

# Archbishop says his style might differ, but substance of job won't

NEW YORK – Archbishop Timothy J. Dolan predicted his style as New York's archbishop will differ from that of his predecessors, but the substance will be the same.

"The 'what' won't change, but the 'how' might," he said.

"Our goal is to change our lives to be in conformity with Jesus and his church and not to change the teachings of Jesus and the church to be in conformity with what we want," he said, adding the most sacred responsibility of a bishop is to pass on the faith that remains changeless.

Archbishop Dolan spoke at a morning press conference at Cathedral High School in the New York Catholic Center April 15 before his installation that afternoon as the 10th archbishop of New York.

Archbishop Dolan, who had headed the Milwaukee Archdiocese for nearly seven years before his appointment to New York, acknowledged "the pulpit of the archbishop of New York has an enhanced prominence that may take some getting used to," but he promised not to shy away from preaching the truth and applying the teaching of Jesus Christ to contemporary situations.

"Bishops are not into politics; we're into principles," he said.

He said he would be "active, present and, I hope, articulate" in expressing church positions on matters before the state Legislature, such as same-sex marriage and the extension of statutes of limitation on filing abuse claims.

First, though, he said, he would "sit down with trusted advisers in the archdiocese" to see what has been done in the past and work through the channels already established.

Commenting on declining Mass attendance in the church, Archbishop Dolan termed

it a subset of a larger problem of people not seeing the need for organized religion.

People are interested in spirituality, but “they want to believe without belonging,” he said. “They want to be sheep without a shepherd. They want to be part of a family, but they want to be an only child.”

The bishops need to respond by preaching and inviting, he said. “The church is at its best when we invite, when we appeal to people and call forth what’s best in them.”

He compared Sunday Mass to a Sunday meal, but said people shouldn’t be surprised that parishioners are not attending church on Sunday when they are rarely sitting down to a Sunday meal with their families.

Nonetheless, Catholics have a faith that is “the pearl of great price,” won for them by the blood of many.

“Faith is something we inherit,” he said, but later “make a free and deliberate choice to embrace it.”

“Just as a child might rebel from a family as a teen and later return, some Catholics look to other faiths for what they feel is missing in their own,” Archbishop Dolan said. “Some are drawn elsewhere by the vigorous preaching of the truth and that should be addressed by pastoral leaders.”

Those who return are attracted by the sacraments, the warmth of Catholic worship and the long succession from St. Peter, he said.