

## Dolan denies rumor of snub to Obama envoy

John L. Allen Jr. | Feb. 18, 2012 NCR Today

By JOHN L. ALLEN JR.

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Given the present political climate in the States, it was probably inevitable that when a reception hosted by the U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See for the new American cardinals in today's consistory was cancelled, some people would suspect a deliberate snub by the American prelates to the Obama administration.

As news of the cancellation spread last evening, rumors both in Washington and Rome began to swirl of another chapter in the current tensions between the American bishops and the Obama administration over the insurance mandates issue.

New Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York, President of the U.S. bishops' conference, told NCR this morning that was simply not true.

Describing the cancellation as the product of scheduling conflicts after Pope Benedict XVI called for a full-day session with the cardinals on Friday, Dolan said he "gladly would have gone" to the embassy event had it been possible.

Dolan said he invited Obama's ambassador to the Vatican, Miguel Diaz, and his wife Marian to join a private dinner Friday night, among other things to express his regrets for not being able to make the reception. New Cardinal Edwin O'Brien was also at the dinner.

On background, embassy officials stressed this morning that welcoming visiting American Catholic leaders is part of the embassy's normal business, and there's been no hiatus because of domestic political debates. In recent months, as various groups of American bishops have come through Rome for their ad limina visits, Diaz has been hosting receptions for them on an almost weekly basis.

The bishops typically arrive at the ambassador's residence in a bus and spend roughly an hour and half, with a few brief welcoming remarks followed by informal conversation.

Earlier in the week, Obama named Diaz and the longtime head of Catholic Relief Services, Ken Hackett, as presidential delegates to the consistory ceremony.

In an interview with NCR earlier this week, Dolan rejected impressions of a breakdown in relations between the bishops and the Obama administration.

"It's not like there's total conflict, and I want to get that out," Dolan said.

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"When I went into the Oval Office in November, the first thing the president did is to say, 'Archbishop Dolan, let's rehearse the areas in which my administration and the Catholic community in the United States is

cooperating.? He went into a litany of about ten minutes, and all I could do was nod my head in agreement,? he said. ?I also added a few more he had forgotten.?

?I will not place myself or my brother bishops in the camp of Obama-haters, because we?re not,? he said.

In today's consistory ceremony, Pope Benedict XVI is creating 22 new cardinals, including Dolan and O'Brien.

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