



# A People Of Hope, A

John L Allen



One of the world's most respected religion journalists profiles New York's Archbishop Timothy Dolan, one of the country's and possibly the world's most important Catholic leaders through lengthy exclusive interviews. Unique among the current leadership of the Catholic Church, Archbishop Dolan shares his insightful perspective in this series of conversations on the present and future of Catholicism. In these pages Dolan shares a perspective which is typically not part of the information an average person would know through today's media. This omission often leaves outsiders with a terribly flawed grasp of what's actually happening in the Church. Legitimate stories on, for example, abuse and Church authority can't be dissolved by reactive conspiracy theories about how the media is out to get the Catholic Church. That said, if these scandals are all there is to the Catholic Church, why would anyone bother being Catholic? It may not be surprising that there are an estimated 22 million ex-Catholics out there, yet it is revealing that even more people have chosen to remain with the Church. Tens of millions of Americans, and hundreds of millions more around the world, still turn to the Church for inspiration, for its sacramental life, for its experience of community and service. In every diocese in America you can find parishes that are flourishing. The faith represented there is not an exaggerated religious frenzy that feeds an uncritical view of the Church. Catholics are nothing if not sober realists about the humanity of their institutions and leaders. They see the Church not as a debating society or a multinational enterprise, but a family with all the flaws and dysfunction, but also all the joy and life, of families everywhere. This is why Archbishop Dolan is such an important part of the Church's emerging landscape. In *A People of Hope* Dolan is seen at his best, capturing an upbeat, hopeful, affirming Catholicism that's the untold story about the Church today. As readers spend time with Dolan here, they may find that his love for people and zest for friendship is what's truly fundamental about the man, not a PR device calculated to conceal some other agenda. Dolan can and does draw lines in the sand when he believes that core matters of Catholic identity are at stake. He's well aware that we live in a deeply secular world in the West, in which powerful pressures, both subtle and overt, seek to blur the counter-cultural message of Catholicism on many fronts. One key to Dolan's character, however, is that changing hearts, not knocking heads, is always his first instinct. John Allen draws out a picture of future trends by exploring where Dolan wants to lead, and how will a Church that increasingly bears his imprint look and feel? To understand this, what's really necessary is to get inside his head and then let him speak for himself. To that end Allen frames questions in a way that allows Dolan to expand on the topic himself as much as possible. The result is a book more with Dolan than a book about him, which is indeed the best way to understand the man. At the end, one can agree or disagree with Dolan's outlook, but one may at least be better equipped to understand why thoughtful modern women and men might still believe there's something worth considering in the Catholic message. Whatever the future may have in store for Dolan staying in New York until he dies, being called to Rome to work in a senior Vatican post, or something else entirely he will be a force in the Catholic Church both nationally and internationally for some time to come, and it's well worth trying to discern what that might mean.

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