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Pope is challenging church to revitalize roots in Christ, cardinals say

by Carol Glatz by Cindy Wooden by Catholic News Service

Vatican City — In just one year, Pope Francis has made a powerful impact on the Catholic Church worldwide, a number of cardinals have said.

Members of the College of Cardinals gathered in Rome for a series of meetings in late February, and several spoke to Catholic News Service about the Argentine pope's budding legacy.

Cardinal Donald W. Wuerl of Washington: "It's been an extraordinary year. He's been able to help people see the face of Christ visible in his church."

"It's been an extraordinary gift and a challenge for the rest of us."

Cardinal Vincent Nichols of Westminster, England: "Pope Francis brings astonishing gifts to the role of Holy Father."

"He's given everyone a huge thrust of enthusiasm and joy of being Catholic, a profound challenge that our lives must be radically centered on Christ. He's calling for a radical renewal in the church starting with the roots."

"He goes to the heart of why the church exists: that we are missionary disciples. We're called into company with the Lord and called to go out and share the Good News."

Cardinal Luis Tagle of Manila, Philippines: "For me, it's a deeply personal joy. His first year in a way articulated many of the things that I believed in."

For example, he said, the church needs to be "more humble, a church that listens, a church that doesn't pretend to have all the answers, a church that can be as confused as other people in the disorder of their lives, a church that is reduced to silence -- the silence of someone who contemplates, not the silence of someone who is angry. ..."

"Many people appreciate that, but in some circles of the church they do not. They interpret your compassionate, silent, listening stance as a kowtowing to the world and some sort of neglect of your prophetic ministry. But the prophetic ministry is much wider than being angry," he said.

"Constantly shouting, shouting, shouting, I don't think is the proper way to solve problems and support a movement toward integrity," he said.

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"I'm very happy that the Holy Father's return to a more evangelical, Gospel style of being and style of leading makes us, in a way, self-critical of what we have inherited and (helps) to purify those things in the light of the Gospel."

Cardinal Oswald Gracias of Mumbai, India: The papacy of Pope Francis "has made a difference for the whole church, the church in India for example, the church in Asia. We have lots of outreach to the poor, but he's made us re-think that and to examine it qualitatively, not just quantitatively, to give priority to the personal touch, he's reminded us of that. But also our own simplicity of life and approach. He's holding us back to basics, to make us the church that Jesus wants."

The cardinal said that, when Pope Francis was asked what he was bringing to the church, what was new, the pope said: "All I want for the church is Jesus Christ."

"I'm happy that the whole world has reacted positively. This is a challenge for any new pope. Somehow Pope Francis has touched the right chord."

"I hope that all of us can work together and give him support to do what he wants to do to make the church more vibrant once again. I really feel he has made the church once again the voice of the poor, the moral voice in the world, and people are listening to him. I hope people will not just listen, but also follow what he says."

Cardinal Wilfrid Napier of Durban, South Africa: "He's given the faith, the Catholic way of life such a different color, a different tone, a different spirit."

"I would say the essence of Pope Francis was if I look at who I am, I can see all that is wrong with me, and it is only because of God's grace that I am not that wrong person that I was potentially going to be, so who I am now is because of God's grace. It's those two poles: the sinner that I am and God's grace that is transforming me."

"He is not what he is because of the position he's been given, but because of a relationship with God and relationship with Jesus, that is what's making him a different person."

"Of course, for me as a Franciscan, it's even doubly challenging, because here's a Jesuit living the Franciscan way of life better than I am. It's quite something. It is quite a lovely challenge I think that you can share with the pope, this idea of living like St. Francis of Assisi."

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