

Equal opportunity praying

By [David Heim](#)

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New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan has been a [harsh critic](#) of the Obama administration, but he is blessing [Democrats and Republicans equally](#) by giving the closing prayer at both parties' conventions.

The Republicans invited him first, and his acceptance raised questions about whether Dolan, the head of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, was lending the authority of the Catholic hierarchy to the GOP. But then the Democrats shrewdly invited him to pray at their convention too. Dolan shrewdly accepted.

Dolan's situation suggests what could be a new practice—if not for political conventions, then for clergy. What if every religious leader who was asked to pray at a major party convention replied, "I'd be happy to do that—on the condition that I'm also invited to the other party's convention."

If enough prominent ministers—the kind who make the politicians' invitation list—made that stipulation, perhaps over time a new tradition of public prayer would arise, a tradition in which prayer isn't a disguised political sermon or political blessing. It would be a boost for political civility and a wonderful testimony to the fact that the divine blessing is not to be identified with any political party.