

Pope appoints top Franciscan to Vatican's religious life department



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(CNA/EWTN News).- Pope Francis made his first appointment within the Roman Curia this morning, choosing his friend, Franciscan Father José Rodríguez Carballo, to help run the Vatican's congregation for consecrated religious.

The Vatican announced April 6 that Pope Francis appointed Fr. Carballo to serve as secretary of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, simultaneously raising him to the level of archbishop and giving him the titular see of Belcastro.

Until his appointment today, Fr. Carballo was the Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor, the 119th successor of St. Francis of Assisi. He was elected to that position on June 5, 2003 and re-elected for another six years on June 4, 2009.

Besides being the head of one of the largest international religious orders, Fr. Carballo also personally knows Pope Francis.

In a March 14, 2013 video greeting to the new Pope, Fr. Carballo explained that he received the news of Francis' election with joy because "I know him personally" and because of the name he chose.

“In 2004 he came to visit me at our Franciscan General Curia in Rome. He wanted to ask about some things referring to the Church of Argentina and the Order,” he recalled.

The meeting lasted for an hour, and during that time Fr. Carballo said that “it seemed to me that I had before me a Franciscan brother, a companion, a friend as if we had known each other all our lives.”

“We met on other occasions as well, especially at the Synods, and I was always struck by his simplicity, austerity, closeness and ability to listen,” he said in the video.

That Pope Francis would choose someone he knows as the second in command for the congregation makes sense, given that his familiarity with the personnel in the Church’s central administration is not extensive.

Fr. Carballo succeeds American Archbishop Joseph Tobin, who was appointed to lead the Indianapolis archdiocese in October 2012. The congregation has been involved in a visitation of U.S. religious sisters that was not well received by all the orders involved.

Cardinal Franc Rodé, the congregation's former prefect, began the visitation in December 2008, to “look into the quality of life” of communities nationwide. In January 2011, Cardinal Joao Braz de Aviz took over from Cardinal Rodé as head of the congregation for religious.

Fr. Carballo was born in 1953 in Lodoselo, Spain. He speaks Spanish, Galician, Italian, French, English and Portuguese, and also knows Latin, Biblical Greek and Biblical Hebrew.

He has published numerous articles in Journals on Consecrated and Religious Life, on Pastoral Theology, Sacred Scripture, Biblical Theology, and Franciscan spirituality.

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