

Conference of National Spiritual Assistants

THE POPE FRANCIS RIPPLE EFFECT

by Brother Bob Brady, OFM



With our National Minister, Deacon Tom Bello in his fine article in the *TAU/USA* Spring 2014 issue on Pope Francis, I am finding myself moved to share with our TAU readers, yet another angle or two, along with the challenges that come from the ripple-effects of the wonderfully provocative and challenging papacy our Holy Father sets before each one of the sisters and brothers, particularly, in our Franciscan Family!

In the most recent issue of another Franciscan publication, the editor, Fr. Tom Washburn, OFM, wrote about the visit our standing OFM English-Speaking Ministers Provincial were able to have with His Eminence, Oscar Andrés Cardinal Rodriguez Maradiaga, S.D.B., Archbishop of Tegucigalpa, Honduras who is also the Chair of Pope Francis' Council of Eight Cardinals from around the globe. The visit, which took place in Florida, was marked by the kind and frank openness of His Eminence:

(From the Conclusion to his reflection with the friar-Provincials)

All this represents a magnificent example and a great stimulus to all if we wish to feel committed, in a Franciscan way, to the mission of Jesus in our world of today, and if we wish to lead others to an encounter with the mystery of God, as the little man of Assisi did.

This has to happen through great experiences of love that open the heart and not only transmits ideas or knowledge about him but lead us to Him. As in Bethlehem, as in the Porziuncola, as it was in the beginning

The Cardinal went on to respond to various questions and other comments during his dialogue with the OFM English-Speaking Ministers Provincial.

Some American periodicals have addressed the recent April 2014 dialogue at the Vatican between the U.S. Leadership Conference of Religious Women (LCWR) and the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith. Some reports have been confusing in their references to their ongoing dialogue. What I am hearing from various Religious women that speaks to me of this example of connectivity to one another as it finds an ability for these continuing dialogues to be marked by the continued expression of directness and respect for each participant within this on-going dialogue.

Recently, the Vatican has marked the fiftieth anniversary of the beginnings of what is now known as the Vatican's 'Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue,' an outgrowth of the Second Vatican Council. A committee of that council has been laboring recently in South Africa over keeping the efforts of dialogue and communication clear and open. In a recent interview with Vatican Radio, Philippa Hitchens and the Archbishop of Birmingham, U.K., a committee member, spoke of the extent of the efforts towards maintaining open channels of communication.

Each of these examples of leadership, communications and dialogue serves to challenge the reader (as well as the author). An overriding theme seen in each of these situations is that the Pope's priorities are (1) to recognize the other, as our sister and our brother—we are of the same genealogy of family in faith! When we are able to first recognize the gift of the other, (2) we should be well on our way towards achieving a glimpse of the Divine being present in the other, and (3) to honor and to respect the wondrous beauty we behold within all of God's creation!