NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Francis greets US delegates, signs NCR board member's cast

Thomas C. Fox | May. 2, 2014 The Francis Chronicles

Pope Francis greeted NCR Board member Jim Frey as part of a US delegation May 2, agreeing to sign Frey's leg cast with a large letter "F."

Frey was in Rome with members of his family and participated in an audience with Francis who met with members of the Papal Foundation [1], which raises millions and supports the pope and the mission of the church. The foundation?s fund has has grown to over $200 million. It has given out a total of $96.6 million in grants and scholarships around the world.

Francis greeted and thanked members of the foundation. These are Francis' remarks [2].

?An incredible day and an incredible experience,? Frey wrote in an email just minutes after the audience with Francis.

Jim?s father, Gene Frey, is a member of the foundation. Frey family members, Mary, Gene?s wife, and Mary, Jim?s wife, along with Carol Frey Wolfe, Jim?s sister, were all in Rome today for the gathering.

During the papal gathering, Gene, in what might have been a historic first gesture by a lay person during a papal audience, gave a hug to Francis, according to Jim?s email.

Gene had told friends for weeks he had had the urge to embrace the pontiff. Given the opportunity, he said he would do it. Apparently the Papal Foundation reception line allowed precisely that chance. Asked if he thought it could possibly arouse the concern of a zealous and protective Swiss Guard, Gene said, "Well, what a way to go, in the arms of Francis."

Jim Frey has been a NCR board member for nearly one year. As a result of an automobile accident as a youth he uses a wheelchair. Several weeks ago, one of his feet got caught on the ground, twisting and fracturing his ankle. One of his legs has been in a cast for several weeks.

Jim took a black felt market to the audience prepared for a papal signing.

He asked ? and the pontiff, open to new things, signed.

Some might now ask what one does with a used papally autographed cast. Jim still has a few weeks to consider the challenge.

Suggestions are welcomed.

Source URL (retrieved on *07/29/2014 - 02:12*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/francis-chronicles/francis-greets-us-delegates-signs-ncr-board-members-cast

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[1] http://www.thepapalfoundation.com/
[2] http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-francis-remarks-to-papal-foundation-delegatio