NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Dolan's Power Politics

Ken Briggs | Aug. 24, 2012 NCR Today

Political ambition is a necessary element in both democracy and religion. The desire to lead can spring from personal talents and an impulse to pursue a vision.

But it all depends on the nature of the vision and the purposes to which the ambition is directed. Cardinal Timothy Dolan shows what can happen when the mix becomes toxic.

By leaping at the chance to pray his endorsement of the Romney-Ryan ticket at the Republican convention, Dolan magnifies his profile as a wielder of power for its own sake as fuel for his own ends.

His career aims at restoring New York as the seat of Catholic influence under his direction and positioning himself as a pope in waiting. An equivalent of a campaign handbook recently encodes this pipe dream.

Proof that he elevates his own agenda above that of American Catholics consists in his willingness to align himself with two candidates who scoff at the main tenets of Catholic Social Teaching, among them its advocacy of programs to help poor people and its staunch support of organized labor.

Further evidence is that he'd rather curry favor with the Republican top command than resolve the conflicts among the Catholic population he purports to represent. His convictions at many points differ sharply from those among the Catholic laity, yet he chooses to exacerbate those divisions by identifying himself as the Republican chaplain.

His posturing might come across less driven by personal political desires if his message and presence conveyed something more distinctly Christian. As it is, his strut and his stereotypical Irish-pol whimsy don't go much further than that.

Source URL (retrieved on *10/08/2015 - 11:29*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/dolans-power-politics