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Dolan Named to Council for New Evangelization

Michael Sean Winters | Jan. 5, 2011 Distinctly Catholic

The Holy See today announced [1]the members of the Pontifical Council for the New Evangelization. The sole American named to the Council was New York's Archbishop Timothy Dolan. It is an inspired choice.

The New Evangelization has two components. First, it will seek to use new media and methods to proclaim the Gospel. For this part of the brief, Dolan is a natural, a media-friendly, gregarious Archbishop who already has his own blog and who happens to preside over the media capital of the world.

The second part of the New Evangelization is more difficult but more pressing. It is to get past the cultural encrustations that impede evangelization. It is to rediscover the essential "newness" of the Gospel. This is a more difficult challenge, not least for a sitting archbishop who will be called upon, especially as President of the USCCB, to speak out on the issues of the day. In our culture, those issues are usually moral, not dogmatic, in content and it is precisely this reduction of faith to morals that inhibits the new evangelization. The truths of the Gospel get their confirmation in the empty tomb of Christ.

All of the Church's teaching - and the authority of her teahcers - are rooted there. All of our teachings about social justice, about sexual morality, about human dignity, all find their source in the empty tomb. Yet we live in a culture that does little to encourage the disposition to believe and sees the Church's efforts to teach, often accurately, as clumsy attempts to hold on to moral norms that no longer persuade.

This is the challenge. How to persuade people to consider the possibility that the tomb was empty. If they are convinced of that, everything else will come. If they are not, the Church will be heard on no other issues.

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[1] http://press.catholica.va/news_services/bulletin/news/26652.php?index=26652&lang=en