



CALL TO ACTION

METRO NY CHAPTER

Inspire Catholics, Transform Church

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June 3, 2020

Cardinal Timothy Dolan
460 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10022

Dear Cardinal Dolan:

We are board members of the New York City branch of Call to Action, all coming from various parishes in the metropolitan area. We are strongly committed to the ideals and teaching of the Second Vatican Council, and we actively support a spirit of inclusiveness and tolerance in our church.

For instance, we strongly support full and equal participation of women in all ministries of the church. Likewise, we deplore the relegation of our homosexual brothers and sisters to a place where they are viewed by many church spokesmen as akin to freaks of nature, engaging in expressions of love that are deemed unnatural. Unfortunately, our church has disengaged from contemporary scientific research on this issue, and it is still preaching the sexual morality that prevailed in past cultures.

We are pleased to read that some German dioceses now provide an ecclesial blessing for same-sex partnerships, and we are convinced that most New York Catholics would respond positively and joyfully if you initiated a similar blessing for gay couples here.

You played a leading role in the recent colloquy between Catholic bishops and President Trump. Touting his pro-life credentials, the president said that he is more responsive to the Catholic Church than any of his predecessors, and he urged you and the other bishops “to do what you have to do” to get out the vote so he will be re-elected.

There is no record of you or anybody else raising a protest voice to tell him that you don’t see that as part of your pastoral responsibilities. Nor did you remind him that it is not the role of religious leaders to intervene in partisan politics. According to Cardinal Blasé J. Cupich, the central issue for the church during this election campaign is to find a way to witness Catholic teaching without allowing it to be distorted by partisan politics.

We acknowledge, of course, that you are entitled to choose your own friends and in a Fox News interview you described your regular contacts and easy familiarity with the president. In that interview you paid the president an amazing compliment when you thanked him for his “sensitivity to the religious community.” In subsequent commentary justifying this and other laudatory expressions for President Trump, you claimed that you are being unfairly attacked by comments from the left and right of the political spectrum.

Many commentators referred to church teaching from *Gaudium et Spes* “The church, by reason of her role and competence, is not identified in any way with the political community nor bound to any political system. She is at once a sign and a safeguard of the transcendent character of the human person. The Church and the political community in their own fields are autonomous and independent from each other.” [GS, No. 76]

Your special welcome for President Trump during the Easter virtual mass in St. Patrick’s Cathedral left us and many Catholics in the

Archdiocese, feeling very cold and alienated because we object to Trump's leadership in many important areas of American life and his moral behavior.

Our concerns about these issues do not fall into liberal or conservative categories. We object strongly to our church leaders effectively endorsing a man that the pope clearly had in mind when he declared that a leader advocating building walls to keep people out instead of bridges to welcome them in cannot call himself a Christian.

Trump's Leadership and Presidency:

Viewed from the perspective of Catholic morality, we offer three examples in areas of American life where we object to Mr. Trump's leadership as it relates to Catholic values:

1. Refugees and Immigrants:

President Trump's Make America Great Again policies have been claustrophobic and unfriendly to new arrivals. The blatant anti-immigrant rhetoric of the powerful Know-Nothing Movement during the 19th century with its despicable anti-Irish and anti-German propaganda is being replicated against other newcomers to America by this administration.

Trump implemented what has been appropriately called the Muslim Ban in 2017, and two years later he again drew on his executive powers to impose a travel prohibition on six African countries, including Nigeria, the largest nation in that continent. To say the least, these actions have a whiff of racism.

In September of last year, he published a Refugee and Asylum Policy that reduced by 84% the number of refugees allowed into America by the last administration. He closed the door on the four million Syrian

refugees, three quarters of whom were women and children. Also, he has allowed the DACA program to fall into abeyance.

Call to Action strongly supported calls for change in the disgraceful way children were treated on the Southern border. We applauded Cardinal Tobin who visited the cages where the young people were incarcerated and spoke movingly about his experience: "You really have to believe in inflicting cruelty on innocent people to choose to support these policies."

