

Remarks by Michael G. Pappas, Executive Director

San Francisco Interfaith Council

Dedication of the Porziuncola Nuova, September 27, 2008

“In the Book of Proverbs it is written that a people without vision shall perish,” noted Michael Pappas, Executive Director of the San Francisco Interfaith Council.



Michael Pappas, right

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“Dear friends, today we celebrate an inspired vision.

“We celebrate the vision of an incredible saint, and the energy, determination, and zeal of a woman who was inspired by the vision of that saint.



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“Amidst so many religious, civic, and diplomatic dignitaries, I stand before you humbled yet at the same time emboldened to say just a few words about a simple monk whose words and deeds have left an indelible mark upon civilization, and certainly our beloved City who bears his name and is privileged to claim him as Patron.

“St. Francis’ life is legend. Invocation of his very name inspires us to do good. To help the poor. To be kind to animals and to respect creation.

“Equally, St. Francis is hailed as the model peacemaker courageous in his endeavors to bridge the divide among people of different faiths.

“In fact, by virtue of Francis’ zeal *to love all human beings*, he found himself catapulted into the role of interfaith activists and pioneers.

“Indeed, he challenges us to risk — confronting and overcoming prejudice by casting aside fear, and dialoging with one another.

“Dear Angela, you are truly a visionary. You have invested so very much in this project with its many incredible implications.

“Your love for a saint whom you acknowledge with confidence as ever-present, and refer to in the familiar as Francesco, reminds us that his message and zeal for love is timeless.

“Never more so than the present is such a reminder essential.

“In the central space of the *Porziuncola*, Francesco invites us and he challenges leaders of all faiths to gather and to wrestle with the issues that divide us, but more importantly to work together to seek peace and justice in our City and in the world.

“For this great vision and these sacrificial efforts, Angela, the interfaith community of San Francisco is indeed indebted to you.

“To our guests here from Assisi, who have crossed the seas to bring to us the greetings and blessings of that holy place, we thank you.

“Today we celebrate your journey which now a sacred part of our rich history. May your stay with us be joyous and fulfilling as we celebrate the successful completion of this beautiful and inspired project.

“A special thanks is extended to our spiritual hosts and true leaders, the cultivation of interfaith relations, Cardinal William Levada and Archbishop George Niederauer, on whose behalf I extend greetings to the many interfaith representatives that are gathered here today.

“The presence of these religious leaders truly enriches our fellowship and affirms the inclusive and universal message of the saint whose presence in San Francisco will be felt in the magnificent *Porziuncola* we have built.

“To all who have joined in this festival of events, may God bless you and God keep you.”