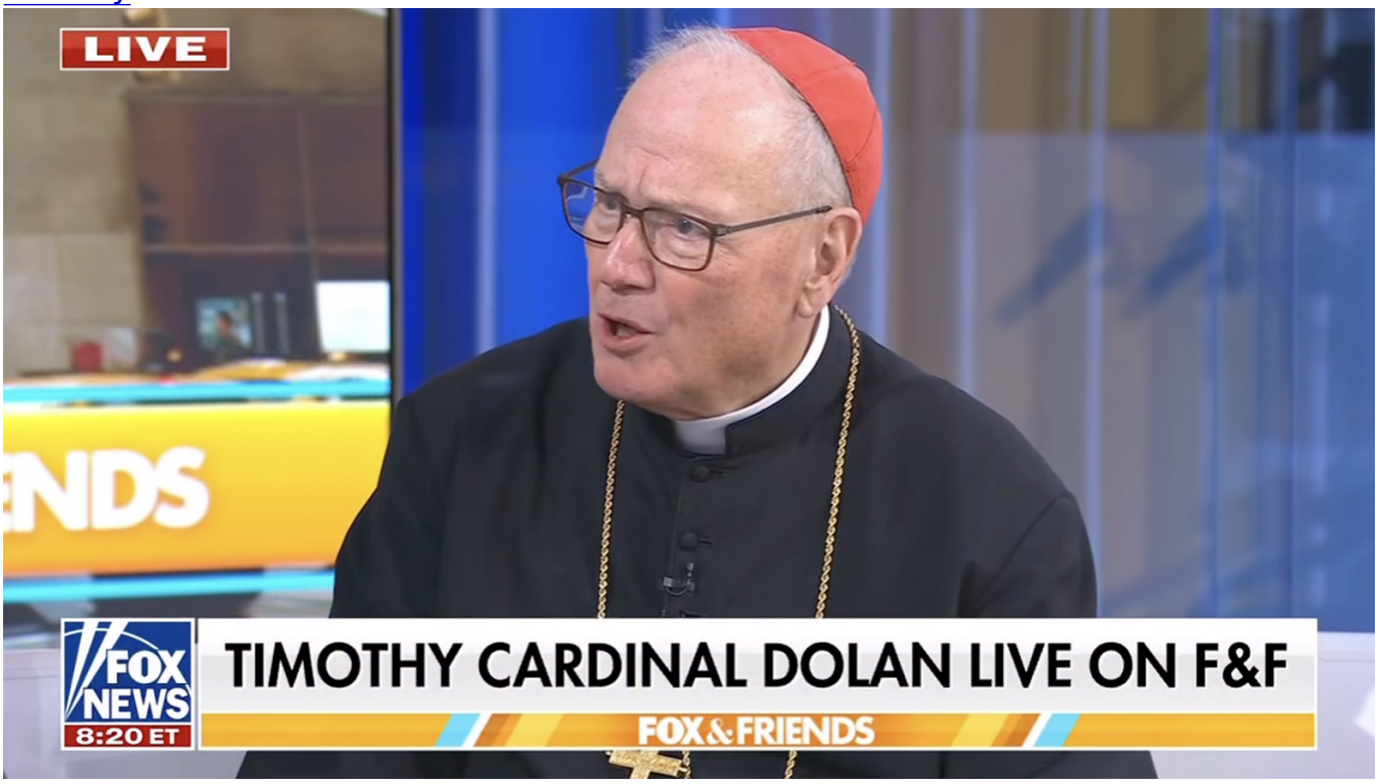
News
Ministry



Cardinal Timothy Dolan speaks about Charlie Kirk during an appearance on Fox and Friends. (Video screen grab)

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A group of Catholic sisters criticized Archbishop of New York Timothy Dolan for his recent comments about the late conservative activist Charlie Kirk, suggesting the

cardinal is "confusing the true witness of the Gospel" by likening Kirk to a biblical saint.

On Wednesday (Sept. 24), Sisters of Charity of New York issued a statement in response to remarks Dolan made earlier this month during an appearance on "Fox & Friends." While discussing Kirk's killing, Dolan cast the work of the activist, an evangelical Christian, in religious terms.

"The more I learned about (Kirk), I thought, this guy is a modern-day Saint Paul," Dolan said. "He was a missionary. He's an evangelist. He's a hero. He's one, I think, who knew what Jesus meant when He said, 'The truth will set you free.'"

Dolan joins many conservatives who have publicly compared Kirk to Christian saints and martyrs after he was shot and killed while speaking at a college campus in Utah earlier this month.

The Sisters of Charity of New York condemned the comparison, noting Kirk's history of inflammatory rhetoric — which includes criticism of Catholicism itself — and arguing that conflating him with biblical heroes could lead Catholics astray.



The Sisters of Charity of New York logo. (Courtesy)

"What Cardinal Dolan may not have known is that many of Mr. Kirk's words were marked by racist, homophobic, transphobic, and anti-immigrant rhetoric, by violent pro-gun advocacy, and by the promotion of Christian nationalism," the sisters' statement read. "These prejudicial words do not reflect the qualities of a saint. To compare Mr. Kirk to St. Paul risks confusing the true witness of the Gospel and giving undue sanction to words and actions that hurt the very people Jesus calls us to love."

In contrast to Kirk, who supported hardline immigration policies during his life, the Sisters of Charity noted their own history of working with immigrants who arrive in the United States "with nothing but hope," adding, "they deserve true examples of discipleship, not false prophets."

"In this moment, we reaffirm our mission: to walk with all people who are poor and marginalized, to welcome immigrants and refugees, to defend the dignity of LGBTQ+ persons, and to labor for peace in a world saturated with violence," the statement read. "These are the marks of authentic discipleship. These are the qualities of saints."

The statement was signed by the group's leadership, which includes Sisters Donna Dodge, Margaret O'Brien, Mary McCormick, Mary Ann Daly, Sheila Brosnan and Margaret Egan.

Their statement doubled as a rejection of Dolan's emerging public persona, which has become increasingly associated with President Donald Trump and his administration. The cardinal sits on Trump's Religious Liberty Commission and spoke twice — first offering a prayer, then later a short speech — when the group gathered with Trump at the Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C., earlier this month.

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At that event, Trump referred to Dolan as "highly respected" and a "king," with the president adding that the two had "worked together" during his first administration and that he had "helped financially with your church and your schools." Trump also endorsed the prelate as his favorite for pope as cardinals gathered to elect a new pontiff earlier this year.

The nuns' statement on Dolan is the latest in a long line of U.S. sisters challenging bishops on political matters. Several groups of Catholic nuns came out in support of the Affordable Care Act in 2010, despite opposition to the health care legislation by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Even as bishops have upped their criticism of Trump and Republicans in recent months, some nuns have pushed for more. After the USCCB initially declined to outright oppose the Trump-backed Republican budget proposal earlier this year, which featured massive funding for the president's immigration enforcement agenda, hundreds of nuns held a protest outside the U.S. Capitol to condemn the bill.

And like the bishops, women religious have also clashed with Vice President JD Vance, who is Catholic, and the Trump administration in general. When Vance and the White House press secretary denounced liberals who denounced appeals to "thoughts and prayers" in the wake of the mass shooting at a Catholic school in Minnesota in August, alleging such rhetoric is disrespectful toward people of faith, the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas issued their own statement, declaring, "our response can no longer be 'thoughts and prayers alone.'"