

Reclaim truth about Jesus' church, Archbishop Dolan tells bishops in Baltimore

Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan of New York called on his fellow bishops Nov. 14 at their fall assembly in Baltimore to communicate to the world that the sinfulness of the church's members is not "a reason to dismiss the church or her eternal truths, but to embrace her all the more."

In his first presidential address since election as president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops last November, Archbishop Dolan opened and closed with the words: "Love for Jesus and his church must be the passion of our lives."

Describing the church as a spiritual family that "to use the talk show vocabulary ... has some 'dysfunction,'" he said the bishops' "most pressing pastoral challenge today is to reclaim that truth, to restore the luster, the credibility, the beauty of the church."

But he cited "chilling statistics we cannot ignore" that "fewer and fewer of our beloved people - to say nothing about those outside the household of the faith - are convinced that Jesus and his church are one."

"So they drift from her, get mad at the church, grow lax, join another or just give it all up," Archbishop Dolan said. "If this does not cause us pastors to shudder, I do not know what will."

He also acknowledged the enthusiasm of "young people, new converts and recent arrivals" as well as "the wonderfully deep and radiant faith of Catholic immigrants who are still a most welcome - while sadly harassed - gift to the church and the land we love."