

# Dolan's Last Ditch

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New York Archbishop Timothy Dolan firmly supports your right to do as he says.

That's the gist of his [June 14 blog post](#) decrying "this rush to tamper with a definition as old as human reason and ordered good," by which he means New York's long-awaited marriage-equality bill.

As I write, the outcome in the state Senate remains uncertain. But since our opponents' attacks will continue either way, I've some words to cross with His Eminence.

First, it is nice to see Dolan defend human reason, but it would be nicer if Holy Mother the Church Inc. did not claim a monopoly. "Ordered good" is short for old men in red hats presuming to tell others how to live. Let them clean their own house first.

Dolan writes, in part, "In [China and North Korea], government presumes daily to 'redefine' rights, relationships, values, and natural law. ... But, please, not here! Our country's founding principles speak of rights given by God, not invented by government...." Dolan can call everyone who disagrees with him a communist seeking to usurp the heavenly throne, but we will continue to use our God-given brains.

The "natural law" Dolan touts is nothing but religious dogma in pseudo-scientific drag. We are free to grow and change. Laws related to marriage have been revised many times, such as by legalizing contraception, decriminalizing adultery, and establishing no-fault divorce.

The Declaration of Independence does indeed say that all men "are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights," but those rights are guaranteed by the Bill of Rights, which begins, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion." Ignoring this fundamental American principle, Dolan conflates church law with civil law. He confuses authoritarianism for Americanism.

Dolan claims, "We cherish true freedom, not as the license to do whatever we want, but the liberty to do what we ought; we acknowledge that not every desire, urge, want, or chic cause is automatically a 'right.' And, what about other rights, like that of a child to be raised in a family with a mom and a dad?" Here Dolan echoes the [pope's insistence](#) that one's "true conscience" agrees with church teachings. But the liberty to do as Rome dictates is no liberty at all.

While Catholic Charities demands the right to discriminate in adoption services with public funds, countless gay and lesbian couples fulfill children's right to loving homes. Conforming the law to Catholic doctrine would be less likely to erase our diverse families than merely deny them

legal protection, thus harming children to promote orthodoxy.

Dolan again: "The Church affirms the basic human rights of gay men and women. . . . This is not about denying rights. It is about upholding a truth about the human condition." On the contrary, the Catholic Church has opposed every legislative effort for gay people's rights. Dolan's assertion about the human condition simply airbrushes reality.

Dolan says: "We believers worry . . . that we will be coerced to violate our deepest beliefs to accommodate the newest state decree. (If you think this paranoia, just ask believers in Canada and England what's going on there to justify our apprehensions.)" Ah, but America has a First Amendment protecting religious liberty. That liberty, however, does not entitle churches to set public policy.

Dolan tries again: "But I also come at this as an American citizen, who reads our formative principles as limiting government, not unleashing it to tamper with life's most basic values." Crusading to have the state enforce your religious beliefs is hardly limiting government.

Archbishop Dolan is whistling past the graveyard. The very closeness of the vote in Albany highlights his waning influence. In contrast, clergy from many denominations offer affirmation to God's gay children. Praise the Lord and pass the legislation.

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