

A new archbishop ñ but will he ìgetî Los Angeles?

Joe Ferullo | Apr. 7, 2010 NCR Today

Retiring Archbishop Roger Mahony has had a rough road of late ? the sex abuse scandal has left him somewhat sullied, as it has for many other princes of the church.

But the outrage against Mahony among Los Angeles Catholics has been relatively muted ? far less visceral than the anger other bishops have faced as the abuse tsunami has traveled the globe. That?s because ? for all his problems - Mahony has always felt like ?one of us.?

He made his career in California ? first in tiny Stockton to the north, then here in Los Angeles for the past twenty-five years. He has been a bulwark against the reactionary anti-immigration forces that rise up in the state each time the economy drifts down; he?s faced off against powerful politicians who?ve tried again and again to use the Latino immigrant community as the scapegoat for all the ills that batter the Golden State.

Just as important, Mahony seemed to understand that California is a place both religious and liberal ? if not libertarian. Here at the far end of the continent, people come largely to be left alone. So, the cardinal never pressed too hard on the hot button sexual issues that have come to define the Catholicism on the right. Even during last year?s contentious political battle over gay rights, Mahony?s rhetoric was much more inclusive and embracing than some of the vitriol coming from other precincts ? including various corners of the Catholic constituency.

As Tim Rutten [writes](#) [1] in the *Los Angeles Times*. Mahony is perhaps the last great American cardinal born of the energy that enveloped Vatican II. That was the era that defined him.

His successor, Archbishop Jose Gomez of San Antonio, is of the leadership generation that came after ? traditional, often reacting to perceived ?excesses? of the Vatican II moment.

By all accounts, Gomez is a great pastor ? he?s Mexican-born, and in a vastly Hispanic archdiocese that can only be a good thing. But San Antonio is not Los Angeles. And Texas? ? it certainly isn?t California.

So as four-million plus Catholics prepare a year-long goodbye to Mahony, they will be keeping a careful eye on Gomez ? to see what he does with a church that in many ways Roger Mahony built and infused with his sensibility, a California sensibility.

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[1] <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/apr/06/opinion/la-oe-rutten7-2010>