Opinion
Vatican



by NCR Staff

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Last week, NCR reported that New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan sent copies of a book that suggests qualities desirable in a future pope to cardinals across the globe. "This is an apparent break with the longstanding practice that the Catholic Church's highest prelates refrain from publicly lobbying for possible candidates for the papacy," NCR Vatican Correspondent Joshua J. McElwee wrote. The author of *The Next Pope: The Office of Peter and a Church in Mission, George Weigel, wrote to NCR t*hat the book "does not contain a single sentence about a future conclave."

However, NCR columnist Michael Sean Winters wonders where Weigel thinks this " 'next pope' about whom he has penned a tome will emerge if not from a conclave?" NCR executive editor Heidi Schlumpf also reminds us that the current pope is still alive and doesn't seem to be making any plans to step down. Following are letters to the editor that have been edited for length and clarity.

If arrogance and dismissal of the movements of the Holy Spirit are prerequisites for the next pope then New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan should be a papabile preferiti!

THADDEUS VIN PIJACKI

Buffalo, New York

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Just when I think that I have seen the most outrageous behavior by a "leader" in my church, I read this.



While New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan's behavior doesn't surprise me, it does embarrass me. Sadly, rather than following the directives from the late Pope John Paul II (who Dolan professed to hold in high esteem), Dolan seems to be more like his other hero, Pope Benedict XVI. While then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger idolized John Paul, the rumors abound about his lobbying efforts to become the successor.

Dolan lacks the intellect of Ratzinger, but not his style. Dolan is more like one of his other heroes, the narcissistic but intellectually limited President Donald Trump. Like

Trump, Dolan has seen no rule that is not worth breaking and no tradition that is worth preserving. Anything to promote himself. The first American pope seems to be his goal.

I fear for all of us! And thank God every day for the gift of Pope Francis.

JACK P. CALARESO

Reading, Massachusetts

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I have just finished reading "Exclusive: Dolan sends book on 'The Next Pope' to cardinals around the world" and I shudder to think that if Jesus came back in his human form today, what he would say to New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan in response to his behavior in recent weeks — kowtowing to President Donald Trump, going public about his "affection" for Trump on Fox News and now trying to "stack the deck" when the next conclave to elect a new pope must convene.

I remember the Gospel of Matthew, where in different sections Jesus speaks to the Pharisees of that time. Would Jesus say something similar to the current cardinal of New York, i.e. Matthew 23:27? "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You are like whitewashed tombs, which appear beautiful on the outside but inside are full of dead men's bones and every kind of filth."

It seems to me that our good Pope Francis is walking in the footsteps that Jesus walked a whole lot better than Dolan!

MARY WUDTKE

Chicago, Illinois

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New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan seems to be making a good move in simply suggesting the papacy of the future. By the way, it is still polite to mention his title in referencing him — at least in the header and opening sentence.

But it was the question of family that must really be the issue. People of NCR fret not. You have simply shown your real issues again. Not really clever at hiding your

agendas.

FRANCIS REARDON

Boca Raton, Florida

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Today's issue of NCR deals with two issues concerning New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan, both of which render his judgement questionable and his conduct indefensible. I refer of course to his inept tampering with the politics of the presidential election in the U.S. and the future election of the next pope.

In the first instance some weeks ago he publicly endorsed the president, which is his right as an American citizen, but to do so publicly as a ranking prelate of the church is totally inappropriate, if not actually immoral. The net effect of his action is clearly damaging to the good name of the church at a time when that reputation has been gravely impacted by scandals of the last few years. I appreciate the fact that NCR called him out on this, though his fellow bishops kept a discreet silence on the topic.

The second issue was his evident attempt to influence the electors who will choose the next pope when the time comes. This is specifically contrary to the rules published by Pope John Paul II on the matter. He seems to be lining up as a type of "kingmaker" allied with another discredited prelate and former nuncio, Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò.

