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Dolan to Obama: Protect poor, immigrant, religious freedom

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NCR Today

The president of the U.S. bishops' conference, New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan, this morning congratulated President Barack Obama on his re-election by calling on the president to protect "the most vulnerable among us."

"The Catholic Bishops of the United States offer our prayers that God will give you strength and wisdom to meet the difficult challenges that face America," Dolan wrote in the letter, made available at the bishops' conference's website. "In particular, we pray that you will exercise your office to pursue the common good, especially in care of the most vulnerable among us, including the unborn, the poor, and the immigrant."

Dolan alluded to the bishops' opposition to a Department of Health and Human Services mandate requiring coverage of contraceptive services in health insurance plans, promising the bishops "will continue to stand in defense of life, marriage, and *our first, most cherished liberty*, religious freedom."

In the last year, the bishops have portrayed their disagreement with Obama on the mandate as an infringement on the constitutional guarantee of religious freedom, hosting a "fortnight for freedom" over the summer and creating a new U.S. bishops' ad hoc committee around the matter.

Dolan's letter was followed by remarks from the U.S. bishops' communications director, Mercy Sr. Mary Ann Walsh. In a blog posting at the U.S. bishops' website, Walsh said the end of the campaign means its time for the two parties to focus on "bold cooperation."

Walsh also called for "reciprocal generosity to those who have less," naming immigrants and families

without the means for a "decent life."

"Widespread poverty now stands as a blight upon our nation," Walsh wrote. "We must address our treatment of the weak for our national greatness is rightly measured by what we do for the least among us. Can we blithely share in a bountiful buffet while fellow citizens go malnourished and suffer from ailments just a dose of medicine away from a cure?"

"With the election is over, efforts to regain our nobility also mean we need now to restore civility in dialogue," Walsh concluded her blog. "Virulent bipartisanship must to yield to bold cooperation. All Americans must work as one for the spiritual and material health of our country and beyond."

Full text of Dolan's letter to President Obama, released this morning:

Dear President Obama,

In my capacity as President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I write to express my congratulations on your re-election as President of the United States. The people of our country have again entrusted you with a great responsibility. The Catholic Bishops of the United States offer our prayers that God will give you strength and wisdom to meet the difficult challenges that face America.

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In particular, we pray that you will exercise your office to pursue the common good, especially in care of the most vulnerable among us, including the unborn, the poor, and the immigrant. We will continue to stand in defense of life, marriage, and *our first, most cherished liberty*, religious freedom. We pray, too, that you will help restore a sense of civility to the public order, so our public conversations may be imbued with respect and charity toward everyone.

May God bless you and Vice President Biden as you prepare for your second term in service to our country and its citizens.

Sincerely yours,

Timothy Cardinal Dolan
Archbishop of New York
President
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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