



NEWSLETTER

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CARDINAL RODRÍGUEZ: “YOU ARE THE VANGUARD OF EVANGELIZATION” *Chair of Pope’s Advisory Council of Cardinals meets with Provincials*

ST. PETERSBURG, FL – During their Spring meeting held in St. Petersburg, the Provincial Ministers of the Conference had the extraordinary opportunity to spend a day of conversation, reflection and fraternity with a man chosen by Pope Francis to help advise him on the reform of the Church, **Oscar Andrés Cardinal Rodríguez Maradiaga, S.D.B.**, Archbishop of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, and chair of Pope Francis’ Group of Eight Cardinals.

The day with the Cardinal took place on Tuesday, April 8, as part of the Provincial’s annual “study day” which takes place each year at their Spring meeting. Cardinal Rodríguez, an Affiliate of the Immaculate Conception Province (USA), was invited to speak to the Provincials on the topic, “Implications of the ‘Franciscan’ Papacy on Leadership.”

In addition to his prepared texts, the Cardinal also engaged the Provincial Ministers in free and open conversation on a wide range of topics effecting the church, the Franciscans, religious life in general and his experiences working closely with Pope Francis over this last year of his papacy.



Cardinal Rodríguez along with the Provincial Ministers of the ESC

“I really appreciated the Cardinal’s familiarity and transparency with us. That is always needed and is such an important thing,” said Gino Correa, OFM, Provincial Minister of Our Lady of Guadalupe Province.

Hugh McKenna, OFM, Provincial Minister of Ireland, said, “This was very uplifting and I go home with a lot more hope in my heart.”

Placing his comments in the context of the New Evangelization, Cardinal Rodríguez said, **“Religious are called to be the vanguard of evangelization.”**

Paul Smith, OFM, Provincial Minister of Holy Spirit Province, Australia, said, “The day with the Cardinal was absolutely fantastic and him talking about the ‘ministry of gesture’ and how important that is was wonderful. He is someone who embodies that as well.”

The Cardinal made reference to an encounter he had with a Lutheran minister who thanked him for all of the encyclicals of Pope Francis. The Cardinal said, "I responded, 'What encyclicals? The Holy Father hasn't written any yet.' And this man responded, 'No, not in words, but thank you for



Cardinal Rodriguez addressing the Provincials

the encyclicals of his gestures.' **Each of the attitudes and gestures of Pope Francis is an encyclical** or, at least, a real homily on the rectitude of life, love of one's neighbor, ecumenism, compassion, friendship, tenderness, sympathy for the sick, the new evangelization, good humor and joy."

The Cardinal's day with the Provincials was ended with a public Mass at nearby St. Joseph's Church in St. Petersburg. About 30 area friars and a handful of area Secular Franciscans were also in attendance along with parishioners from St. Joseph's. Bishop Robert Lynch, Bishop of the St. Petersburg Diocese also concelebrated the Mass.

Bishop Lynch is an Affiliate of the Holy Name Province. A festive dinner honoring the Cardinal's visit was enjoyed by all at St. Anthony Friary following the Mass. The meeting was being hosted by the Holy Name Province.

Some highlights from Cardinal Rodríguez presentation to the Provincial Ministers:

Witnesses of God: "One of our characteristics, as consecrated men, has to be that of grasping the presence of God, listening to Him, contemplating Him, giving witness to Him through our life and announcing Him in words. **The future will depend very much on our capacity to be witnesses to God**, who is present in our complicated world, and on translating into life the experience we have had and acquire of Him in our following of the poor Jesus Christ in the footprints of St. Francis of Assisi."

Living in Fraternity: "The fraternity has been the 'great novelty' by which we have been able, during recent decades, to understand and express ever better the Franciscan vocation, overcoming every individualistic reading of it. Being Brothers living in and on the basis of Fraternity leads us to cultivate our form of life, giving it quality and depth. **We are brothers, not simply companions;** we do not live in a boarding house, but live together in a Fraternity where the constant learning to be Friars Minor is an integral part of our ongoing formation."

Option for the Poor: "Our evangelization is directed, first of all, to people and reaches the systems and structures through them. We, therefore, evangelize the worker, not the work. We evangelize people, not their systems of government. The Friars Minor are evangelized in their fraternities, not the institutions of the Province or Order. In this way, the theme of the poor springs from real people. **Solidarity, which requires us to have respect for the other in his identity and in his differences with respect to us, drives us to share the condition of the other in the poor.**"

Justice and peace: “In a world crucified by violence, wars, radical fundamentalisms, discords and divisions, **we feel the urgency of the exhortation of St. Francis to be, evermore and in all parts, the makers of peace and instruments of reconciliation**, beginning with those with whom we live and whom we serve: the Fraternity, the local and national community.”

Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue:

“St. Francis pushes people towards a convergence in diversity that is capable of keeping hope alive and the path that leads to communion open. When the Holy See wanted to remind the world of the urgency for interreligious dialogue, it did so by indicating a place: Assisi. **The Franciscan tradition also invites us to pay particular attention to dialogue** with our Muslim Brothers, especially in the places where the phenomenon of fundamentalism is growing in a disturbing way. The silent Franciscan presence in those countries is a sign of a path to dialogue that we want to keep open always.”



Cardinal Rodríguez preaching at the Mass

Horizons of hope: “The horizon is full of hope and it is being changed into an attitude of faith lived in solidarity. United in hope, let us go forward with confidence, finding, here and now, signs of life capable of animating and responding fruitfully to the new times and spaces. **Our form of evangelical life contains the ideal basis for changing our fraternities into living cells**, the ground of which fertilize the faith and hope through a solidarity without frontiers.”

Following Pope Francis: “He is renewing the Church profoundly **through his gestures, attitudes and speeches** by which he is trying to enlighten minds, warming hearts and strengthening the will of all with the light and power of the Gospel in order to make us all determined witness, ‘missionary disciples of Christ’, sent into the world to serve the poorest and the marginalized and, in this way, transform our society without fear. **I am convinced that the Holy Spirit is speaking to the Church through Pope Francis** and is proposing a real ‘personal and pastoral conversion’ to us and is encouraging us to carry out the new evangelization. **Through his gestures, teaching role and his way of ‘governing’, he is communicating his vision of the Church to us.** Everything about him speaks to us of Christ.”

“Let us follow the activity of the Pope each day. A lot may seem to us to be mere curious anecdotes. But they are not to give himself publicity. What the Holy Father is proposing to us in a simple manner each day are elements of a teaching role that is rich in the novelty of the Gospel! **There is a new concept of Church here! There is a new way of thinking, including the way of governing in the Church, here!** We have such a lot to learn!”

FRANCIS, REPAIR MY CHURCH AGAIN. “Today, as in the past, **the Lord has again called Francis and has asked of him the very same thing he asked of him of Assisi.** The fresco of Giotto clearly expresses how the Saint draws the man closer to one of the towers of St. John Lateran that is threatening to collapse. However, we have to be prepared since this beautiful but strange popularity is beginning to strengthen adherences and words of thanksgiving to the Holy Spirit for having entrusted the Bark of Peter to a pastor who ‘smells of sheep’ and who knows that the Gospel is a secure route to the future are heard.”

Cardinal Rodríguez was born in Tegucigalpa, where he currently serves. Hearing God’s call to the religious life, he joined the Salesians Order in 1961. He earned doctorates in philosophy, theology and moral theology as well as diplomas in clinical psychology and psychotherapy. Ordained to the priesthood in 1970, he has taught chemistry, physics and music; as well as been a professor of moral theology and ecclesiology at the Salesian Theological Institute in Guatemala. The Cardinal is also trained in classical piano and did music studies in El Salvador, Guatemala and the United States. He speaks English, French, Italian, German and Portuguese in addition to his native Spanish. In 1978, he was elevated to the episcopacy being named Auxiliary Bishop of Tegucigalpa, a position he served in until 1993 when he was named Archbishop. Soon-to-be-Saint, Pope John Paul II added him to the ranks of the College of Cardinals in the 2001 Consistory making him the first-ever Cardinal from Honduras. In addition to his episcopal responsibilities in Tegucigalpa, Cardinal Rodríguez also serves a President of the Episcopal Conference in Honduras and since 2007 has served as President of Caritas International.

The Cardinal’s full presentation can be downloaded here: <http://www.escofm.org/news.html>

OUR TIME WITH THE CARDINAL WAS ENLIGHTENING, EXCITING

BY JEFFREY SCHEELER, OFM, PROVINCIAL MINISTER | ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PROVINCE

I have spent the past week in sunny Florida with the other Provincial Ministers of the English Speaking Conference. During the April meeting we usually have a study day, and this year we were honored to have **Oscar Andrés Cardinal Rodríguez Maradiaga, SDB**, as our presenter.



Provincial Minister Jeffrey Scheeler, OFM and Cardinal Rodríguez Maradiaga, SDB, outside of St. Anthony Friary, St. Petersburg

Cardinal Rodríguez is the Archbishop of Tegucigalpa in Honduras, and has become a close confidante of Pope Francis. He is the Chair of the eight Cardinals who are advising the Pope about administration and reform of the Roman Curia. The Cardinal is an Affiliate of the Order through Immaculate Conception Province, and wore his habit while he was with us.