Should these awful, inhumane regulations earn the president praise for "his sensitivity to the religious community?"

2. Care for Creation:

Laudato Si stands out as Pope Francis' signature statement to the whole world. It deals with our serious obligations to care for the common earthly home given to us from on high. He pleads with world leaders to come together before it is too late to implement plans to save our planet which is in danger of extinction. The pope has returned to this theme repeatedly, including in a five-year update of the encyclical this month.

Call to Action has been involved in projects to promote Francis' important environmental agenda, and we urge the whole church to stand behind the pope's urgent pleas on this crucial moral issue.

The Paris Climate Accord was completed in 2015 with support from almost every country in the world. The leaders agreed to implement a multi-pronged program to reduce the carbon in the atmosphere. It was adjudged to be a modest but serious first step in dealing with the threat of global warming.

President Obama supported the agreement, but shortly after taking over, President Trump, who had called global warming a hoax during

the election campaign, shamefully, withdrew America from the international accord.

Since then he has directed major tax breaks to the coal and oil industries, and he has demoted the Environmental Protection Agency, preventing scientists there from even attending conferences that deal with major issues relating to healthier air and cleaner water. Mr. Trump's disdain for the environment is loudly proclaimed by his appointment of Mr. Wheeler, a former coal lobbyist, as head of the EPA.

Where is Mr. Trump's sensitivity to the religious community and especially to Catholic parishioners whose esteemed pontiff prompted world leaders in the strongest terms to do even more than is required by the Paris Agreement?

3. Poverty in America:

The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the grave inequalities embedded in the American capitalist system. Every day we see queues stretching for miles on food lines while from the middle of March until the middle of May, two months, billionaires' wealth has increased by a whopping 15%, and their ranks have been augmented by eighteen new members in the same time period.

Mr. Trump's economic philosophy, true to its genesis among conservative thinkers, asserts that the best way to spread the wealth throughout the community is by giving every break to the people at the top while promising that their wealth will trickle down. It has never worked but they keep recycling the theory using different terminology.

Pope Francis cogently mocks the pretenses of the Trickle Down Theory. "The promise was that when the glass was full it would overflow,

benefiting the poor, but what really happens is when the glass is full, it magically gets bigger. Nothing ever comes out for the poor.”

The deficit, which has ballooned because of the president’s tax policies, led to forceful calls for movement towards balancing the budget next year. All welfare payments that help the poor are on the chopping block. The Food Stamp Program which last year kept 3.1 million people out of poverty, including 1.3 million children, is identified for a 20% reduction. The virus crisis may change these projections, but the president’s commitment to the rich and disparagement of the poor won’t alter.

What Do We Pray For?

Again, Cardinal Dolan, knowing the disastrous impact of the president’s economic policies on the poor and working families, how could you speak of him in laudatory terms regarding sensitivity to the religious community?

The New Testament tells us that character matters, that we will all be held accountable for our behavior, in particular what we do for the least of our brethren. Trump is a congenital liar and his actions and words in the past leave no doubt about his misogyny and cruelty.

Call to Action views his leadership as bereft of any ethical compass. Our leaders shouldn’t be encouraging such behavior by praising his moral leadership, his supposed sensitivity to the religious community.

Please stop attempting to influence the Catholic vote in the 2020 Presidential Election.

We ask you, UCCB and the American Catholic Church to navigate the politics of 2020 by

- Faithful witnessing to church social teaching, but not in a way that reinforces partisan hatred or divide.
- Avoiding endorsement or alignment with any candidate or political party in the upcoming election.
- Teaching in such a way that we form conscience as we make political choices. Recognizing that it is not the role of the Church to replace our conscience.
- Finally, not compromising Catholicism by advocating a partisan choice for the "Catholic vote".

Yours sincerely,

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