WILLIAM T. KEANE

Leesburg, Florida

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This man must be stopped. He's every bit as dangerous as President Donald Trump, but we can't vote him out of office. What can we poor people who have no power do about him?

MARGARET DUNLEAVEY

Fishkill, New York

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I guess the positive side of this is that New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan is confirming that the Holy Spirit has nothing to do with the selection of the person to be "next Peter."

It is all about who you know and whom you can convince (bribe) to vote for you in the "election" process.

Poor Holy Spirit! Another time she is not allowed to do as she wills!

JIM OFFENBERGER

Vienna, West Virginia

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This is a crying shame. This is contrary to what St. John Paul II stated that there should be no politicking about a future pontiff when there was one still reigning. New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan should be ashamed of himself. He has politicized the whole issue of the papacy.

What is the point of praying to the Holy Spirit and having a Mass said in his honor before the conclave, to assist in the election of the right candidate as the Holy Roman Pontiff if, at the end, some electors have issues with the candidate elected?

For a long time now, we have been watching with dismay what has been going on in the Vatican.

Pope Francis was elected as the 266th successor of St. Peter fairly and squarely. As such, all of us owe allegiance to him — if we believe the Holy Spirit was involved in his election.

This business of sending out the book to all 222 cardinal electors when Francis is still alive is a damned disgrace. Who is Dolan anyway? Does he take it upon himself to set the future papal benchmark?

The sooner this issue is sorted out the better. It will be for the good of the church. Otherwise we may soon see a free house on books as to what to expect from future popes.

LOUIS LEO FERNANDES

Mumbai, India

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It doesn't surprise me that New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan is trying to manipulate. His face appears wherever politics rears its ugly head. There are many parallels between the man who wants to be "king" and the one who considers himself "prince" of the church. Smell like the sheep? I think not!

JANE FRANCISCO

Charlotte, North Carolina

Advertisement

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I cannot believe the audacity of both the book by George Weigel and New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan's response. Do neither know any ecclesiology?

No leader in the church should wish to allow the Second Vatican Council to fade quietly out of mind. Anyone with a serious knowledge of ecclesiology and love of the church and its doctrinal tradition would know that Vatican I was in so many ways a furthering of the agenda of the Council of Trent. And Vatican II in its dogmatic decrees — the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church and the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation — are an integral part of the development of our understanding of the nature of the church and of revelation and so are central to our living fully the Catholic life.

Vatican II sought merely to bring to fulfillment the great work of Vatican I and speak to the world of today. If we are not speaking to the real gospel challenges, they would seem to have lost our right to speak.

So dear Dolan and Weigel: have the courage to tell the world what is wrong and with Vatican II and where it strays from the proclamation of the kingdom of God. Do not sit around and be divisive, but lobby within the proper channels to have a Vatican III

called.

Otherwise, Dolan, respect the promised you made to the pope and his successors when you were elevated to cardinal.

Stop dividing the church.

(Fr.) PETER E. HAMMETT, OSB

St. Benedict, Louisiana

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New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan's obsequious support for President Donald Trump casts the American Catholic Church in a poor light. A church which should champion integrity, justice and opportunity for all our people instead gives succor to an incompetent con artist. Several authors have argued that Trump did not expect to win the election in 2016 but was intending to embellish his "brand" and become more valuable to his media enablers. The result of that electoral debacle is the damage which Trump has inflicted on our society both culturally and physically.

The U.S. bishops' conference did not mince words when they opposed President Barack Obama, including his work to deliver health insurance to the uninsured, a goal the bishops claimed they shared but under Obama they did not support. However, under Trump they remain silent in the face of all the egregious policies he attempts to enact including denying millions of people health insurance during a pandemic.

The bishops need to pay more attention to how they are perceived by the great majority of Catholics. We read and are inspired by the teachings of the good shepherd but then our "shepherds" in our churches show us by their rhetoric and example that Christ's teachings can be subject to political interpretations as convenient.

CHARLES A. LE GUERN

Granger, Indiana

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