigrant rights, Gomez has already increased church outreach to Latinos, who make up 70 percent of the archdiocese. He's launched weekly Spanish-language radio and TV programs that focus on faith and values that the *Times* says reach an audience of 2 million. And he has more fully integrated Spanish-language feast days and festivals into the life of the church.

A close friend of the 61-year-old Gomez told the *Times* the archbishop's style is "subtle, careful and cautious ... He is much more soft in style and doesn't want to offend anyone. He knows where he wants to go but he's going to take his time getting there."

In an era of scandal -- and of confrontational bishops from one corner of the country to the other -- the Gomez approach is finding admirers inside and outside the church, and may define a fresh path forward for Catholic leadership.

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[1] http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-gomez-profile-20130217,0,370222.story
[2] http://ncronline.org/node/44051