

Dolan set to be New York archbishop

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Archbishop Dolan at installation (CNS photo)

NEW YORK

Amid warm applause and traditional evening prayer, Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan urged the people of the Archdiocese of New York to open the door of their hearts to welcome Christ as an intimate part of their lives.

Speaking at a vespers service at St. Patrick's Cathedral April 14, the eve of his installation as the spiritual leader of the country's second largest archdiocese, Archbishop Dolan admitted he was afraid to completely open the door to Christ, but that when he did he "heard him invite me to serve him and his church as archbishop of New York."

The archbishop, who has led the church in Milwaukee since 2002, said he wondered about his appointment to one of the most prominent leadership positions in the U.S. church. He said he felt comfortable at home in Wisconsin, with its "beloved brats, beers and cool summer lake breezes."

"I inwardly replied to him: 'Go away, Lord. I'm not your man. My Spanish is lousy and my English not much better. ... The Yankees and Mets over the Cardinals and Brewers? Forget it!'" he said.

He said he questioned how he could follow his predecessors such as Archbishop John J. Hughes and Cardinals Patrick J. Hayes, Francis J. Spellman, Terence J. Cooke, John J. O'Connor and Edward M. Egan to become the 10th archbishop of New York.

"Yet he had his sandal in the door and would not let me shut him out as I heard the whisper of the one who says, 'Timothy, be not afraid. My grace is sufficient. Never do I invite one to a task without giving him/her the strength to do it.'"

Likewise, the 59-year-old archbishop told the congregation, everyone can choose to welcome Christ "to receive incomparable light, love, mercy and friendship or whether we will remain closed up in darkness, self-absorption, sin and isolation."

"God invites us, never coerces; God invites us to believe in him, trust him, accept him. God invites us to let him be the Lord of our life, and when we do our lives are never the same. Our lives will last forever," he said.

The service began with the traditional knocking at the cathedral doors as Archbishop Dolan struck a hammer nine times until the massive doors opened. As he stepped in the congregation welcomed the native of St. Louis.

As he waited in mist and fog outside the cathedral for the service to begin, Archbishop Dolan greeted friends and people he recognized in the opening procession. He made lighthearted jokes and thanked participants for being part of the installation ceremonies.

Cardinal Egan welcomed the archbishop to the cathedral as the vespers service began, assuring him that the archdiocese will keep him in prayer as he starts his new ministry.

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