He spoke to us about Pope Francis’ “Franciscan” papacy, and delighted us with stories of his experiences and conversations with Pope Francis, Pope Benedict, Pope John Paul II, and other Church leaders, as well as

current issues facing the Church. It was exciting to be with one so close to Pope Francis and get the inside scoop!

He believes Pope Francis evangelizes through his “gestures” more than words. He recalled all the many ways he has surprised us by his actions, and encouraged us as Franciscan leaders to find ways we can do the same.

CONFERENCE MEETS IN ST. PETERSBURG

ST. PETERSBURG, FL – The Provincial Ministers of the ESC held their Spring meeting at St. Anthony Friary in St. Petersburg. The meeting was hosted by Holy Name Province.

The meeting highlight was the Spring “study day” guided by **Oscar Andrés Cardinal Rodríguez Maradiaga, S.D.B.**, Archbishop of Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Also on the agenda were the following:

- ✓ Sub-Conference meetings among the Provincials of the United States, Canada and Europe.
- ✓ Possible future candidates for Visitor General
- ✓ Candidates for General Definitive
- ✓ Possible legislation to be presented at the General Chapter
- ✓ Possible lay brother delegates for the General Chapter
- ✓ Program for a Franciscan Year at The Franciscan International Study Centre in Canterbury, England
- ✓ An update on the Convocation of Lay Brothers scheduled for 2015

CANADIAN PROVINCES BEGIN CONVERSATION ABOUT RECONFIGURATION

ST. PETERSBURG, FL – During the recent Spring meeting of the English Speaking Conference, the Canadian Sub-Conference of the ESC met to discuss the possible reconfiguration of the Franciscan entities in Canada.

Canadian Provincial Ministers Dennis Vavrek, OFM (Christ the King Province, Western Canada) and Marc LeGoanvec, OFM (St. Joseph Province, Eastern Canada), met with Francis Walter, OFM, General Definitive, and Primo Piscitello, OFM (Immaculate Conception Province, USA), to discuss the possibility of reconfiguration in Canada to address the issues of declining personnel and the best ways to revitalize Franciscan life there.

Fr. Primo was part of the conversation because Immaculate Conception Province has about 20 friars in the greater Toronto area as part of its Canadian Foundation. Any reconfiguration of Franciscan life in Canada would include the friars in the Canadian Foundation in Toronto.

The next major step in the process of reconfiguration will be a meeting of Canadian Provincial Administrations which will take place in September.

PROVINCE OF ST. PAUL (MALTA) CELEBRATES CENTENARY

VALETA, MALTA – The Maltese Province of Saint Paul the Apostle is 100 years old. On Sunday 12 April 1914, which was Easter, the Minister General of the Order, Pacifico Monza ofm, declared the Maltese Franciscan Custody of Saint John the Baptist an independent Province of the Order, with the title Saint Paul the Apostle.



The foundations of the Maltese Franciscans are, of course, much older than that. They were established as a Custody of their Sicilian mother Province of Val di Noto in 1838, but the friars had been present in Malta since the end of the 15th century when one of the disciples of Saint Bernardine of Siena, who led the Observant movement, Bishop Matteo Giumarra di Agrigento, spread the Observant reform in Sicily, from where it found its way to Malta.

The turn of events in the Franciscan Order at the end of the 19th century was a boost for Franciscan religious life in Malta. The unification of the Order of Friars Minor in 1897 and the providential figure of a Maltese Franciscan, Anton Maria Cesal, were key factors in bringing about the renewal of the Maltese Franciscan Custody. Cesal founded another two churches and friaries. Time was now ripe for a rebirth. The Franciscan Order could now found a new entity, the Maltese Province of the Friars Minor, dedicated to Saint Paul the Apostle. It was exactly 100 years ago.

The Minister General at the time was Pacifico Monza ofm (1911-1915). In 1914 he came over to Malta for a general visitation. On 7 April 1914 the General *Definitorium* issued the Decree of the foundation of the Maltese Franciscan Province, with the title of Saint Paul the Apostle. The original Decree, however, was published at the *Ta' Ġiezu* friary in Valletta on Easter Sunday, 12 April 1914.

Since its establishment, the Maltese OFM Province has continued to flourish, with new churches and friaries in Hamrun (Saint Francis Stigmatised), Baħar iċ-Ċagħaq (Porziuncola Retreat House and Saint Mary of the Angels), and other permanent or temporary presences in Malta and abroad (London, Toronto, Adelaide, Honduras, Libya, Hal Far, Birkirkara, Mellieħa, Marsaskala).

Times have never been easy for the Franciscan OFM Province of Malta. This commemoration is not only a joyful celebration of past achievements, but should also be a courageous occasion to face up to the challenge of giving a Franciscan witness in a secularised and postmodern society.